An Anthology of Medieval English Popular Literature

SELECTED AND INTRODUCED BY DOUGLAS GRAY
EDITED BY JANE BLISS

This anthology offers a fruitful exploration of the boundary between literary and popular culture, and showcases an impressive breadth of literature, including songs, drama, and ballads. Familiar texts such as the visions of Margery Kempe and the Paston family letters are featured alongside lesser-known works, often oral. This striking diversity extends to the language: the anthology includes Scottish literature and original translations of Latin and French texts.

The illuminating introduction offers essential information that will enhance the reader’s enjoyment of the chosen texts. Each of the chapters is accompanied by a clear summary explaining the particular delights of the literature selected and the rationale behind the choices made. An invaluable resource to gain an in-depth understanding of the culture of the period, this is essential reading for any student or scholar of medieval English literature, and for anyone interested in folklore or popular material of the time.

The book was left unfinished at Gray’s death; it is here edited by Jane Bliss. As with all Open Book publications, this entire book is freely available to read on the publisher’s website. Printed and digital editions, together with supplementary digital material, can also be found at www.openbookpublishers.com.
Chapter 9

Songs

In spite of considerable losses of material in manuscripts and early prints, a surprisingly large number of early songs and lyrics have survived. The corpus must have been a very substantial one. And behind and beside it lay another: an equally large mass of oral songs, now almost totally lost to us, but which lived in the memories of contemporary literate poets. The heads of some clerks were probably filled with snatches of old songs, remembered from younger days or still heard in the communities in which they lived. They will sometimes refer to such songs in their sophisticated works: Chaucer makes his Pardoner sing ‘Come hider, love, to me’;¹ Gavin Douglas quotes (among other examples) ‘the schip salis our the salt fame, Will bring thir merchandis and my lemman hame’² And, as we have already seen in the pages of this anthology, other ‘snatches’ are sometimes quoted by (usually hostile) preachers and moralists. A number are quoted below. Such snatches are probably the closest we can come to the lost corpus of early oral song. But many of the lyrics printed below are the work of clerks related in various degrees to the tradition of oral song. Some of these ‘popular lyrics’ are (as Greene described them, see below) popular ‘by destination’, intended for the use of an illiterate or partly-literate audience. The literary skill of the clerks and the quality of their imitations of the simple styles and forms of oral songs often make it very difficult to decide whether a lyric should

¹ Tales, 1A (Prologue), v. 672.
² In the Prologue to the 12th book of his translation of Virgil’s Aeneid.
be described as ‘popular’ or ‘learned’ and, if we decide to place it in the category of popular lyric (a category whose boundaries are not absolutely fixed), how closely it approximates to the oral song from which it came. Thus Greene, discussing the plough song (xiii), records numerous parallels in later folksong, but points out that the carol is ‘intended for more sophisticated performance, probably by choir-boys’, and concludes cautiously that ‘it is conceivable that a carol on this theme may be the result of a learned clerical composer’s interest in an air heard in the fields.’ Similarly, in the fine drinking song ‘Bryng us in good ale’ (xvi) he notes the ‘repeated formula with a portion changed with each repetition, an old device used by very elementary folk-poetry’ — and which allows improvisation. However, the repetition is quite artful, with the rejected items of food becoming a splendidly bizarre ensemble, and the accompanying (apparently explanatory) ‘asides’ are sometimes wonderfully fantastic. Could it be a clever imitation, and transformation, of the techniques of oral folk-poetry? ‘Performance’ seems to lie behind almost all the popular lyrics. Some of them are clearly dance songs; in nearly all of them we seem to hear the voice of the singer. They survive in a variety of forms. Perhaps the most distinctive is the ‘carol’, not yet limited to Christmas songs. The name derives from the French ‘carole’, a ring-dance, and the ideas of performance and entertainment continue to lurk even in the more sophisticated and literary examples. Characteristically the Middle English carol is a stanzaic poem, secular or religious, marked by a recurring ‘burden’ or refrain. Other forms of song are also found, and we see brief glimpses of sharp satire, and examples of popular talk (like the ducks that ‘slobber in the mere’, in xvi below), double entendre, and some entertaining rascals. But in general the popular lyric presents us with a rich and varied array of merry entertainment. Our selection attempts to give a sense of this. After a ‘welcome song’ delivered by a minstrel or a master of ceremonies, we move to a series of snatches of oral songs, then to the merriment of the festal season and throughout the year, and to various contemporary figures, pedlars ‘light of foot’, roving bachelors and an amorous priest, encounters

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3 Early English Carols, 1977 (revised) edition. The Plough Song is no. 418.2 (pp. 248–9), notes pp. 464–5.
4 Gray cites this in Simple Forms (p. 223), giving a reference to Early English Carols p. cxx; the comment is not in Greene’s notes to the song.
between men and women; to some songs which seem to hover between children’s songs and erotic lyric, and to merry nonsense verse. We end with some religious popular lyrics, some of which show the same zest and merriment as their secular counterparts.

Snatches of Oral Songs

i)\(^5\)

Bon jowre, bon jowre a vous!º  
I am cum unto this hows  
With ‘par la pompe’,º I say.  

Is ther any good man here  
That will make me any chere?º  
And if ther were, I wold cum nere  
To witº what he woldº say.  

A, will ye be wild?º  
By Mary myld,  
And her swete child,  
I trow ye will synge gay.º  
Bon jowre …

Be gladly,º masters everychon!  
I am cum myself alone  
To apposeº you onº by on;  
Let se who dare say nay  
   Sir, what say ye?  
   Syng on, let us see.  
   Now will it be  
Thys or another day?
Bon jowre …

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\(^5\) In The Oxford Book of Medieval Verse, no. 259. Normally, only one reference is given for each poem.
Loo, this is he that will do the dede!
He tempereth his mowth — therefore take hede.
Syng softe, I say, lest your nose blede,
For hurt yowrseld ye may.

But, by God that me bowght,
Your brest is so towght,
Tyll ye have well cowght
Ye may not therwith away.
Bon jowre ...

Sir, what say ye with your face so lene?
Ye syng nother good tenowre, treble, ne mene.
Utter not your voice without your brest be clene,
Hartely I you pray.
I hold you excused,
Ye shall be refused,
For ye have not be used
To no good sport nor play.
Bon jowre ...

Sir, what say ye with your fat face?
Me thynkith ye shuld bere a very good bace.
To a pot of good ale or ipocras,
Truly as I you say.
Hold up your hede,
Ye loke lyke lede,
Ye wast myche bred
Evermore from day to day.
Bon jowre ...

Now will ye see wher he stondith behynde?
Iwis, brother, ye be unkind;
Stond forth, and wast with me som wynd

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6 Mean would be a middle line in the part-song.
For ye have ben called a synger ay, always
  Nay, be not ashamed —
  Ye shall not be blamed,
For ye have ben famed
The worst in this contrey.
Bon jowre …

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ii) Of every kuneº tre, kind (of)
Of every kune tre,
The hawethorn blowet suotes[t]º blossoms most sweetly
Of every kune tre

My lemmonº she shal boe,º lover be
My lemmon she shal boe,
The fairest of e[very] kinne,
My lemmon she shal boe.

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iii) Al nistº by the rose, rose night
Al nist bi the rose I lay,
Dar[st]º ich noust the rose stele, dared
Ant yet ich bar the flourº away. I took the flower (= maidenhood)

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iv) Mayden in the mor lay,
In the mor lay,

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7 Ibid. no. 66.
8 In Medieval English Lyrics, ed. Silverstein, no. 61.
9 Ibid. no. 62.
Sevenyst⁹ fulle, sevenist fulle.
Maiden in the mor lay,
In the mor lay,
Sevenistes fulle ant a day.

Welle⁹ was hire mete,⁹
Wat was hire mete?
The primerole⁹ ant the,
The primerole ant the,
Welle was hire mete,
Wat was hire mete?
The primerole
Ant the violet.

Welle was hire dryng,⁹
Wat was hire dryng?
The chelde⁹ water of the,
The chelde water of the,
Welle was hire dryng,
Wat was hire dryng?
The chelde water of the,
Of the welle-spring.

Welle was hire bour,⁹
Wat was hire bour?
The rede rose an te,⁹
The rede rose an te,
Welle was hire bour,
Wat was hire bour?
The rede rose an te,
The rede rose an te
An te lilie flour.
v)\(^{10}\)

Ich am of Irlaunde
And of the holy londe
Of Irlande.
Gode sire, pray ich the,
For of saynte charite,\(^{9}\) holy charity
Come and daunce wyt me
In Irlaunde.

vi)\(^{11}\)

Me thingkit\(^{9}\) thou art so lovely,
So fair and so swete,
That sikirli\(^{9}\) it were mi det\(^{9}\) death
Thi companie to lete.\(^{9}\) give up

vii)\(^{12}\)

Westron wynde when wyll thow blow?
The smalle\(^{9}\) rayne downe can\(^{9}\) rayne.
Cryst, yf my love wer in my armes
And I in my bed agayne!

viii)\(^{13}\)

Sing, cuccu nu! Sing cuccu!
Sing, cuccu! Sing, cuccu nu!

Somer is ycumen in,
Lhude\(^{9}\) sing, cuccu! loudly

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10  Ibid. no. 60.
11  Ibid. no. 63.
12  Medieval English Lyrics, ed. Davies, no. 181.
13  Ibid. no. 3.
Groweth sed and bloweth\textsuperscript{o} med\textsuperscript{o} 
And springth the wode\textsuperscript{o} nu.
Sing, cuccu!

Awe\textsuperscript{o} bleteth after lomb,
Lhouth\textsuperscript{o} after calve\textsuperscript{o} cu,
Bulluc sterteth,\textsuperscript{o} bucke verteth\textsuperscript{o}
Murye sing, cuccu!
Cuccu, cuccu,
Wel singes thu, cuccu,
Ne swik thu naver\textsuperscript{o} nu!

\textbf{Christmas and New Year}

ix\textsuperscript{14}

Make we mery both more and lasse\textsuperscript{o} 
For now ys the tyme of Crystyemas.

Lett no man cum into this hall —
Grome,\textsuperscript{a} page, nor yet marshall,\textsuperscript{o}
But that sum sport he bring with all,
For now ys the tyme of Crystmas.
Make we mery …

Yff that he say he can not syng,
Sum oder sport then lett hym bring,
That yt may please at thys festyng,
For now ys the tyme of Crystmas.
Make we mery …

Yff he say he can nowght do,
Then for my love aske hym no mo —
But to the stokes\textsuperscript{o} then let hym go,

14 \textit{Ibid.} no. 168.
For now ys the tyme of Crystmas.
Make we mery …

x) The Boar’s Head\textsuperscript{15}

Po, po, po, po,\textsuperscript{9} \quad (a barnyard call for pigs)
Love brane\textsuperscript{8} and so do mo,\textsuperscript{9} \quad brawn \quad more

At the begynnyng of the mete
Of a borys hed ye schal hete,\textsuperscript{9} \quad eat
And in the mustard ye shal wete,\textsuperscript{9} \quad dip
And ye shal syngyn or ye gon.
Po, po …

Wolcum be ye that ben here,
And ye shal have ryth gud chere,
And also a ryth gud fare,
And ye shal syngyn or ye gon.
Po, po …

Welcum be ye everychon,
For ye shal syngyn ryth anon;
Hey yow fast, that ye had don,
And ye shal syngyn or ye gon.
Po, po …

xi) The Holly and the Ivy\textsuperscript{16}

Nay, nay, Ive,
It may not be, iwis,
For Holy must have the maistry,
As the maner is.

\textsuperscript{15} IMEV 436, from Wright, Songs and Carols (song 38, pp. 42–3); also in Early English Carols, ed. Greene, no. 134.
\textsuperscript{16} In Medieval English Lyrics, ed. Davies, no. 171.
Holy berith beris, beris rede ynowgh; very
The thristilcok, cock thrush the popyngay, parrot daunce in every bow,
Welaway, sory Ivy, what fowles hast thow
But the sory howlet, owl that syngith, ‘How, how.’
Nay, nay …

Ivy berith beris as black as any slo;
Ther commeth the woode-colver and fedith her of tho, wood-pigeon
She liftith up her tayll and she cakes or she go — craps before
She wold not for hundred poundes serve Holy soo.
Nay, nay …

Holy and his mery men, they can daunce in hall,
Ivy and her jentyll women can not daunce at all,
But lyke a meyny of bullokes in a waterfall,
Or on a whot somers day, whan they be mad all. hot
Nay, nay …

Holy and his mery men sytt in cheyres of gold;
Ivy and her jentyll women sytt withowt in fold, outside on the ground
With a payre of kybid helis cawght with cold — chilblained
So wold I that every man had that with Yvy will hold.
Nay, nay …

What cher? Gud cher, gud cher, gud cher!
Be mery and glad this gud New Yere.

‘Lyft up your hartes and be glad
In Crystes byrth’, the angell bad;

17 Ibid. no. 177.
Say eche to oder for hys sake,  
‘What cher?’ What cher …

I tell you all with hart so fre,  
Ryght welcum ye be to me,  
Be glad and mery, for charite —  
What cher? What cher …

The gudman of this place in fere\(^o\)  
in company, together  
You to be mery he prayth you here,  
And with gud hert he doth to you say,  
What cher? What cher …

**Merriment, of various kinds, throughout the Year**

**xiii) God speed the Plough**\(^18\)

The merthe of alle this londe  
Maketh the gode husbonde\(^o\) farmer  
With erynge\(^o\) of his plowe. ploughing

Iblessyd be Cristes sonde\(^o\) grace  
That hath us sent in honde  
Merthe and joye ynowe\(^o\) in plenty, much  
The merthe …

The plowe goth mony a gate\(^o\) path  
Both erly and late,  
In winter in the clay.  
The merthe …

Abowte barley and whete,  
That maketh men to swete,\(^o\) sweat

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\(^{18}\) In *The Oxford Book of Medieval English Verse*, no. 152.
God spede the plowe alþ day.
The merthe …

Browne Morel and Goreº
drawen the plowe ful soreº
Al in the morwenynge.
The merthe …

Rewarde hem therefore
With a shefeº or more
Alle in the evenynge.
The merthe …

Whan men bygynne to sowe,
Ful wel here corne they knoweº
In the mounthe of May.
The merthe …

Howe ever Janyverº blowe,
Whether hye or lowe,
God spede the plowe allway!
The merthe …

Whan men begynneth to wedeº
The thystle fro the sede,
In somer whan they may.
The merthe …

God leteº hem wel to spedeº
And longe gode lyfe to lede,
All that for plowemen pray.
The merthe …
Merriment, of various kinds, throughout the Year

xiv) 19

We ben chapmenº light of fote, pedlars
The fowle weyis for to fle,

We berynº abowtyn non cattes skynnys, carry
Pursis, perlis,º sylver pynnis pearls
Smale wympelesº for ladyis chynnys; elegant head-dress
Damsele, beyº sum ware of me. buy

I have a poket for the nonys,º for the occasion
Therine ben tweyneº precious stonys; two
Damsele, hadde ye asayid hem onys; sooner
Ye shuld the rathereº gon with me.

I have a jelyfº of Godes sonde,º jelly grace
Withoutyn fytº it can stonde; feet
It can smytyn and haght non honde;º hath no hand
Rydº yourself quat it may be. guess

I have a powder for to selle,
Quat it is can I not telle —
It makit maydenys wombys to swelle;
Therof I have a quantyte.

IMEV 3864; also in Greene’s Early English Carols, no. 416.
Drinking Songs

How,\(^9\) butler, how! Bevis a towt\(^9\) hey! drink to all!
Fill the boll, jentill butler, and let the cup rowght!\(^9\) go round

Jentill butler, bell amy,\(^9\) fine friend
Fyll the boll by the eye,\(^9\) to the brim
That we may drink by and by.\(^9\) one and all
With how, butler, how! Bevis a towt!
Fill the boll, butler, and let the cup rowght!

Here is mete\(^9\) for us all, food
Both for gret and for small —
I trow\(^9\) we must the butler call, believe
With how, butler, how! Bevis a towght!
Fill the boll, butler, and let the cup rowght!

I am so dry I cannot spek,\(^9\) speak
I am nere choked with my mete\(^9\) — food
I trow the butler be aslepe.
With how, butler, how! Bevis a towght!
Fill the boll, butler, and let the cup rowght!

Butler, butler, fill the boll,
Or elles I beshrewe\(^9\) thy noll!\(^9\) curse head
I trow we must the bell toll.\(^9\) ring
With how, butler, how! Bevis a towght!
Fill the boll, butler, and let the cup rowght!

Iff the butlers name be Water,\(^9\) Walter (apparently so pronounced)
I wold he were a galow-claper,\(^9\) gallows-bird

\(^{20}\) In The Oxford Book of Medieval English Verse, no. 260.
But if he bryng us drynk the rather, unless sooner.

With how, butler, how! Bevis a towght!
Fill the boll, butler, and let the cup rowght!

xvi)

Bryng us in good ale, and bryng us in good ale,
Fore owr blyssyd lady sak, bryng us in good ale.

Bryng us in no browne bred, fore that is mad of brane,
Nor bring us in no whyt bred, fore therin is no game,
But bryng us in good ale.
Bryng us ...

Bryng us in no befe, for ther is many bonys,
But bryng us in good ale, for that goth downe at onys,
And bryng us in good ale.
Bryng us ...

Bryng us in no bacon, for that is passing fate,
But brynge us in god ale, and gyfe us inought of that,
And bryng us in good ale.
Bryng us ...

Bryng us in no mutton, for that is often lene,
Nor bryng us in no trypys, for thei be syldom clene,
But bryng us in good ale.
Bryng us ...

Bryng us in no eggys, for ther ar many schelles,
But bryng us in good ale, and gyfe us nothyng ellys,
And bryng us in good ale.
Bryng us ...

21 In Medieval English Lyrics, ed. Davies, no. 119.
Bryng us in no butter, for therin ar many herys,
Nor bryng us in no pygges flesch, for that wyl mak us borys,
But bryng us in good ale.
Bryng us …

Bryng us in no podynges,º for therin is al black pudding goats’ blod.
Nor bring us in no veneson, for that is not for our gode,
But bring us in good ale.
Bryng us …

Bryng us in no capons flesch, for that is often der,
Nor bring us in no dokesº flesch, for thei ducks’ slober in the mer,º pond
But bring us in good ale.
Bryng us …

**Amorous Encounters; Men and Women**

Hey, noyney!
I wyll love our Ser John
Andº I love eny.

O Lord, so swettº Ser John dothe kys
At every tyme when he wolde pley;
Off hymselfe so plesant he ys,
I have no powre to say hym nay.
Hey, noyney …

Ser John love[s] me and I love hym,
The more I love hym the more I maye,

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He says, ‘swett hart, cum kys me trym.’
I have no powre to say hym nay.
Hey, noyney …

Ser John to me is proferying
For hys pleasure right well to pay,
And in my box he puttes hys offryng —
I have no powre to say hym nay.
Hey, noyney …

Ser John ys taken in my mousetrappe;
Fayne wold I have hem bothe nyght and day;
He gropith so nyslye abought my lape,
I have no po[w]re to say hym nay.
Hey, noyney …

Ser John gevyth me relyus rynges
With praty pleasure for to assay,
Furres off the finest with othyr thynges —
I have no powre to say hym nay.
Hey, noyney …

How, hey! It is non les:
I dar not seyn quan che seyght ‘Pes!’
Yyng men, I warne you everychon,
Elde wy[v]ys tak ye non,
For I myself [at hom have on] —
I dar not seyn quan che seyght, ‘Pes!’
How, hey …
Quan I cum fro the plow at non, no
In a reven dygh myn mete is don, no
I dar not askyn our dame a spon —
I dar not seyn quan che seyght, ‘Pes!’
How, hey …

If I aske our dame bred,
Che takyt a staf and brekit myn hed
And doth me rennyn under the led —
I dar not seyn quan che seyght ‘Pes!’
How, hey …

If I aske our dame fleych, no
Che brekit myn hed with a dygh,
‘Boy, thou art not wroght a reych!’ no
I dar not seyn quan che seyght ‘Pes!’
How, hey …

Yf I aske our dame chese,
‘Boy,’ che seyght, al at ese, no
‘Thou art not wroght half a pese!’ no —
I dar not seyn quan che seyght ‘Pes!’
How, hey …

Hogyn cam to bowers dore,
Hogyn cam to bowers dore,
He tryld upon the pyn for love,
Hum, ha, trill go bell,
He tryld upon the pyn for love,
Hum, ha, trill go bell.

24 From Richard Hill’s commonplace-book; IMEV 1222 (NIMEV TM 601, DIMEV 2035).
Up she rose and let hym yn,

When thei were to bed browght,

'Go ye furth to yonder wyndow,'

Whan she hym at the wyndow wyst,

‘Ywys, leman, ye do me wrong,

Up she rose and let hym yn,

When thei were to bed browght,

'Go ye furth to yonder wyndow,'

Whan she hym at the wyndow wyst,

‘Ywys, leman, ye do me wrong,

She had a-went she had worshipped all her kyn,

The old chorle he cowlde nowght,

The old chorle he cowlde nowght,

She torned owt her ars and that he kyst,

She torned owt her ars and that he kyst,

Whan she hym at the wyndow wyst,

‘And I will cum to you within a throw,'

'Or elles your breth ys wonder strong',

Hum, ha, trill go bell.

Hum, ha, trill go bell,

Hum, ha, trill go bell.

Hum, ha, trill go bell.

Hum, ha, trill go bell.

Hum, ha, trill go bell.

Hum, ha, trill go bell.
‘Say me, viit in the broom,
Teche ne wou I sule don
That min hosebonde
Me lovien wolde.’

‘Holde thine tunke stille
And hawe al thine wille.’

Miscellaneous Songs

I have a gentil co[k],
Crowyt me [the] day
He doth me rysyn erly,
My matyins for to say.

I have a gentil co[k],
Comyn he is of gret;
His comb is of red [c]orel,
His tayil js of get.

I have a gentil co[k],
Comyn he is of kynde;
His comb is of red corel,
His tayl is of inde.

His legges ben of asor,
So geintil and so smale;
His spores arm of sylver qwyte
Into the wortewale.

25 In The Oxford Book of Medieval English Verse, no. 28.
26 Ibid. no. 189.
His ey[e]nº arn of cristal,  
Lokynº al in aumbyr;º  
And every nyght he perchitº hym  
In myn ladyis chaumbyr.

I have a newe gardyn,  
And neweº is begunne;  
Swychº another gardyn  
Know I not under sunne.

In the myddis of my gardyn  
Is a peryrº set,  
And it wele non per bernº  
But a per jenet.º  

The fairest mayde of this toun  
Preyid me  
For to gryffyn her a gryfº  
Of myn pery tre.

Quan I hadde hem gryffidº  
Alle at her wille,º  
The wyn and the ale  
Che dede in fille.º  

And I gryffid her  
Ryght up in her home;  
And be that day xx wowkesº  
It was qwyk in her womb.

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28 By St John’s Day (24th June), hence a ‘John pear’. 
That day twelfus month
That mayde I mette,
Che seyd it was a per Robert,º
But non per Jonet.

Nonsense Verse, sometimes used for satire,
sometimes simply for enjoyment

Whan netilles in winter bere rosis rede,
And thornys bere figges naturally,
And bromesº bere appylles in every mede,º
And lorellesº bere cheris in the croppisº so hie,
And okysº bere dates so plentuosly,
And lekesº geve hony in ther superfluens,º
Than put in a woman your trust and confidens.

Whan whiting walk in forestes hartesº for to chase,
And heryngesº in parkys hornys boldly blowe,
And flowndersº morehennesº in fennes embrace.
And gornardesº shote grengeseº owt of a
crossebowe,
And rolyonsº ride in hunting the wolf to overthrowe,
And sperlyngesº rone with speris in harness to
defenceº
Than put in a woman your trust and confidence.

Whan sparowys bild chirches and stepulles hie,
And wrennes cary sakkes to the mylle,
And curlews cary clothesº horsis for to drye,
And se-mewes bryng butter to the market to sell,
And wod-dowesº were wod-knyffesº theves to kyll,

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²⁹ In Medieval English Lyrics, ed. Davies, no. 125.
And griffons\textsuperscript{8} to goslynges don obedience — \textit{vultures}
Than put in a woman your trust and confidence.

Whan crabbis tak wodcokes\textsuperscript{8} in forestes and parkes, \textit{woodcocks}
And haris ben taken with swetnes of snaylis,
And [cammels in the ayer tak swalows and larkes],
And myse mowe corn with wafeyying\textsuperscript{9} of ther taylis, \textit{waving}
Whan dukkes of the dunghill sek\textsuperscript{9} the Blod of Hayles,\textsuperscript{30}
Whan shrewd\textsuperscript{9} wyffes to ther husbondes do non offens — \textit{shrewish}
Than put in a woman your trust and confidence.

\textbf{xxiv)}\textsuperscript{31}

Hay, hey, hey, hey!
I wyll have the whetston and I may.\textsuperscript{9} \textit{if I can}

I sawe a doge sethyng\textsuperscript{9} sowse\textsuperscript{9} \textit{boiling} \textit{pork for pickling}
And an ape thechyng\textsuperscript{9} an howse \textit{thatching}
And a podyng\textsuperscript{9} etyng a mowse; \textit{sausage}
I will have the whetston and I may.
Hey, hey …

I sawe an urchin\textsuperscript{9} shape\textsuperscript{9} and sewe \textit{hedgehog} \textit{cut out cloth}
And another bake and brewe,
Scowre the pottes as they were newe;
I will have the whetston and I may.
Hey, hey …

I sawe a codfysshe corn sowe
And a worm a whystyll blowe

\textsuperscript{30} It was alleged that some of the Blood of Christ was preserved at Hailes Abbey, in Gloucestershire.

\textsuperscript{31} In \textit{Early English Carols} (ed. Greene), no. 471; \textit{DIMEV} 2256. The whetstone, a token of falseness, was hung about the nect of a convicted liar (\textit{MED}); he means ‘I shall prove the best liar’.
And a pye tredyng a crow;
I will have the whetston and I may.
Hey, hey ...

I sawe a stokfysshe drawing a harrow
dried fish
And another dryveyng a barrow
And a saltfysshe shotyng an arrow;
I will have the whetston and I may.
Hey, hey ...

I sawe a bore burdeyns bynd
And a froge clewens wynd
balls of yarn
And a tode mustard grynd;
I will have the whetston and I may.
Hey, hey ...

I sawe a sowe bere kyrchers to wasshe,
The second sowe had an hege to plasshe,º
weave
The thirde sowe went to the barn to thr[a]sshe;
I will have the whetston and I may.
Hey, hey ...

I sawe an ege etyng a pye —
Geve me drynke, my mowth ys drye,
Ytt ys not long sythº I made a lye;  
since
I will have the whetston and I may.
Hey, hey ...

Religious Songs (a brief selection)

Nou gothº sonne under wod,º
goes wood
Me reweth,º Marie, thi faire rode.º  
I pity face

32 In The Oxford Book of Medieval English Verse, no. 269.
Nou goth sonne under tre,
Me reweth, Marie, thi sone and the.

XXVI)33

Adam lay ibowndyn, bowndyn in a bond,
Fowre thousand winter thowt he not to long.

And al was for an appil, An appil that he tok,
As clerkes fyndyn wretyn, wretyn in here bok

Ne hadde the appil take ben, the appil take ben,
Ne hadde never our Lady a° ben hevene qwen.

Blyssid be the tyme that appil take was,
Therfore we mown⁰ syngyn ‘Deo gratias!’²⁹ have

XXVII)34

Levedie, I thonke the
Wid⁰ herte suithe⁰ milde with very
That god⁰ that thou havest idon me good
Wid thine suete childe,

Thou ard god and suete and briht,
Of⁰ alle otheir icoren⁰ above chosen
Of the was that suete with⁰ sweet creature
That was Jesus iboren⁰ born

Maide milde, biddi⁰ the I pray
Wid thine suete childe
That thou er[e]ndie⁰ me intercede for

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33  Ibid. no. 191.
34  Ibid. no. 29.
To habben Godis milce.º
Moder, [thou] loke one me
Wid thine suete eye;
Rest and blisse [gef] thou me,
Mi levedi, thenº ic deye.

Can I not syng but ‘hoy’,
Whan the joly shepherd made so mych joy.

The sheperd upon a hill he satt,
He had on hym his tabardº and his hat,
Hys tarbox, hys pype, and hys flagat;º
Hys name was called Joly, Joly Wat,
For he was a gud herdesº boy.

With hoy!
For in hys pype he made so mych joy.
Can I not syng …

The sheperd upon a hill was layd,
Hys dogeº to hys gyrdyll was tayd,º
He had not slept but a lytill br[alydº
But ‘Gloria in excelsis’º was to hym sayd.
For he was a gud herdes boy,
With hoy!
For in his pype he mad so mych joy.
Can I not syng …

The sheperd on a hill he stode;
Rownd abowt hym his shepe they yode;º
He put hys hond under hys hode;º
He saw a star as rede as blod.
For he was a gud herdes boy,
   With hoy!
For in his pype he mad so mych joy.
Can I not syng ...

‘Now farwell Mall, and also Will;
For my love go ye all stylly\textsuperscript{9} quietly
Unto\textsuperscript{9} I cum agayn you till,\textsuperscript{9} until back to you
And evermore, Will, ryng well thy bell.’
For he was a gud herdes boy,
   With hoy!
For in his pipe he made so mych joy.
Can I not syng ...

‘Now must I go ther\textsuperscript{9} Cryst was borne; \textit{where}
Farwell, I cum agayn tomorn;
Dog, kepe well my shepe fro the corn,
And warn well, Warroke,\textsuperscript{9} when I blow my horn.’ \textit{Wat’s dog, or his ‘boy’\textsuperscript{36}}
For he was a gud herdes boy,
   With hoy!
For in his pype he made so mych joy.
Can I not syng ...

The sheperd sayd anon right,\textsuperscript{9} immediately
‘I will go se yon farly\textsuperscript{9} syght, \textit{wondrous}
Wheras the angell syngith on hight,\textsuperscript{9} loudly
And the star that shynyth so bright,’
For he was a gud herdes boy,
   With hoy!
For in his pipe he made so mych joy.
Can I not syng ...

\textsuperscript{36} The editor (Sisam) marks this name as ‘obscure’.
Whan Wat to Bedlemº cum was,
He swetº — he had gon faster than a pace.º
He fownd Jesu in a sympill place
Between an ox and an asse.
For he was a gud herdes boy,
   With hoy!
For in his pipe he mad so mych joy.
Can I not syng …

‘Jesu, I offer to the here my pype,
My skyrte,º my tarbox, and my scrype;º
Home to my felowes now will I skype,º
And also loke untoº my shepe.’
For he was a gud herdes boy,
   With hoy!
For in his pipe he mad so mych joy.
Can I not syng …

‘Now, farewell, myne own herdsman Wat,’
‘Ye, for God, lady, even so I hat.º
Lull well Jesu in thy lape
And farewell, Joseph, wyth thy rownd cape.’º
For he was a gud herdes boy,
   With hoy!
For in hys pipe he mad so mych joy.
Can I not syng …

‘Now may I well both hopeº and syng,
For I have bene a Crystes beryng.º
Home to my felowes now wyl I flyng.º
Cryst of hevyn to his blis us bryng!’
For he was a gud herdes boy,
   With hoy!
For in his pipe he mad so myche joy.
Can I not syng …
'Lullay, myn lykyng,9 my dere sone, myn swetyng, beloved
Lullay, my dere herte, myn owyn dere derlyng.'

I saw a fayr maydyn syttyn and synge;
Sche lullyd a lytyl chyld, a swete lording.9
Lulllay myn lykyng …

That eche9 Lord is that that made alle thinge;
Of alle lordis he is Lord, of all kynges Kyng.
Lullay, myn lykyng …

Ther was mekyl9 melody at that chyldes berthe;
Alle tho9 that wern in hevene blys, they made mekyl merth.
Lullay, myn lykyng …

Aungele[s] bright, thei song that nyght and seydyn to that chyld,
‘Blyssid be thou, and so be sche that is bothe mek and myld.’
Lullay, myn lykyng …

Prey we now to that chyld, and to his moder dere,
Grawnt hem his blyssyng that now makyn chere,9
Lullay, myn lykyng …

Mery hyt ys in May morning
Mery wayys for to gone,

And by a chapel as y came,
Mett y wythe Jesu to chyrcheward9 gone, towards church
Petur and Pawle, Thomas and Jhon,
And his desyplys everychone. 
Mery hyt ys ....

Sente Thomas the bellys gane ryng,
And Sent Collas the Mas gane syng;
Sente Jhon toke that swete offering,
And by a chapell as y came.
Mery hyt ys ...

Owre Lorde offeryd whate he wollde,
A challes off ryche rede golde,
Owre Lady the crowne off hyr mowlde —
The son owte off hyr bosom schone.
Mery hyt ys ...

Sent Jorge, that ys owre Lady knyghte,
He tende the tapyrys fayre and bryte,
To myn yghe a semley syghte —
And by a chapell as y came.
Mery hyt ys ...