

In My Tradition: Ballads and Folk Lyrics

Rosaleen Gregory

The theme this time seems to be love, sought after and, sometimes, consummated.

The Water is Wide

There are countless versions of this song from Scotland and England, but it's too lovely to leave out of any collection. I've chosen my version of the tune and guitar chords from *The Joan Baez Songbook* (N.Y.: Ryerson Music Publishers, Inc., 1964), but I've modified the tune a little and added in a couple more 'floating verses'. Its origin appears to be Child ballad 204, "Jamie Douglas", and it's also known by the title "Waly, Waly".

The Queen of Hearts

I found my preferred version of this song also in *The Joan Baez Songbook*. I acquired a copy in 1977 when we were living in Kingston, Ontario, but I remember both songs from way back in England. I first heard "The Queen of Hearts" during the 1960s, when it was popular in folk music clubs. It's a traditional English folk song originally collected in 1894 by Sabine Baring-Gould, who dated it to around the 1660s, the time of the Stuart Restoration. It's another one that goes well with guitar.

Bonny at Morn (unaccompanied)

When I was growing up in Ealing in the 1950s, my father was the Director of Adult Music Education for

the sprawling County of Middlesex surrounding London. He was often sent piano arrangements of songs to review or comment on, and I would sometimes get hold of these and try them out on the family piano. I remember coming across this lovely Northumbrian tune and lyrics at that time, though it was many years before it became part of my repertoire. It was collected by John Bell and included in Collingwood Bruce and John Stokoe's 1882 *Northumbrian Minstrelsy*. I've always been a bit puzzled by the words to this song; to me they seem to be about a delinquent teenage mum who's leaving her child to be cared for by everybody else, but I could be quite wrong.

Blow the Candles Out

I found this gentle, upbeat love song in *The Seeds of Love* (1967, edited by Stephen Sedley and published in association with the English Folk Dance and Song Society by Essex Music Limited). It likely dates back to Elizabethan times. This version of the tune is based on the one sung by Suffolk singer Edgar Button, and the text derives from Thomas d'Urfey's *Pills to Purge Melancholy* (1719-20). I have modified the melody in a few places. It can be sung unaccompanied or with the guitar chords suggested here. I usually pause for 3 beats on the first note of the penultimate bar. It would make a good duet with a male voice singing verses 1, 3 and 5 and a female verses 2 and 4.

The Water is Wide

The water is wide, I cannot get o'er,
And neither have I wings to fly,
Give me a boat that can carry two,
And both shall row, my love and I.

I leaned my back up against some oak,
Thinking it was a trusty tree,
But first it bended, and then it broke,
And so did my false love to me.

I put my hand into some soft bush,
Thinking the sweetest flower to find,
I pricked my finger to the bone,
And left the sweetest flower behind.

Out in the meadow the other day,
A-gathering flowers, both fresh and gay,
A-gathering flowers, both red and blue,
I little thought what love can do.

A ship there is, and she sails the sea,
She's loaded deep as deep can be,
But not so deep as the love I'm in,
I know not if I sink or swim.

Oh love is handsome and love is kind,
Fair as a jewel when first it's new,
But love grows old and waxes cold,
And fades away like morning dew.

The Water is Wide

Anon

Voice

The water is wide, ___ I cannot get o'er, Neither have ___ I wings to ___
 fly. ___ Give me a boat ___ that can carry two, ___ and both shall row, ___ my love ___ and
 I _____

Queen of Hearts

Anon

Voice

To the Queen of Hearts is the Ace of ___ Sor row, He's here to -
 day, he's gone ___ to - mor row. ___ Young men are plenty but sweet - hearts ___
 few, If my love leaves me, ___ what shall I do? _____

To the Queen of Hearts is the Ace of Sorrow,
 He's here today, he's gone tomorrow,
 Young men are plenty, but sweethearts are few,
 If my love leaves me, what shall I do?

Had I the store in yonder mountain,
 Where gold and silver is there for counting,
 I could not count for the thought of thee,
 My eyes so full I could not see.

I love my father, I love my mother,
 I love my sister, I love my brother,
 I love my friends and my relatives, too,
 I'll forsake them all and go with you.

To the Queen of Hearts is the Ace of Sorrow,
 He's here today, he's gone tomorrow,
 Young men are plenty, but sweethearts are few,
 If my love leave me, what shall I do?

Bonny at Morn

Anon

Voice

The sheep's in the meadows, the kye's in the com, Thou's ow - er lang
 in thy bed, Bon-ny at morn. The sheep's in the meadows, the kye's in the com, Thou's
 ow - er lang in thy bed, Bon-ny at morn. Can-ny at night, Bon-ny at
 morn, Thou's ow - er lang in thy bed, Bon - ny at morn.

The sheep's in the meadow, the kye's in the corn,
 Thou's ower lang in thy bed, Bonny at morn.
 The sheep's in the meadow, the kye's in the corn,
 Thou's ower lang in thy bed, Bonny at morn.
 Canny at night, Bonny at morn,
 Thou's ower lang in thy bed, Bonny at morn.

The bird's in the nest, the trout's in the burn,
 Thou hinders thy mother at many's the turn,
 The bird's in the nest, the trout's in the burn,
 Thou hinders thy mother at many's the turn,
 Canny at night, etc.

We're all laid idle wi' keeping the bairn,
 The lad winnot work, and the lass cannot lairn,
 We're all laid idle wi' keeping the bairn,
 The lad winnot work, and the lass cannot lairn,

Canny at night, etc.

Blow the Candles Out

Anon

Voice

The musical score is written on a single treble clef staff in 4/4 time. The key signature has one flat (B-flat). The melody is accompanied by chords: Dm, C, Dm, C, Dm, C, Dm, F, Em, G, Dm, C, Dm, C, and Dm. The lyrics are: 'When I was ap prenticed in Lon - don I went to see ___ my dear, The cand - les ___ all ___ were burn - ing the moon shone bright and clear, I knocked up-on her wind - ow to ease her of her pain, [So] she rose up ___ to let me in, Then barred the door a - gain.'

When I was ap prenticed in Lon - don I went to see ___ my dear, The
cand - les ___ all ___ were burn - ing the moon shone bright and clear, I knocked up-on her
wind - ow to ease her of her pain, [So] she rose up ___ to let me in, Then barred the door a -
gain.

When I was apprenticed in London
I went to see my dear
The candles all were burning
The moon shone bright and clear
I knocked upon her window
To ease her of her pain
She rose up to let me in
Then barred the door again.

I like your well behaviour
And this I often say
I cannot rest contented
When you are far away
The roads they are so muddy
We cannot walk about
So roll me in your arms love
And blow the candles out.

Your father and your mother
In yonder room do lie
A-hugging of one another
So why not you and I?

A-hugging of one another
Without a fear or doubt
So roll me in your arms dear
And blow the candles out.

I prithee speak more softly
Of what we have to do
Lest that our noise of talking
Should make our pleasure rue
The streets they are so nigh, love
The people walk about
They may peep in and spy, love
So blow the candles out.

And if we prove successful, love
Please name it after me
Treat it neat and kiss it sweet
And rock it on your knee
When my three years are over
My time it will be out
And I will pay my debt to you
By blowing the candles out.