

Traditional Ballads

Written by Ambra Michelli | Samantha Moore

1. What is a Ballad?
2. Subject Matter
3. From Where Do Ballads Originate and Who Sang Them?
4. Survival and Evolution
5. Style, Rhythm, and Music: Patterns

B293– Lord Willoughby

♩ = 120



Music: Robinson's Schoole of Musicke 1603, German c. 1600 Het Luitboek van Thysius, no. 78.. It appears twice in Byrd: My Ladye Nevells Booke and Byrd's Fitzwilliam Virginal Book II, 190.

Words: English words of "Lord Willoughby" published a billion times but no early copies survive, says Simpson. The battle should have been in the 1585-1590 period.

Lord Willoughby

The fifteenth day of July
With glist'ning spear and shield
A famous fight in Flanders
Was foughten in the field
The most courageous officers
Were English captains three
But the bravest in the battle
Was brave Lord Willoughby

Stand to it noble pikemen
And look you round about
And shoot you right you bowmen
And we will keep them out
You muskets and calivermen
Do you prove true to me
I'll be the foremost man in fight
Said brave Lord Willoughby.

Then quoth the Spanish general,
'Come let us march away,
I fear we shall be spoiled all
If we here longer stay,
For yonder comes Lord Willoughby
With courage fierce and fell,
He will not give one inch of way
For all the devils in hell.'

And then the fearful enemy
Were quickly put to flight
Our men pursued courageously
And caught their forces quite
But at the last they gave a shout
Which echoed through the sky
'God and St George for England!'
The conquerors did cry.

To the soldiers that were maimed
And wounded in the fray
The Queen allowed a pension
Of eighteen pence a day
And from all costs and charges
She quit and set them free
And this she did all for the sake
Of brave Lord Willoughby.

Then courage noble Englishmen
And never be dismayed
For if we be but one to ten
We will not be afraid
To fight the foreign enemy
And set our country free
And thus I end the bloody bout
Of brave Lord Willoughby.

You can read about the history of the tune (and hear a markedly different version) at [Greg Lindahl's Music of the Sixteenth Century Broadside Ballad page](#).

The melody is marked as drastically different from one referenced melody for this same ballad, sung also to the tune of *The Carman's Whistle*.

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B056– The carman's whistle

♩ = 120



We can reference the periodicity of this poetic text (the title if not the content) by a derogative quote printed:

Quote [Referencing Words]

Contemporary quote, 1592: "I maruell who the diuell is his Printer [who]... would bee so impudent to print such odious and lasciuious ribauldrie, as Watkins Ale, The Carmans Whistle, and sundrie such other."

~Simpson, Claude M.

Quote [Referencing Music]:

.. neither is there anie tune or stroke which may be sung or plaide on instruments, which hath not some poetical ditties framed according to the numbers thereof: some to Rogero, some to Trenchmore, ... to Galliardes, to Pavines, to Iygges, to Brawles, to all manner of tunes which everie Fidler knowes better then myself.'

~William Webbe, *Discourse of English Poetrie*, 1586

Carmans Whistle

(1590)

[The tune, "Oh, neighbour Robert", is equivalent to "Lord Willoughby"] [MS Rawl. poet. 185, c 1590, via W. Bolle's article 'Das Liederbuch MS. Rawlinson Poet. 185', *Archive für das Studium der Neuren Sprachen und Literaturen*, 1905. For comparison below is a 17th century version.]

In a pleasant morninge,
in the merrie month of may,
Amonge the frutefull meadowes,
a youngman tooke his way;
and gazinge rounde aboute him
what pleasures he could see,
he spied a proper maiden
vnder an oaken tree.

Comely was her countenance,
and lovely was her lookes;
seeminge that wanton Venus
had write her in her bookes;
many a smirking smile she lente
amidst those meaddoes greene;

the which he well perceaved,
yet was of her vnseene.

At length she changed her smilinge
into a sighing sonnge,
bewailing her bad fortune
that she was a maide so lonnge;
for many one more yonger,
quothe she, hath lonnge bene wed;
yet do I feare that I shall die,
and keepe my maidenhed.

My fathers rich and welthie
and hath no child but I;
yet want I still a husband

to keepe me companie.
my yeares are younge and tender;
and I am fair withall;
yet is there nere a youngman
will comfort me at all.

This youngman which listned
and marked her grevous mone,
was sorrie for to see her
sit musing all alone
he nimble lepte vnto her
which made the maide to start;
But when he did embrace her,
it ioyed her wofull harte.

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Fair maide, quoth he, whie mourn you?
what meanes your heavie chere?
Be ruld by me, I pray you,
and to my wordes give care:
a pleasante note ile tell yoy
your sadnes to expell.
good sir, how do you call it?
the truth unto me tell.

Tis called the carmans whistell,
a note so sweete and good,
It will turne a womans sadnes
into a merrie moode.
good sir, then let me hear it,
if so it be no harme.
Doute not, quoth he, faire maiden,
ile kepe you in my arme.

But first let me intreate you
with patience to attende,
till I have brought my musike
unto a perfect end.
If I may heare you whistle,
quoth she, I will be still.

and think, so I molest you
tis sore against my will.

When he to her had whistled
a merrie note or two,
she was so blith and pleasant
she knew not what to doe.
Quoth she: of all the musike
that I ever know,
the carmans plesant whistle
shall for my monie go.

Good sir, quoth she, I pray you
who made this pleasante game?
Quoth he, a gentle carman
did make it for his dame.
And she was well contented
with him to beare a parte,
godes blessinge, quoth the maiden,
light one the carmans harte.

For never was I pleased
more better in my life
then with the carmans whistle

which pleaseth maide and wiffe.
and, sir, I do beseech you,
however I do speed,
to let me hear you whistle,
when I do stand in need.

Quoth he: farewell, faire maiden,
and as you like this sporte,
so of the carmans whistle
I pray you give reporte.
good sir, quoth she, I thanke you
for this your taken paine;
but when shall we, I pray you,
meete in this place againe?

Quoth he at any season,
by day or els by night,
commend the carmans whistle
for pleasure and delight;
and counte me slack and slothfull,
if twice you send for me.
I faith then, quoth the maiden,
ile give thee kisses three.

The Combers Whistle, or, The Sports of the Spring

Tune of, The Carmans Whistle (17th Century)

All in a pleasant Morning
in the Merry Month of May;
Walking the fragrant Meadows
where the Comber took his way:
And viewing round about him
whereas he did remain
At length he spied a fair Maid
upon the flowery Plain.

So cheerful was her countenance
and lovely to behold
She seem'd as if that Venus fair
was of the selfsame Mold
And many a smirk and smile she gave
all in the Meadows green;
I could compare her unto none
but unto Love's fair Queen.

At length she turned her smiling
into a love-sick song.
Lamenting of her woful chance
she staid a Maid so long:
There's many that are younger
then I, that have been wed;
Yet still I fear that I shall dye,
and keep my Maiden-head.

My father's rich and wealthy,
and hath no Child but I;
But still I want a Husband
to keep me company.
My years are young and tender
and I am fair and tall,
Yet there is never a young man
will comfort me at all.

The blossoms of my beauty,
I think, may well invite
Some Batchelor of fortune good
to take me for his right:
For why I dare presume it,
there's few doth me excell,
As it is manifest and plain
to all that know me well.

How happy are those Virgins all
that in the City throng.
For they have Sweet-hearts plenty,
and ne'r live single long;
Which makes me grieve so sadly
that yet I am not sped;
For in plain terms, to tell you true,
I long for to be wed.

This Comber he stood listening
to hear her make such moan,
His heart was sorely grieved
to see her all alone:
He quickly stept unto her,
and with a joyfull cheer,
Quoth he fair maid, I chanced
your mournful Song to hear.

And now I'm come to ease you
of all your grief and pain;
For why, I well can please you,
by Whistling of a strain.
Quoth shee I long to hear it
so well that you can play;
Then prithee go about it straight,
because I hate delay.

Then he pull'd forth his Whistle
and plaid a note or two;
The Maid she was so over-joy'd,
she knew not what to do.
and well she was contented
with him to bear a part:
A blessing said this Maiden fair,
light on this Combers heart.

Quoth she, I prithee tell me,
where did'st thou learn this game.
It was a young brisk Journey-man
that make it for his Dame,
With which he oft did please her,
and shee to him did say
And charg'd him that he should not see
the Whistle made away.

Then she did him desire
one other Tune to play
Which made her so admire,
she thus to him did say:
Of all the pleasant Musick
that ever I did know
The Comber's merry Whistle
shall for my money go.

When shall we two meet again
for pleasure and delight,
At any time or season,
by day, or eke by night:
Then count me very slothful,
if that you send for me,
When as I fail to meet my Dear:
so take these Kisses three.

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6. Writing Your Own

Authenticity vs. Popularity with a Modern audience

Some of the Archaic terminology/references, phrasing, and vocabulary are:

- ❑ Hey, Ho: a common choral element
 - Rose Round
 - “Cruel Sister”[7]
 - Shakespear: *As You Like It*: Act 5 Scene 3
 - “With a hey, and a ho, and a hey-nonny-no,”
- ❑ References in chorus to the “Wind and Rain” and some natural/season element
 - “Cruel Sister”[7]
 - Certain versions of Black Jack Davey
 - *The Wind and Rain* (Childe Ballad #10)
 - *Pretty Polly*
- ❑ Thrice
 - To the modern ear, we understand this, but it lends a medieval-y vibe
 - Adverb: three times, as in succession; on three occasions or in three ways.
- ❑ Corset
 - Reference to garb, pulls us into a more renaissance feel
- ❑ Jest: modernly referenced as a joke. Another slightly archaic term to lend to the flavor of the song.

7. Documenting Your Work

This song I actually based on a pre-existing ballad: Good Hunter

8. Conclusion

In the end, if you write a song that tells a story, you’ve written a ballad. If you use a predetermined rhythm based on a documented ballad and reference historical pieces that parallel the moral of your tale, you’ve written an arguably more valid ballad in an academic perspective. Finding one style you prefer, documenting it appropriately, and letting that guide your creative compositions, are fine steps toward maintaining historical validity and making your work smarter, rather than harder. Good luck!

Sources Sited

Lord Willoughby:

- ❑ Music: Robinson's *Schoole of Musicke* 1603, German c. 1600 *Het Luitboek van Thysius*, no. 78.. It appears twice in Byrd: *My Ladye Nevells Booke* and *Byrd's Fitzwilliam Virginal Book II*, 190
- ❑ Words: English words of "Lord Willoughby" published a billion times but no early copies survive, says Simpson. The battle should have been in the 1585-1590 period.
- ❑ Sheet Music from the Cantaria Folk song archive:
Citation: (from [Bruce Olsen's 17th Century Broadside Ballad Index](#))
- ❑ Secondary: Simpson B293, Livingston # 247, Ward
- ❑ MS Rawl. poet. 185, c 1590, via W. Bolle's article 'Das Liederbuch MS. Rawlinson Poet. 185', Archive fur dan Studium der Neuren Srachen und Literaturen, 1905
- ❑ Music files (midis and sheet music): <http://www.pbm.com/~lindahl/ballads/music.html>

The Carmans Whistle:

- ❑ William Webbe, *Discourse of English Poetrie*, 1586
- ❑ F. Coles, T. Vere, J. Wright, and J. Clarke [1674-1679]
- ❑ William Webbe, *Discourse of English Poetrie*, 1586
- ❑ Simpson, Claude M. *The British Broadside Ballad and its Music*. Rutgers University Press, 1966.
- ❑ Secondary: Simpson B056, Ward
- ❑ Music: Byrd's Fitzwilliam Virginal Book and Byrd's My Lady Nevells Booke 1590
- ❑ With Allowance, Ro. L'Estrange. F. Coles, T. Vere, J. Wright, and J. Clarke [1674-1679] [Source, Bolle. poet. 185]