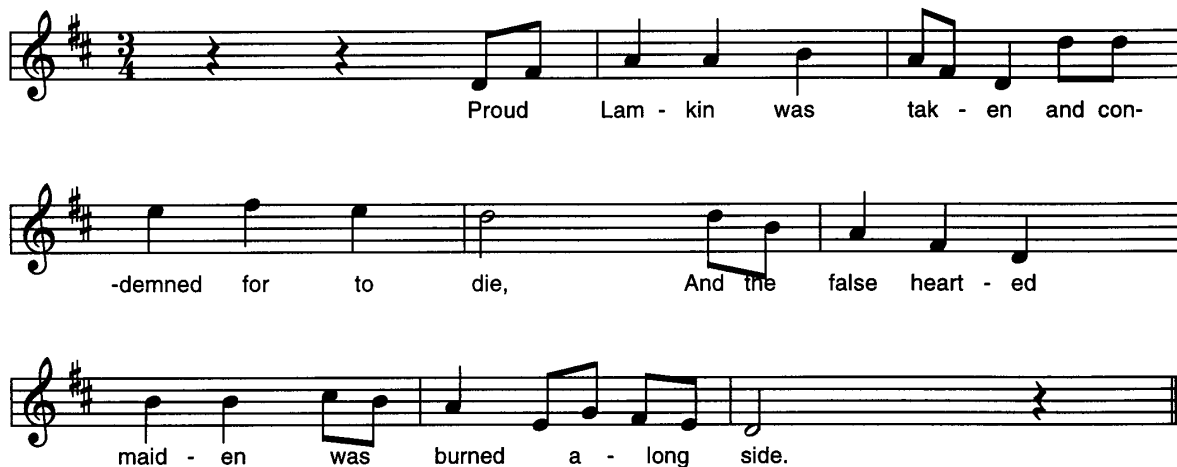


## Lamkin: A Ballad Reinterpreted

The animated discussion at the CSTM Vancouver conference revealed that we are not the only ones for whom this grisly ballad (Child # 93) has a peculiar fascination. Jon Bartlett and Rika Ruebsaat's thoughtful paper was one of the highlights of the academic sessions, and we are pleased to print it in its entirety. Jon and Rika asked us to include the text of "Long Lamkin" as sung by Sister Emma of Clewer, Berkshire. Noted by Cecil Sharp on 27<sup>th</sup> February 1909 (one of three variants that he collected), it was published in Ralph Vaughan-Williams and A.L. Lloyd (eds.), *The Penguin Book of English Folk Songs* (Harmondsworth, 1959: Penguin Books Ltd.), pp. 60-1 (with notes on p. 117). Verse 17 was appended. Canadian versions with tunes do not seem to be numerous, except perhaps in Newfoundland, where Maud Karpeles found four variants and Kenneth Peacock also collected the ballad. This version comes from Maud's second collecting trip, when she explored the outports of the island's southern coast. It was collected from Joseph Quann, on the 18<sup>th</sup> July 1930, in Rencontre, on Fortune Bay.

### Lamkin

Anon  
Joseph Quann



Proud Lam - kin was tak - en and con -  
-demned for to die, And the false heart - ed  
maid - en was burned a - long side.

Said the lord to his lady as he was going away,  
'Beware of proud Lamkin for he comes up this way'.

'What do I care for proud Lamkin, or any of his men,  
When my doors are well bolted and my windows shut in?'

He was scarce gone one hour when proud Lamkin came by,  
He knocked at the hall door and the nurse let him in.

'O where is your master? Is he not within?'  
'He's gone to old England,' cried the false nurse.

'O where is your mistress? Is she not within?'  
'She's up in her bed-chamber with the windows barred in.'

'How am I to get at her?' proud Lamkin did cry.  
'O here is young Sir Johnson, pierce him and he'll cry.'

He took out his bodkin and pierced young Sir Johnson,  
And made the blood trinkle right down his toes.

'O mistress, dearest mistress, how can you sleep so fast?  
Can't you hear your young Sir Johnson a-crying his last?'

I can't pacify him on the nurse-milk or pap;  
I pray you come down, quieten him on your lap.'

'How can I come downstairs on such a cold winter's  
night,  
No spark of fire burning, no candle alight?'

'You've got two white holland sheets, as white as  
snow;  
I pray you come down by the light of them so.'

As she was coming downstairs not thinking much  
harm,  
Proud Lamkin awaited, took her by the arm.

'I have got you, I have got you,' proud Lamkin did  
cry,  
'For years I have waited but I have got you at last'.

'O spare me my life,' she cries, 'For one, two  
o'clock,  
And I'll give you all the money that you will carry  
on your back.'

'If you'll give me the money like the sand on the  
shore,

*And this is Sister Emma's version:*

Said my lord to my lady, as he mounted his horse:  
"Beware of Long Lankin that lives in the moss."

Said my lord to my lady, as he rode away:  
"Beware of Long Lankin that lives in the hay."

"Let the doors be all bolted and the windows all  
pinned,  
And leave not a hole for a mouse to creep in."

So he kissed his fair lady and he rode away,  
And he was in fair London before the break of day.

The doors were all bolted and the windows all  
pinned,  
Except one little window where Long Lankin crept  
in.

"Where's the lord of this house?" said Long  
Lankin.  
"He's away in fair London", said the false nurse to  
him.

"Where's the little heir of this house?" said Long  
Lankin.

I'll not keep my bright sword from your white skin  
so free.'

'O spare me my life,' she cries, 'For one half an  
hour;  
I'll give to you my nurse, although she's my flower.'

'O where is your nurse? Go send her to me;  
She can hold the silver basin while your heart's  
blood runs free.'

'False nurse was my friend,' she cries, 'But now  
she's my foe;  
She can hold the silver basin while my heart's blood  
do flow.'

There was blood in the nursery and blood in the  
hall,  
And blood on the stairs and her heart's blood was  
all.

Proud Lamkin was taken and condemned for to die,  
And the false-hearted maiden was burned  
alongside.

"He's asleep in his cradle," said the false nurse to  
him.

"We'll prick him, we'll prick him all over with a  
pin,  
And that'll make my lady to come down to him."

So he pricked him, he pricked him all over with a  
pin,  
And the nurse held the basin for the blood to flow  
in.

"O nurse, how you slumber. O nurse, how you  
sleep.  
You leave my little son Johnson to cry and to  
weep."

"O nurse, how you slumber, O nurse how you  
snore.  
You leave my little son Johnson to cry and to roar."

"I've tried him with an apple, I've tried him with a  
pear  
Come down, my fair lady, and rock him in your  
chair."

“I’ve tried him with milk and I’ve tried him with  
pap.  
Come down, my fair lady, and rock him in your  
lap.”

“How durst I go down in the dead of the night  
Where there’s no fire a-kindled and no candle  
alight?”

“You have three silver mantles as bright as like the  
sun.  
Come down, my fair lady, all by the light of one.”

My lady came down, she was thinking no harm.  
Long Lankin stood ready to catch her in his arm.

Here’s blood in the kitchen. Here’s blood in the  
hall.  
Here’s blood in the parlour where my lady did fall.

Her maiden looked out from the turret so high  
And she saw her master from London riding by.

“O master, O master, don’t lay the blame on me  
‘Twas the false nurse and Lankin that killed your  
lady.

Long Lankin was hung on a gibbet so high  
And the false nurse was burnt in a fire close by.

## Long Lankin

Anon  
Sister Emma

Said my lord to my la - dy as he  
mount - ed his horse, 'Be - ware of Long '  
Lan - kin that lives in the moss. Said my  
lord to my la - dy as he rode a -  
way, 'Be - ware of Long Lan - kin that  
lives in the hay.