

# In My Tradition: Ballads and Folk Lyrics

Rosaleen Gregory

Here, for the time being at least, is a new column. Its main purpose is to introduce some more ballads which for one reason or another never got included in Francis Child's canon of 305 ballad clusters. As you will see, there are many fine songs in that category, and here are four (one with two different versions.)

When I was at Keele University in North Staffordshire, England, in the early 1960s, I ran the Folk Club there for a while. One of the finest singers we ever brought in to sing was Anne Briggs, who came, I think, once with Bert Jansch and once without. (She also performed at a Folk Festival which was held at the Keele campus during those years). I took down several songs from Anne's singing, three of which are featured here.

My favourite, despite the rather silly story, was "Polly Vaughan", which I loved for the gorgeous tune. I went out and sang it to the swans which used to swim on the beautiful lake on campus, but none of them turned into Polly.

I also took down by ear the tune and words of "Rosemary Lane", but never actually learned or performed it until very recently, when I was going through my repertoire and also found a very similar version in Milner & Kaplan's *Songs of England, Ireland and Scotland: A Bonnie Bunch of Roses* (Oak Publications, 1983). This is the version transcribed here; the text (which is slightly different from what Anne sang) is said to be from a broadside by Disley, and the tune (almost identical to the one I took down from Anne's singing) learned from Brian Brooks.

The first version printed here of the wonderful and ominous "Reynardine" story is the one which

was current around English folk clubs in the 1960s. I learned text and tune from Anne Briggs, who herself likely learned it from A. L. (Bert) Lloyd; he was something of a mentor to Anne. For a long time I sang only this version; later I found the Irish version also reproduced here, in Stephen Sedley's 1967 edition of *The Seeds of Love* (Essex Music Limited, in association with the English Folk Dance and Song Society).

I like them both; Anne's version seems to me more mysterious; Sedley's version has a lilting, courtly quality, without losing sight of the inherently dangerous nature of this encounter with the supernatural. The text here is collated from two (English) nineteenth-century broadsides by Such and Pitts, plus sets collected in Ireland by Joyce and Hughes and also A. L. Lloyd's version, which he had heard sung by Tom Cook of Eastbridge, Suffolk. The tune is said to have been collected by Percy Merrick from a Sussex farmer called Henry Hills—it still sounds very Irish to me and well-suited to a text which mentions "Fermoy" as the location of the action.

Rosie Anderson's sad story I learned from the singing of Paddy Tutty; it was collected by Gavin Greig and published in *Folk Song of the North East*. Rosie seems to me to be one of a kind with Thackeray's Becky Sharp in *Vanity Fair*; I believe the cautionary tale of her ill-fated attempt to escape a safe but stuffy union is based on a real life series of incidents and perhaps involves the Lord Elgin who bought (stole?) the Elgin Marbles—he was clearly a smooth talker.

That's it for now—more in the pipeline.

**Reynardine**

 **LISTEN** [www.canfolkmusic.ca/songs/issue43\\_3/Reynardine1.mp3](http://www.canfolkmusic.ca/songs/issue43_3/Reynardine1.mp3) **Anon**

Voice

One even - ing as I rambl - ed, a mong the leav es so — green, I —

ov - er heard a young wo - man con - verse with Rey - nard - ine.

One evening as I rambled among the leaves so green,  
I overheard a young woman converse with Reynardine,

Her hair was black, her eyes were blue, her lips as red as wine,  
And he smiled as he looked upon her, did that sly bold Reynardine.

She said, "Young man, be civil, my company forsake,  
For in my good opinion I fear you are some rake."

"Oh, no," said he, "no rake am I, brought up in Venus' train,  
But I'm seeking for concealment all from King George's men."

Her cherry cheeks and ruby lips they lost their former dye,  
And she fell into his arms there all on the mountain high,

They hadn't kissed by once or twice till she came to again,  
And it's modestly she's asked him, "Pray tell to me your name?"

"If by chance you ask for me perhaps you'll not me find,  
For I'll be in my green castle—inquire for Reynardine."

It's sun and dark she followed him, his teeth did brightly shine,  
And he led her over the mountains, did that sly bold Reynardine.

## Reynardine



[www.canfolkmusic.ca/songs/issue43\\_3/Reynardine2.mp3](http://www.canfolkmusic.ca/songs/issue43_3/Reynardine2.mp3)

Anon

Voice

One night up - on my ram - bles two miles be-low Fer - moy, I  
met a farm - er's daught - er all on the moun-tains high. I said, "My pret - ty  
fair maid, your beau-ty shines so clear, All on these lone - some moun - tains, I'm  
glad to meet you here."

One night upon my rambles two miles before Fermoy,  
I met a farmer's daughter all on the mountains high;  
I said, "My pretty fair maid, your beauty shines so clear;  
All on these lonesome mountains, I'm glad to meet you here".

She said, "Kind sir, be civil, my company forsake;  
For in my own opinion I fear you are some rake.  
And if my parents they should know, my life they would destroy  
For keeping of your company all on the mountains high".




He said, "My dear, I am no rake brought up in Venus' train,  
 But I'm seeking for concealment all on the lonesome plain.  
 Your beauty so enticed me, I could not pass it by;  
 So it's with my gun I'll guard you all on the mountains high."

Her cherry cheeks and ruby lips they lost their former dye;  
 She fainted in his arms there all on the mountains high.  
 They hadn't kissed but once or twice till she came to again;


With that she kindly asked him, "Pray tell to me your name".

"If by chance you look for me perhaps you'll not me find,  
 For I'll be in my castle—enquire for Reynardine."  
 Sun and dark she followed him, his teeth did brightly shine;  
 And he led her over the mountains, that sly bold Reynardine.

**Polly Vaughan**

 [www.canfolkmusic.ca/songs/issue43\\_3/Vaughan.mp3](http://www.canfolkmusic.ca/songs/issue43_3/Vaughan.mp3) Anon

Voice



Come all \_ you young fell - ows that hand - le a \_ gun, Be -  
 ware how you shoot \_ when the night's com - ing on. For young Jim-my met his  
 true love, he mis - took her for a swan, And he shot her and kill-ed her by the  
 set-ting of the \_ sun.

Come all you young fellows that handle the gun  
 Beware how you shoot when the night's coming on;  
 For young Jimmy met his true love; he mistook her for a swan,  
 And he shot her and killed her by the setting of the sun.

As Polly was walking all in a shower of rain  
 She sheltered in a green bush, her beauty to save,  
 With her apron throwed over her he mistook her for a swan,  
 And he shot her and killed her by the setting of the sun.

Then home ran young Jimmy with his dog and his gun,  
 Saying, "Uncle, dear Uncle, have you heard what I've done?"

I met my own true love; I mistook her for a swan,  
 And I shot her and killed her by the setting of the sun."

Then out rushed his uncle with his locks hanging grey,  
 Crying, "Jimmy, oh dear Jimmy, don't you run away;  
 Don't leave your own country till the trial do come on,  
 For they never will hang you for the shooting of a swan".

Well, the trial it wore on and Polly's corpse did appear,  
 Crying out in great anguish, "Let Jimmy go clear;  
 For my apron was throwed round me, he mistook me for a swan,  
 And he never would have shot his own Polly Vaughan".

# Rosemary Lane



[www.canfolkmusic.ca/songs/issue43\\_3/Lane.mp3](http://www.canfolkmusic.ca/songs/issue43_3/Lane.mp3)

Anon

Voice

Am Em G Am G

When I lived a serv-ant in Rose-mar - y Lane, I gained the good

D G Am G D G

will of my mast - er and dame, 'Till at length a young sail - or came there for to

D Am Em G Am

lie, \_\_\_ Which was the be - gin-ning of my mis - er - y.

When I lived a servant in Rosemary Lane,  
I gained the good will of my master and dame,  
Till at length a young sailor came there for to lie,  
Which was the beginning of my misery.

He called for a candle to light him to bed,  
He called for a napkin to tie up his head,  
To tie round his head as sailors all do,  
And he vowed and he swore I should come to bed too.

I crept into bed to keep myself warm,  
He vowed and he swore he would do me no harm;  
What he did to me I ne'er will declare,  
But I wish that short night had been seven long years.

In the middle of the night this young man grew bold  
And in my smock tail he threw handfuls of gold,

Saying "Take this, my dear, and more you shall have.  
I'll be a friend to you, as long as I live."

So we tumbled and tossed by the light of the moon.  
We rose the next morning all in the same tune;  
The very next morning this young man arose,  
And dressed himself out in his tarpaulin clothes.

"Alas!" then I cried, "O! I am undone,  
He has left me with child, a daughter or son;  
And if 'tis a girl, she shall stay home with me,  
And if 'tis a boy he shall plough on the sea.

"With his long quartered shoes, check shirt, and blue gear,  
On the quarter-deck standing like a bold British tar,  
I'll dry up my milk and you shall plainly see  
I'll pass for a maid in my own country."

# Rosie Anderson



[www.canfolkmusic.ca/songs/issue43\\_3/Anderson.mp3](http://www.canfolkmusic.ca/songs/issue43_3/Anderson.mp3)

Anon

Voice

D Bm G D

Hay Marsh all was as good a lord as ev - er lived on earth, He

G Bm G D G7 D

court - ed Ros - ie And - er - son, lad - y in - to Perth O, a lad - y in - to Perth.

Hay Marshall was as good a lord as ever lived on earth,  
He courted Rosie Anderson, a lady into Perth-O, a lady into Perth.

He courted her, he married her, made her his wedded wife  
And at that time, I dare to say, he loved her as his life, he loved her as his life.

There was an Assembly into Perth, and Rosie she was there;  
Lord Elgin danced with her that night, and did her heart ensnare, and did her heart ensnare.

Lord Elgin danced with her that night, and did convoy her home;  
Hay Marshall he came rushing in just as he set her down, just as he set her down.

"I'm all into surprise", he says, "I'm all into surprise,  
To see you kiss my wedded wife before my very eyes, before my very eyes".

"You need not be surprised", he said, "you need not think it odd;  
For I've convoyed your lady home from the dangers of the road, from the dangers of the road".

"I have not kissed your wedded wife", Lord Elgin he did say;  
"I only brought her safely home from the dangers of the way, from the dangers of the way".

"Oh, had not she a maid?" he said, "or had not she a guide?  
Or had not she a candle light? For what was she afraid? For what was she afraid?"

Young Betsey she was called upon, the truth for to rehearse –  
"How could I bring my lady home? – Lord Elgin took my place, Lord Elgin took my place".

"Although ye be a lord", he says, "and I a provost's son,  
My Lord, I'll make you smart for this, although you think it fun, although you think it fun".

He's ta'en his Rosie by the hand and led her from the room;  
Says, "I'll send you to fair London till all this speech dies down, till all this speech dies down.

"I'll send you up to fair London, your mother to be your guide;  
Let all the world say what they will, I'll still be on your side, I'll still be on your side".

She had not been in fair London a month but barely one,  
When word came back to Hay Marshall that Rosie's played the loon, that Rosie's played the loon.

"Oh woe be to your roses red, that ever I loved you!  
For to forsake your own husband among the beds of rue, among the beds of rue..

"My meat I cannot take", he says, "my clothes I cannot wear,  
For thinking on Rosie Anderson, oh, once I loved so dear, oh, once I loved so dear".

Hay Marshall's on to fair London, with money in his purse,  
And all for to get witnesses, his Rosie to divorce, his Rosie to divorce.

Hay Marshall had twenty witnesses, and Rosie had but two;  
"Woe's me", cries Rosie Anderson, "Alas, what shall I do? Alas, what shall I do?"

"If 'twere to do that's done", she says. "if 'twere to do that's done,  
Hay Marshall's face I would adore, Lord Elgin's I would shun. Lord Elgin's I would shun.

"But spring is coming on", she says, "some regiment will be here.  
I'll maybe get some officer my broken heart to cheer, my broken heart to cheer".

Now Rosie's got an officer, and he has proved untrue;  
Now he has gone and left her, her folly for to rue, her folly for to rue.

"In Bedlam I maun lie my lane, in Bedlam I maun cry:  
In Bedlam I maun live", she says, "and in Bedlam I maun die, in Bedlam I maun die.

"Come all ye fair maids far and near, a warning take by me:  
Never forsake your own true love for any lord you see, for any lord you see".