Jeannie Robertson: The Child Ballads

HERSCHEL GOWER & JAMES PORTER

Jeannie Robertson, now aged 62, has inherited and preserved a repertoire of twenty Child ballads from the oral tradition. The ten examples which follow were chosen for both textual and musical interest. This selection is representative of the whole repertoire, the style of rendering, the personality, diction, and mannerisms of the singer. Some of her other ballads have appeared in volume III of Bertrand H. Bronson, *The Traditional Tunes of the Child Ballads*, in *Scottish Studies* and in a few scattered publications, but now for the first time they have been meticulously individualised, with careful attention to both textual and musical peculiarities. In these labours the editors acknowledge the invaluable assistance of their several colleagues at the School of Scottish Studies, especially Robert Garioch on the texts and Ailie Munro on the tunes.

Actually what the ear accepts when a text is sung sometimes strikes the eye as an incongruity when the line is scanned on the printed page. For example, in the third stanza of 'Mary Hamilton' Jeannie first sings *night* and then *nicht*. These technical inconsistencies have not been altered; folksong must surely reflect the state and condition of folk language and the speech mannerisms of the individual singer.

A thorough collation of Jeannie's texts with others in print, or in current circulation, would require space beyond our present limits. In general her versions bear marked resemblances to several in Child and to texts later collected by Gavin Greig in Aberdeenshire. Her 'Lord Lovel' can be spotted at once for its English background and it very probably came the route of chapbook sources. At least it occurs with some regularity in the Lauriston Collection of nineteenth-century chapbooks at the National Library of Scotland. Although the dates of chapbook imprints are somewhat uncertain, it would appear that 'Lord Lovel' came to Jeannie through her grandmother, who bought the chapman's wares and passed the songs on to Maria Stewart, Jeannie's mother.

In addition to the ten Child ballads which follow in full transcript, Jeannie also sings:

53 Young Beichan
77 Sweet William's Ghost
81 Little Musgrave and Lady Barnard
106 Famous Flower of Serving Men
114 Johnie Cocke
163 The Battle of Harlaw

216 The Mother's Malison; or Clyde's Water
233 Andrew Lammie
236 The Laird o' Drum
280 The Beggar Laddie

Her 'Andrew Lammie' runs to more than fifty stanzas. Others may be fragments of three or four stanzas. But in those instances where memory has lapsed, Jeannie alertly recounts the story in prose after she has sung the tune.

Her manner of singing is best described as 'the high ballad style'. Slow and forceful, it never fails to be convincing. The older songs speak of her ability to report the tragic conditions of human life in concrete detail. As elegies celebrating past deeds and memorable actions, the ballads convey a sense of mourning and regret and a long view of human crises. The tone is one that we legitimately associate with the heroic song-poetry of Homer and the measured cadences of *Beowulf*. As a modern purveyor of the heroic, Jeannie Robertson displays the kind of intellect and feeling that forge a new song out of the materials of tradition. This is to say that her style is individual and her art still vigorous. She sings with a natural integrity but with little or no animation. Using her voice as a 'creative' instrument, she asks for no accompaniment. Her own assessment of her songs goes like this: 'To tell ye the God's truth, my songs are natural. They're hunnerds o' years old. They're aboot people and they're real. The songs are part o' me and as long as there's people to listen, I'll go on singin'.'

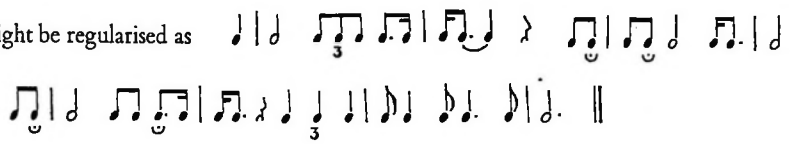
Style, Technique, and Musical Idiom

A number of commentators have already described the singing of Jeannie Robertson in popular or non-technical terms. Struck by the expansiveness of her delivery and the finesse of her phrasing, they have praised the general effect of Jeannie's singing. To date, however, no critic has commented on the musicality of technique which actually produces the effect.

Those who listen closely to the phrase-structure will recognise the natural quality and coherence of expression that characterise her very complex treatment of a melody —a melody which in itself may be basically quite simple. For example, if we examine version 2 of 'Edward', which she calls 'Son David', the characteristics are abundantly clear: interpreting the anacrusis on the analogy of version 1 as  , a barring pattern on conventional lines emerges of 7/8, 10/8, 8/8, 9/8, 11/8, 10/8, 8/8, (6/8). This pattern gives an effect of balancing or contrasting phrases, and as a structural device it is also familiar in the *ùrlar* of *piobaireachd*. (For details see R. L. C. Lorimer, 'Studies in Pibroch', *Scottish Studies* 6:1–30; 8:45–79.) In Jeannie's singing of 'Mary Hamilton', where the

rhythmic contour is also fairly externalised, a similar pattern can be noted. However, in certain other instances—in 'Lord Lovel' for example—the pulse is an internal one with all semblance of corporeal rhythm suppressed.

The rhythmic pulse in the songs determines not only the metrical structure but also the individual time-values: to put it another way, the note-values are the embodiment of the pulse, and the formulation or grouping of these into phrases supplies the metrical structure. Thus, 'Lord Randal' has an observable 8-bar structure to the stanza, even though the individual note-values are complex. The rhythm of the first stanza might be regularised as



It does seem obvious that any attempt to capture the nuances of pulse and phrasing of such artistry as these songs proclaim must employ strict methods: thus notational devices must be extended to embrace the minutiae of actual performance. (The devised uses I have made of musical symbols and diacritical signs are explained in my earlier article on transcription method, *Scottish Studies* 12:169–78.) Were the initial stanza of 'Lord Randal' transcribed in the rhythm noted above, a reader would have only a partial—or even false—idea of the subtlety of rhythm and phrasing in the performance. My transcription method, then, creates a basic version from which skeletal abstracts, or typological or structural analyses may be made (in the manner of Bertrand H. Bronson's in *The Traditional Tunes of the Child Ballads*). In the case of one Child ballad, 'Lord Randal', I have transcribed in the pages that follow the first two stanzas to facilitate comparison of thematic or motivic variation; in another, 'Edward' (or 'Son David'), two separate versions—recorded on different occasions—are printed together for a similar reason. My system of classification by mode and range also follows Professor Bronson's method, which seems to me the most comprehensible yet devised in the context of British-American folk song. I have also relied heavily, in consulting analogues to the Child Ballads published thus far, on Bronson's volumes I, II, and III.

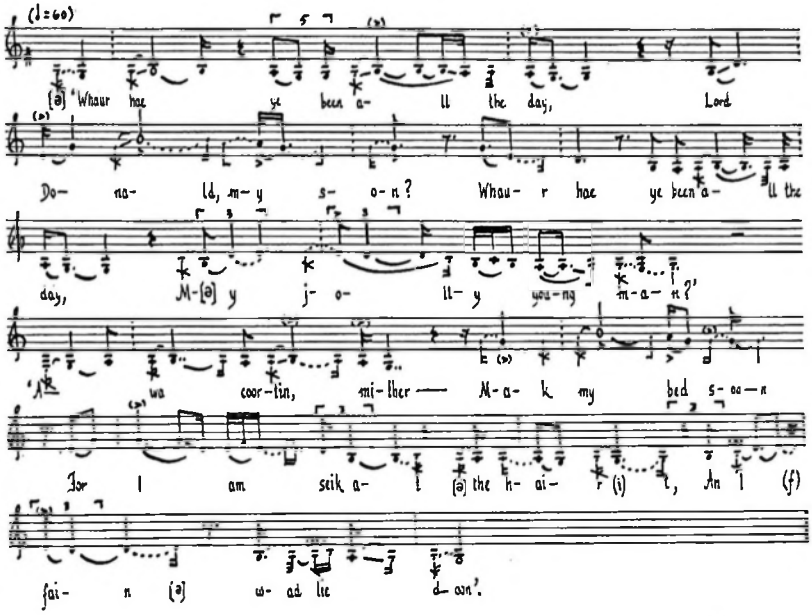
A great traditional singer manifests perhaps a greater degree of difference in actual style from his or her peers than do art-singers, by virtue of the unfettered nature of the material. One might therefore note the following characteristic traits in Jeannie Robertson's style: (1) an expansiveness of delivery that is nevertheless tightly controlled in the length of the phrases; (2) fluidity of rhythm, which appears in two distinct forms—as an externalised pulse or quasi-regular tempo (as in 'Edward', 'Mary Hamilton', 'The Three Gypsies'); and as an evasive, complex, internal pulse (the remaining seven transcribed Child Ballads are of this type) which makes heavy demands on the listener's rhythmic sense; (3) an idiomatic enunciation, with speech-rhythms and dialectal peculiarities native to the North-East of Scotland; (4) a wealth—in this closely associated

with 1 and 3—of expressive *portamenti* and *appoggiature*; (5) a pervasive finesse in phrasing that is the hallmark of a unique musicality; and (6) a powerful sense of drama and characterisation.

These canons apply first and foremost to the Child Ballad renderings, since their nature generally demands a broader, more consciously majestic tone. It must be said, though, that Jeannie herself recognises the differences in approach in the various types of songs in her repertoire (BBC programme 'Oor Jeannie', broadcast on 10 June 1968). Breadth of performance, however, is not restricted to the older, heroic ballads, for this same characteristic is evident in 'The Bold Lieutenant'. On the other hand it would clearly be misleading to portray Jeannie's singing style as uniformly expansive: characterisation and variety of mood and tempo are some of her strongest assets. One finds that this variety is self-evident from the detail of the transcriptions which range all the way from the heroic Child ballads to the short, graceful lyrics.

LORD RANDAL (Lord Donald) Child 12

Collector: Hamish Henderson SA 1957/44 B2



'Whaur hae ye been all the day,
Lord Donald, my son?
Whaur hae ye been all the day,
My jolly young man?'

'Awa coortin, mither—
Mak my bed soon,
For I am seik at the hairt,
An I fain wad lie doon.'

'What will ye hae for your supper,
Lord Donald, my son?
What will ye hae for your supper,
My jolly young man?'

'I hae had my supper—
Mither, mak my bed soon,
For I am seik at the hairt,
An I fain wad lie doon.'

'What had ye for supper,
Lord Donald, my son?
What had ye for supper,
My jolly young man?'

'I had little smaa fishes—
Mither, mak my bed soon,
For I am seik at the hairt,
An I fain wad lie doon.'

'What like were the fishes,
Lord Donald, my son?
What like were the fishes,
My gallant young man?'

'Black back an spreckled belly—
Mither, mak my bed soon,
For I am seik at the hairt,
An I fain wad lie doon.'

'Oh, I doubt you are poishoned,
Lord Donald, my son—
Oh, I doubt you are poishoned,
My jolly young man.'

'What will ye leave tae your father,
Lord Donald, my son?
What will ye leave tae your father,
My jolly young man?'

'My houses and lands, mither—
Mak my bed soon,
For I am seik at the hairt,
An I fain wad lie doon.'

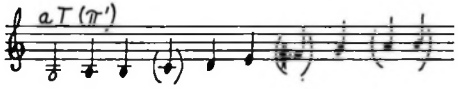
[lapse of memory]

'What will ye leave tae your true-love,
Lord Donald, my son?'

'The tow and the helter
To hang on yon tree,
An there for to hang
For the poishonin o me.'

'What will ye leave tae your true-love,
Lord Donald, my son?
What will ye leave tae your true-love,
My jolly young man?'

'The tow an the helter
Tae hang on yon tree,
An there for to hang
For the poishonin o me.'



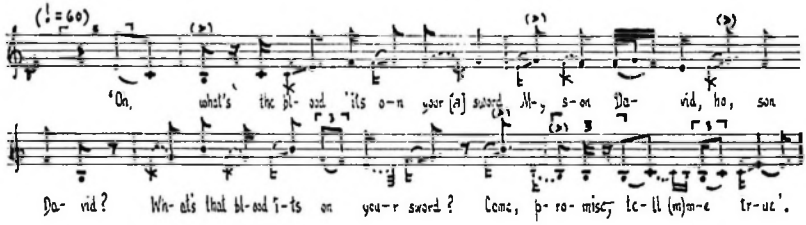
Form: ABCD

Although we must regard the modal classification of the tune as strictly Ionian since it incorporates all the notes of the major scale (albeit the fourth and seventh degrees as decorative passing-notes), there is a strongly pentatonic character to the melodic structure. This apart, the most noteworthy feature is the enlarged compass of the tune, stretching as it does over the range of a tenth. Some might suggest that this bold shape reflects the controlled hysteria at the heart of the text; whatever the reason, we have here a tune of epic proportions, sung in the grand manner. It would seem to have some affinity with Bronson's Aa group of tunes with its significant emphasis on the mediant. It stands, however, generally outside his published variants by nature of its characteristic leap to the higher mediant in its second phrase. Here the first two stanzas are transcribed to indicate the process of structural and stylistic variation.

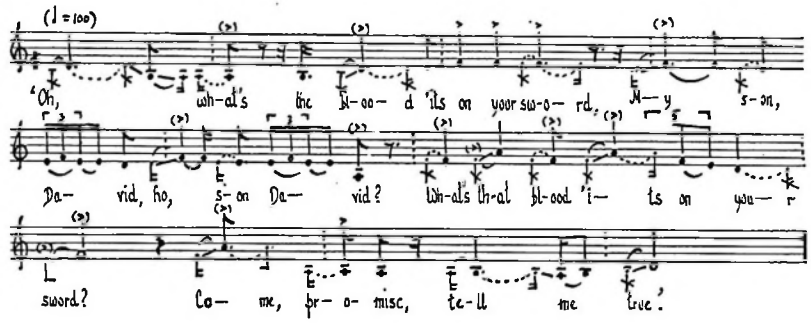
EDWARD (Son David) Child 13

Collector: Hamish Henderson SA 1952/43 B7; SX 1958/2 A5

VERSION 1



VERSION 2



'Oh, what's the blood 'its on your sword,
My son, David, ho, son David?
What's that blood 'its on your sword?
Come, promise, tell me true.'

'Oh, that's the blood of my grey meer,.
Hey, lady Mother, ho, lady Mother,
That's the blood of my grey meer,
Because it wadnae rule by me.'

'Oh, that blood it is owre clear,
My son David, ho, son David,
That blood it is owre clear,
Come, promise, tell me true.'

'Oh, that's the blood of my greyhound,
Hey, lady Mother, ho, lady Mother,
That's the blood of my greyhound,
Because it wadnae rule by me.'

'Oh, that blood it is owre clear,
My son David, ho, son David,
That blood it is owre clear,
Come, promise, tell me true.'

'Oh, that's the blood of my huntin hawk,
Hey, lady Mother, ho, lady Mother,
That's the blood of my huntin hawk,
Because it wadnae rule by me.'

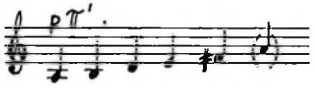
'Oh, that blood it is owre clear,
My son David, ho, son David,
That blood it is owre clear,
Come, promise, tell me true.'

'For that's the blood of my brother, John,
Hey, lady Mother, ho, lady Mother,
That's the blood of my brother, John
Because he wadnae rule by me.'

'Oh, I'm gaun awa in a bottomless boat,
In a bottomless boat, in a bottomless boat,
For I'm gaun awa in a bottomless boat,
An I'll never return again.'

'Oh, whan will you came back again,
My son David, ho son David?
Whan will you come back again?
Come, promise, tell me true.'

'When the sun an the moon meet in yon
glen,
Hey, lady Mother, ho lady Mother,
When the sun an the moon meet in yon
glen,
For I'll return again.'

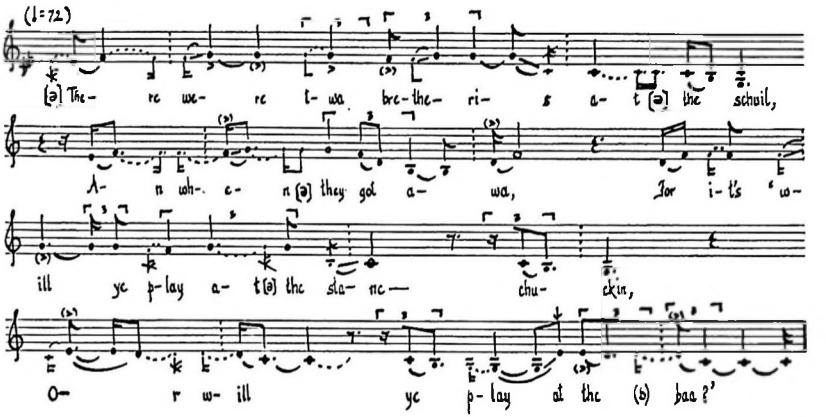


Form: ABCD

Bertrand H. Bronson, in volume I of *The Traditional Tunes of the Child Ballads* writes: '. . . all the tunes that have been found for this ballad, save one or two, come from the Appalachians, and all have been recovered only in the present century. The ballad would seem to have died out of tradition in Scotland before Greig began his labours.' It is easy to be wiser with hindsight; nevertheless, no greater controversion of this conclusion can be imagined than the recovery of this variant from Jeannie Robertson. Hamish Henderson has noted that this (with a closely related version sung by Jeannie's aunt Margaret Stewart) 'fills the gap in the most spectacular manner.' The tune itself embodies a forthright pentatonic shape, and it is instructive to compare the stylistic variations in the two transcribed versions—recorded on separate occasions—of Jeannie's first stanza. Not only is Version 2 sung at a considerably faster tempo, it carries greater dramatic weight in the incisiveness of stress and accent. If there is any relationship with those tunes under Group B in Bronson's collection, it is certainly tenuous. One might point to the upward curve of a sixth at the outset, but thereafter Jeannie's rendering is solidly individual in its isorhythmic phrase-repetition. Particularly telling, of course, is the plunging octave leap in the final phrase. One should also note the basic cellular units (DBA, DEF# and their retrograde forms) that consolidate the pentatonic structure of the tune.

THE TWA BROTHERS Child 49

Collector: Hamish Henderson SA 1958/25 B19



There were twa bretheris at the schuil,
An when they got awa,
For it's 'Will ye play at the stane-chuckin,
Or will ye play at the baa.
Or will ye gae up tae yon bonnie, green hill,
An there we'll wrastle a faa?'*

'I willnae play at the stane-chuckin,
Or will I play at the baa,
But I'll gae up tae yon bonnie green hill,
And there we'll wrastle a faa.'

They wrastl't up, they wrastl't down,
Till John fell to the ground,
But a dirk fell out of William's pootch,
Gave John a deadly wound.†

'Oh, lift me, lift me on your back;
Tak me to yon well sae fair,
An wash the blood frae off my wound,
That it may bleed nae mair.'

He's liftit him upon his back,
Taen him to yon well sae fair;
He's washed the blood frae off his wound,
But aye it bled the mair.

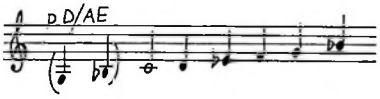
'Oh, ye'll take off my holland sark,
Rive it frae gair tae gair,
Ye'll stuff it in the bloody wound,
That it may bleed nae mair.'

* For lines 5 and 6 the second half of the tune is repeated.
† *wound* rhymes with *ground* throughout

For he's taen off his holland sark,
Rived it frae gair tae gair:
He's stuffed it in the bloody wound,
But it bled mair an mair.

'Oh lift me, lift me on your back;
Tak me tae Kirkland fair,
An dig a grave baith wide an deep
And lay my body there.

'Ye'll lay my arrows at my head,
My bent bow at my feet,
My sword an buckler by my side,
As I wes wont tae sleep.'

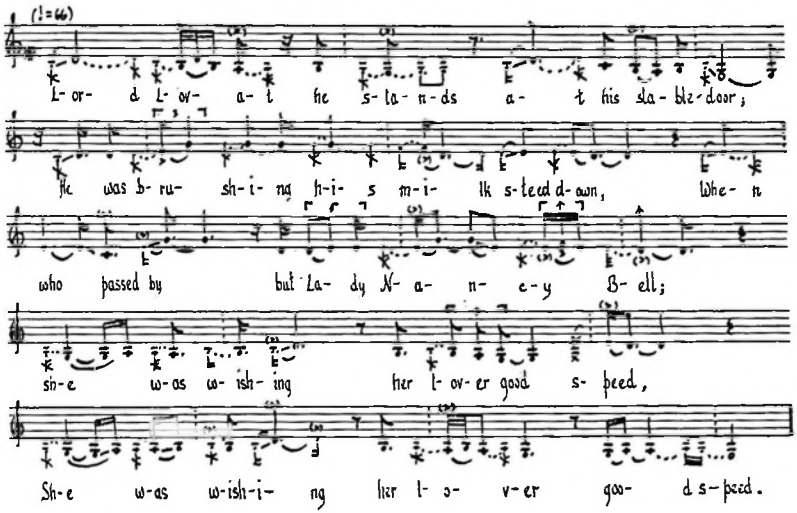


Form: ABAC

The hexatonic melody displays the frequent trait in Scots tunes of veering towards another mode from the original in its concluding phrases. The initially firm E-flat tonality (and its central cadence on the dominant) is characteristically coloured by the change to the relative minor in the last strain. The fall, however, from the upper G to the lower via C and B flat in the opening strain provides the thematic clue to the final cadence. The melodic contour prevents it from having any formal relationship with the New World variants cited by Bronson. Once again he concludes that this ballad 'appears latterly to have been lost to traditional memory in the land of its birth. No copy was found by Gavin Greig. . . . Since the early Scottish collectors failed to preserve a tune, the musical tradition is represented only in American variants.' As to the nature of the melody, a detached view would hesitate to read any overt symbolism into the modal deviation noted above, but it does seem to convey (more aptly than some other tunes associated with the ballad) something of the tragic nature of the events portrayed in the text.

LORD LOVEL (Lovat) Child 75

Collector: Hamish Henderson SA 1953/247 B8 (B1)



Lord Lovat he stands at his stable-door;
He was brushing his milk steed down,
When who passed by but Lady Nancy Bell;
She was wishing her lover good speed. (*bis*)

'Where are you going, Lord Lovat?' she said;
'Come promise, tell me true.'
'Over the sea, strange countries to see;
Lady Nancy Bell, I'll come and see you,
Lady Nancy Bell, I'll come an see.'

He was away a year or two,
But he scarcely had been three,
When a mightiful dream cam into his head:
'Lady Nancy Bell, I'll come an see you,
Lady Nancy Bell, I'll come an see.'

He passed down by the village church,
An down to Mary's hall,
An the ladies were all weeping forth. (*bis*)*

* This stanza is curiously truncated by the omission of the third line of text and melody.

'Who is dead?' Lord Lovat he said;
'Come promise, tell me true.'
'Lady Nancy Bell died for her true-lover's sake,
And Lord Lovat, that was his name.' (*bis*)

He ordered the coffin to be opened up,
And the white sheet rolled down;
He kissed her on the cold-clay lips,
An the tears came trinklin down. (*bis*)

*(JR 'I learned it about 35 years ago . . . off a very old woman . . . in Aberdeenshire. She lived in Aberdeen . . . but I think she came from Perthshire. It was Cameron or something they called her'.)

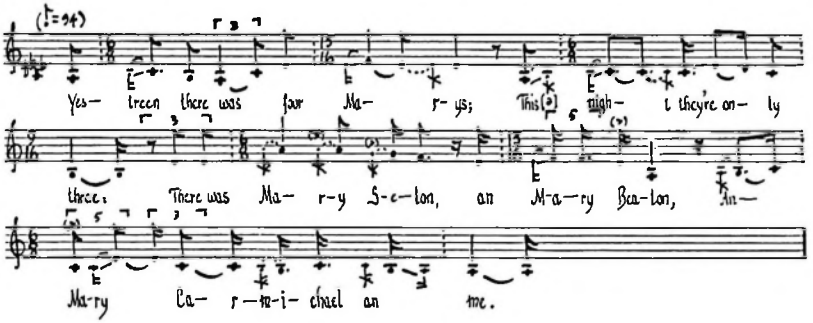
Form: ABCDE

Some justification is evident in regarding this version as a relative of the copious number of variants published by Bronson under the title 'Lord Lovel', even though the six-eight time which Bronson characterises as one of its main features is here expanded in heroic solemnity. The central cadence, as in the great majority of Bronson variants, falls on the fifth, the first cadence falling on the tonic. Likewise, the central cadence is reached by a drop from the octave above. To that extent one can perceive an affinity with the main family of tunes. What should be stressed is that this version is far from reinforcing Bronson's opinion that '. . . there is no obvious bond of sympathy between tripping melody and lachrymose text'. This is perhaps a result of examination on paper that is somewhat removed from the reality of a worthy singer in performance: it is Jeannie Robertson's grandest asset, possibly, that a ballad text as melodramatic as this one can be elevated to a tone of high tragedy in her singing. The popularity of the ballad, nevertheless, would appear to be based on the memorable character of the tune, as Bronson points out in his discussion of the other collected variants.

* The comments which follow some of the songs in this article were recorded from Jeannie Robertson after her singing.

MARY HAMILTON Child 173

Collector: Hamish Henderson SA 1953/196 B10



Yestreen there was four Marys;
This night they're only three:
There was Mary Seton, an Mary Beaton,
An Mary Carmichael an me.

A knock cam to the kitchen door;
It sounded through aa the room,
That Mary Hamilton had a wean
To the highest man in the toon.

'Where is that wean you had last night?
Where is that wean? I say.'
'I hadnae a wean to you last nicht,
Nor yet a wean to-day.'

But he searched high and he searched low,
And he searched below the bay,
And it was there he found his ain dear wee wean;
It was lyin in a pool o blood.

Yestreen there was four Marys;
This night they're only three:
There was Mary Seton, and Mary Beaton,
An Mary Carmichael an me.

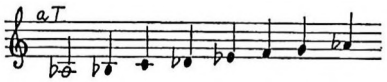
Oh, little did my mither ken,
The day she cradlet me,
The land I was to travel in,
Or the death I was to dee.

For oft times I hae dressed my queen,
An put gowd in her hair,
But little I got for my reward
Was the gallows to be my share.

Oh, happy, happy is the maid
That's born o beauty free,
For it was my dimplin rosy cheeks
That was the ruin o me.

Yestreen there was four Marys;
This night they're only three;
There was Mary Seton, an Mary Beaton,
And Mary Carmichael, an me.

(JR 'I heard it when I was a child. It was old people from Perthshire that I heard saying it. It was away about Blairgowrie. They didn't sing it. They used to say thir three verses, just like a poetry'. [These are verses 2, 3, and 4])

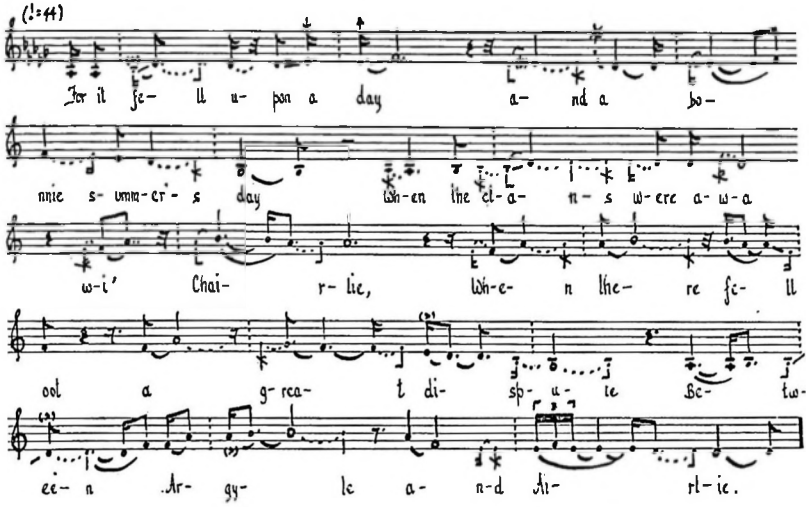


Form: ABCD

There are other extant tunes for this celebrated ballad text, but none as generally favoured as this one. It belongs to Bronson's Group D classification and is chronologically a comparative latecomer. Jeannie's version demonstrates clearly that 'artless art' which allows the phrase-lengths and individual note-values to establish their own cohesive yet plastic inter-relationships. Time-signatures are more relevant here than in some of her other ballad-renderings where the deliberate pace leads to a complete freedom from metronomic rhythm (*cf.* 'The Twa Brothers'): she simply follows the outline of the familiar melody, achieving a unique asymmetry in the balance of phrases. A barring pattern of 6/8, 15/16, 6/8, 9/16, 6/8, 13/16 and 6/8, with the occasional triplet and quintuplet group declare the feeling for shape and contour of the natural artist. A lesser singer might have straitjacketed the rhythmic shaping of the name 'Mary Beaton', for example, by means of a bare crotchet F and quaver E flat for 'Mary' and two repeated A flats on 'Beaton'. Jeannie's subtler rhythmic ambiguity effectively points the contrast with the preceding and straightforward 'Mary Seton'.

THE BONNIE HOUSE O AIRLIE Child 199

Collector: Hamish Henderson SA 1952/43 A 10



For it fell upon a day and a bonnie summer's day
When the clans were awa wi' Chairlie,
When there fell oot a great dispute
Between Argyle and Airlie.

Lady Ogilvy looked frae her high castle wall,
And, O, but she sighed sairly,
For to see Argyle and aa his men
Come to plunder the bonnie hoose o Airlie.

'Come doon, come doon, Lady Ogilvy,' he cried,
'Come doon and kiss me fairly,
For ere this mornin clear's daylight
I will no leave a stanin stane o Airlie.'

'For I wadnae come doon, you false lord,' she cried,
'Nor wad I kiss thee fairly,
I wadna come doon, you false Argyle,
Suppose you dinnae leave a stanin stane o Airlie.

'For if my good lord, he was at hame
As this night he's awa wi' Chairlie,
For it's no Argyle and aa his men
That would plunder the bonnie hoose o Airlie.

'For I have reared him seven bonnie sons
And it's the last time they'll e'er see their daddy,
But gin I had as mony o'er again
They wad aa be to follow Chairlie.'

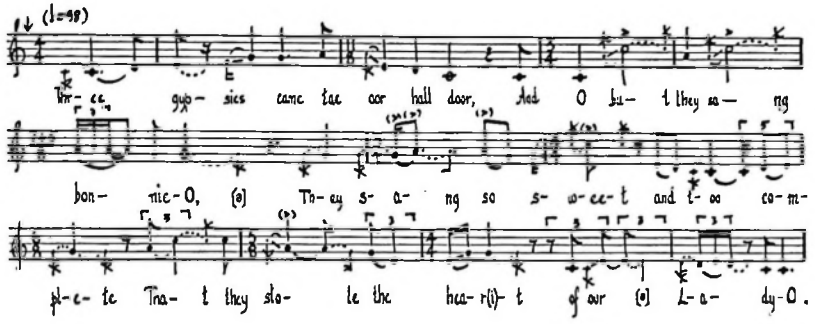
(JR remembers the 'story' which is told in the last verses but she does not 'mind' the verses themselves: 'I jest heard the auld people singin' it about 35 years ago. I've known it near all my days. I used to have all the verses.')

Form: ABCD

It is a pity, perhaps, that this tune has usurped the earlier melodies published by Smith (*The Scotish Minstrel*, 1820–4), George Thomson, Greig and others, but it could be argued that the popularity of the text of 'Loch Lomond' has guaranteed the preservation of the present tune, which is no doubt a more readily memorable air than the others. However, Jeannie's rendering asserts the integral role of the appoggiatura or leaning-note in her ballad-style: there is a natural tendency for such notes to have prominence in relation to the tonic and dominant at cadential points, though here also one sees the same inclination with the mediant, at 'day'. The majestic delivery of the tune invests it with a quality unknown to the generations of popular entertainers who have contrived to misinterpret even 'Loch Lomond' by means of a raucous march-tempo.

THE GYPSY LADDIE Child 200

Collector: Hamish Henderson SX 1958/2 A6



Three gypsies came tae oor hall door,
And O but they sang bonnie-O,
They sang so sweet and too complete
That they stole the heart of our Lady-O.

For she cam tripping down the stairs,
Her maidens stood before her-O
And when they saw her weel-fawred face
They throwed their spell oot ower her-O.

When her guid Lord came home that night
He was askin for his lady-O
The answers the servants gave tae him:
'She's awa with the gypsy laddies-O.'

'Gae saddle tae me my bonnie, bonnie black,
The broon it's ne'er sae speedy-O,
That I may go ridin this lang summer day
In search of my true lady-O.'

For he rode East and he rode West,
And he rode through Strathbogie-O,
And there he met a gey auld man
That was comin through Strathbogie-O.

For it's 'Did ye come East, or did ye come West,
Or did ye come through Strathbogie-O
And did ye see a gay lady
She was followin three gypsy laddies-O?'

For it's 'I've come East and I've come West,
And I've come through Strathbogie-O,
And the bonniest lady that e'er I saw,
She was followin three gypsy laddies-O.'

'For the very last night I crossed this river
I had Dukes and Lords to attend me-O
But this night I must put in my warm feet an wide*
And the gypsies widin before me-O.

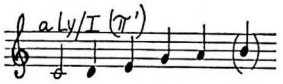
* wide = wade

'Last night I lay in a good feather bed,
My own wedded Lord beside me-O,
But this night I must lie in a cauld corn-barn
And the gypsies lyin aa roon me-O.'

For it's 'Will you give up your houses and your lands,
And will you give up your baby-O,
And will you give up your own wedded Lord,
And keep followin the gypsy laddies-O?'

For it's 'I'll give up my houses and my lands
And I'll give up my baby-O,
And I'll give up my own wedded Lord
And keep followin the gypsy laddies-O.'

They are seven brothers of us all
We all are wondrous bonnie-O.
And this very night we all shall be hanged
For the stealin of the Earl's lady-O.

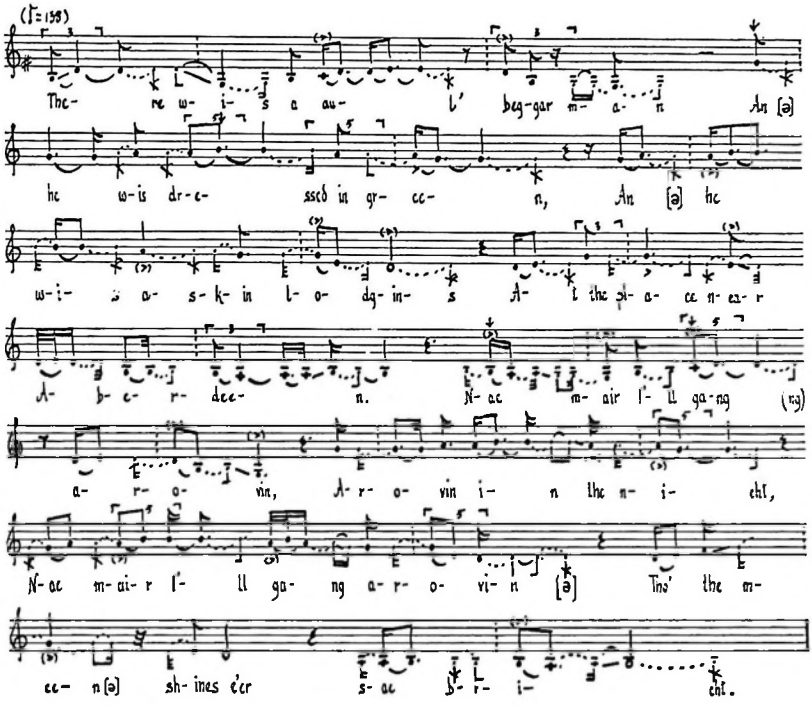


Form: ABCD

One cannot deny the pentatonic framework of this vigorous tune, though a purist would probably regard the presence of the decorative passing B as a qualification for Ly/I rather than π' classification under the Bronson system (*cf.* 'Lord Randal' *supra*). It has distinct affinities with both Bronson's A and B Groups—with Group A in its initial rising and falling sequence, and with Group B in the distinctive octave leap at the beginning of the second line (see the Greig MSS. variant, Bronson 45, for its nearest antecedent). The octave leap, interestingly, is carried to the point of a structural cornerstone in one variant from the United States, where it appears at the outset of the first three lines of each stanza (sung by Mary Jo Davis, Fayetteville, Alabama, on *Folkways Ethnic Library* FE 4530, vol. I). Perhaps it should also be pointed out that the tune itself has sired a *rifacimento* in the song 'Ploughboy, O', whose author, John MacDonald, was a bothy farm servant in his youth in the North-East, working latterly as a gamekeeper and repairer of ploughboys' melodeons. As in her 'Mary Hamilton', Jeannie imparts a more decisive rhythmic swing to the tune; its patently extrovert nature is linked psychologically to the graphic immediacy of the text.

THE JOLLY BEGGAR Child 279

Collector: Hamish Henderson SA 1962/75 A1



There wis a aul' beggar man
An he wis dressed in green,
An he wis askin lodgins
At the place near Aberdeen.

Nae mair I'll gang a-rovin,
A-rovin in the nicht,
Nae mair I'll gang a-rovin
Tho' the meen shines e'er sae bricht.

[*Repeated after each stanza*]

He widnae lie in the barn,
Nor yet intae the byre,
He widnae lie in nae ither place
But at the kitchen fire.

'For if ye had been a decent lass,
As I took you to be,
I wad a made you the queen
O' aa the counteree.'

He put his hand intae his pootch,
He gied her guineas three.
'O tak you this ma bonnie lass
For to pay the nurse's fee.'

He took a horn frae his side,
He blew it loud and shrill,
And four and twenty noblemen
Cam trippin ower the hill.

He took a penknife frae his pootch,
He let aa his duddies fall,
An he wis the brawest hielan' man
That stood amangst them all.

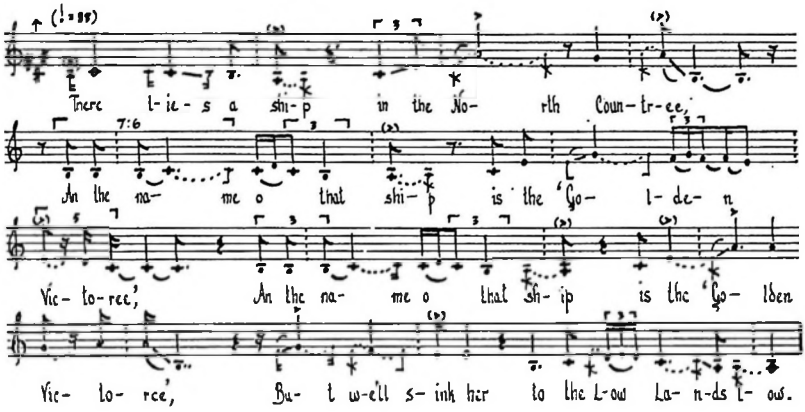
(JR 'Some says it ["brawest hielan' man"] ought to be "brawest gentleman." I don't know which is right.')

Form: ABCD (refrain also)

This tune can with advantage be compared to that of 'Lord Randal' *supra*. Both inhabit the same tonality, both stretch from the lower tonic over the compass of a tenth (in the second phrase of the tune), both are strongly pentatonic in their leanings. In range and contour they are remarkably similar. The internal rhythm of 'The Jolly Beggar' tune, however, is more pronounced by virtue of the complexity of note-values and groups, while there is an even greater degree of deliberateness in syllable-enunciation than in 'Lord Randal'. It is difficult to suggest a reason for this, other than noting that 'Lord Randal' involves only dialogue, whereas this ballad has a narrative opening. One can easily notice that the two ballads formed from direct speech are less intricate in both internal pulse and speech-pattern. It would seem proper to conclude that direct or indirect speech in the text influences the melodic style in different ways, however subtly in Jeannie's case.

THE 'SWEET TRINITY' (The 'Golden Victoree') Child 286

Collector: Hamish Henderson SA 1957/44 B5



There lies a ship in the North Countree,
An the name o that ship is the 'Golden Victoree',
An the name o that ship is the 'Golden Victoree',
But we'll sink her to the Low Lands low.

For up spoke the captain, an up spoke he:
'Is there any man on board who will sink [the/this] ship for me
Is there any man on board who will sink [the/this] ship for me,
Who will sink her to the Low Lands low?'

For up spoke the cabin-boy, an up spoke he:
'What will you give to me if I sink [the/this] ship for thee?
What will you give to me if I sink [the/this] ship for thee,
If I sink her to the Low Lands low?'

'For I will give you silver, and I will give you gold,
Besides my youngest daughter, if you turn bold,
Besides my youngest daughter, if you turn bold,
If you sink her to the Low Lands low.'

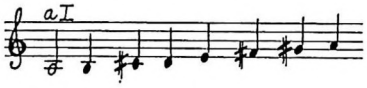
'I neither want your silver, or I neither want your gold,
But I'll take your youngest daughter, if I turn bold,
I'll take your youngest daughter, if I turn bold,
If I sink her to the Low Lands low.'

He bendit his breast, with a dagger in his hand,
An off he did go for to let the water in,
An off he did go for to let the water in,
For to sink her to the Low Lands low.

Some was playin dominoes, and others
playin draughts,
An the water comin in gave them all a
great styte,
An the water comin in gave them all a
great styte,
But he sunk her to the Low Lands low.

He bended his breast, an back he did come,
Roarin, 'Captain, dear Captain, it's will ye
let me in?'
Roarin, 'Captain, dear Captain, it's will ye
let me in,
For I've sunk her to the Low Lands low.'

(**JR** 'Now there's one or two verses I have-na . . . he died before they took him up . . . .')

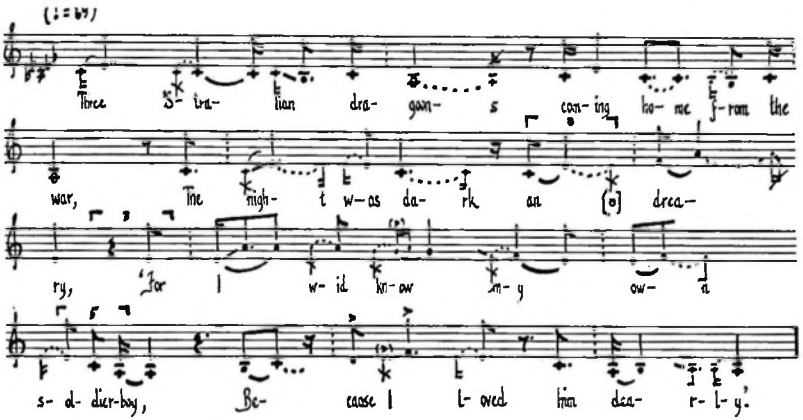


Form: ABAC

We must presume some modernity of origin for this particular melody, deferring nonetheless to the artistry with which the singer cloaks it. The downward-leaping seventh at 'Countree' and the emphasis on the leading-note G-sharp in the second and fourth lines point to a provenance suggesting the music-hall more than the Northern roads. The regularity of shape lends an artificial air to the whole, a 'composed' look to the tune. Condensed and standardised it might possibly discover its true character as a *Marsch*-Tempo cousin to 'Lili Marlene' (*cf.* the descending sequence from G-sharp to C-sharp at 'Golden Victoree'). It is a tribute to Jeannie's sense of style that tunes of all artistic hues are transformed by the singer's personality.

THE TROOPER AND THE MAID Child 299

Collector: Hamish Henderson SA 1963/84 A1



Three 'Stralian dragoons coming home
from the war,
The night was dark and dreary,
'For I wid know my own soldier-boy
Because I loved him dearly.'

She took his horse by the bridle-head,
An laid it to the stable;
Hay an corn for a pretty soldier's horse,
For to eat while it was able.

She took the lad by the lily-white hand,
An led him tae her chamber;
Cakes an wine for a pretty soldier-boy,
For to eat while he was able.

She went up the stair for to make her bed
Then soft and easy,
For she stript off her lily-white goon
Beside his hat an sabre.
For he stript off his boots and his spurs,
And they both lay down together.*

They weren't very long into bed,
When the buglet did sounded,
For the bugle it did play, an the trumpet it
did say,
'Bonnie lassie, I maun leave you.'

'Oh whan will you come back, my bonnie
soldier-boy,
To be the wee thing's daddie?'
'When cockleshells growes in silver bells,
Bonnie lassie, we'll get mairried.'

* For lines 5 and 6 the second half of the tune is repeated.

Form: ABCD

One cannot but remark on the similarity of the twin opening phrases here to those of 'Lord Lovel', and to a lesser extent the low-pitched, arch-like beginnings of 'Lord Randal' and 'The Sweet Trinity'. These cellular structures, it could be argued, indicate a certain thematic—or at least motivic-stylistic—unity in the singer's ballad presentation. One would shrink from elevating the incidence of these structures to the point of a principle; however, they could well be interpreted as intermittently-recurring initial formulas against which the rising pitch-curve of the consequent gains in contrast. The third and fourth lines are sharply differentiated, modally speaking, from the simple pentatonic structure of lines 1 and 2 through the addition of the stressed melody notes G-flat and D-flat. The effect of sentiment produced somewhat deprives the tune of its earlier heroic promise.