

Title: Beer is for Girls

Entrant: Isolde de Lengadoc

Category: Bardic

Specific Art Form: Songwriting

Entry Contents: Text in period broadside presentation, vocal performance with harp accompaniment at the judges' convenience

Quote: "I will make it a felony to drink small beer." – Henry VI, Part 2, Act IV, Scene 2

Overview

"Beer is for Girls" is intended to be a rowdy, audience-involving drinking song in keeping with English drinking songs of the late 16th century. It includes repeating refrain lines embedded in each verse, in a style consistent with late-period English drinking songs, which audience members should easily be able to pick up and join in on as the song progresses. The structure of the text as well as the melody take as their model "Martin Said to His Man," by Thomas Ravenscroft. It is displayed here in the manner of a 16th century English broadside.

My song was inspired by the, I think, universal plight of young, beer-loving women: well-meaning offers of cloyingly sweet "girly drinks," in lieu of the real thing. Although Jack Cade, in his rabble-rousing speech in act 4, scene 2 of *Henry VI, Part 2* no doubt has in mind "cheap, low-quality beer" with his reference to "small beer," I feel quite justified in taking "small beer" to mean any drink that serves as an inadequate substitute for good beer. Wine and ciders can be lovely drinks, and cordials have their place as a period curiosity. I would by no means wish to outlaw them, however if I could outlaw the assumption that girls prefer something sweet to a good, strong beer, I would. Instead, I offer this humble, yet devastatingly serious song.

Text and Music

Thomas Ravenscroft's "Martin Said to His Man" first appeared in print in 1609 in *Duerteromelia*,¹ the second of two volumes of Ravenscroft's works published in that year.² Even if we assume that these very first publications of Ravenscroft's works were collections of already composed and known pieces, given the year of Ravenscroft's birth (1582),³ it is likely that these were composed just after 1600. Therefore, it must be admitted that "Martin Said to His Man" may be very slightly post-period, but by quite a few years less than many of Shakespeare's works.

The idea of single-line refrains being embedded in the verses of a song is not, however a post-period innovation. It was quite common during both the medieval and

¹ First published in London, for Thomas Adams, 1609, printer unknown. For an excellent facsimile of the entire publication, in addition to the rest of the Ravenscroft corpus, with audio and modern transcriptions of many of his songs, see:

<http://www.pbm.com/~lindahl/ravenscroft/>

² The first was *Pannellia*, also published in London in 1609, for R.B. and H.W., by William Barley (ibid).

³ Damschroder, David and Williams, David Russel. *Music Theory from Zarlino to Schenker*. Hillsdale: Pendragon Press, 1990. p 260.

renaissance eras, appearing in “Scarborough Fair” and a number of other well-known songs. It appears to have been quite a bit more common than the verse-chorus-verse structure to which the modern ear is accustomed.⁴

I chose “Martin Said to His Man” as a model because of how well its refrain structure lends itself to rowdy audience participation and because it is an example of specifically a drinking song in this form. Thus, the verses of my song each follow this specific format: the second, fourth, seventh and eighth lines are the same in each verse. My rhyme scheme, ABABCCDB, also closely mimics Ravenscroft’s, with the refrains rhyming only with the refrains, not the other lines in the verse (Ravenscroft’s first refrain line does not rhyme with any other line, as mine does, but this is a small deviation from what was by no means a canonical rhyme scheme).⁵

Although I have written an original melody for my song, it adheres to the same chord structure as “Martin Said to His Man.” Although both songs are written in C major, accidentals in the fourth lines of both songs force a quick switch to D minor, which resolves to D major before resuming in C.⁶ This is a rather conventional chord structure that would have been familiar to Englishmen well before the turn of the 17th century. It lends itself to a simple, easy-to-sing melody (and thus easy to catch onto and sing along with) that does not distract from the humor of the lyrics.

“Martin Said to His Man” is written in three, but I have opted to use a polka rhythm for my song (2/4, or two quarter note beats per measure). While the majority of Ravenscroft’s melodies are written in a triple meter (some multiple of three beats per measure), some are written in duple meter, for example “I Am A-Thirst”⁷ and the familiar “Three Blind Mice,”⁸ which is typically sung in 2/4. These songs make clear that this time signature was already in use for songs of this type, and lends itself splendidly to the “oom-pah” accompaniment that immediately brings “drinking song” into the minds of any western audience. This makes it the perfect time signature to involve modern (perhaps slightly tipsy) audiences in an absolutely period way.

The second, third and fourth verses pay homage to various types of “small beer,” namely cordials, wine and cider. Although I have been offered such abominations as Smirnoff Ice and wine coolers at events, I was determined to stick to substances that were known in period, so as not to detract from the mood of the piece. I deviated from this very slightly when naming specific types of wine and cider. Grape varieties (ie cabernet

⁴ The verse-chorus-verse structure is represented, particularly in the 16th century, but it is not nearly as common in period as it is in modern SCA bardic circles. Although a quantitative analysis of refrain structures in the corpus of renaissance secular music would be fascinating, this conclusion is, for now, based only on my own perusal of period music.

⁵ For a transcription of Ravenscroft’s lyrics and melody, see page 5 of this documentation.

⁶ The text and music in modern notation of my song can be found at the very end of this documentation.

⁷ For a facsimile of “I Am A-Thirst,” with links to transcriptions into modern notation, see link #26 at: <http://www.pbm.com/~lindahl/ravenscroft/deuteromelia/>

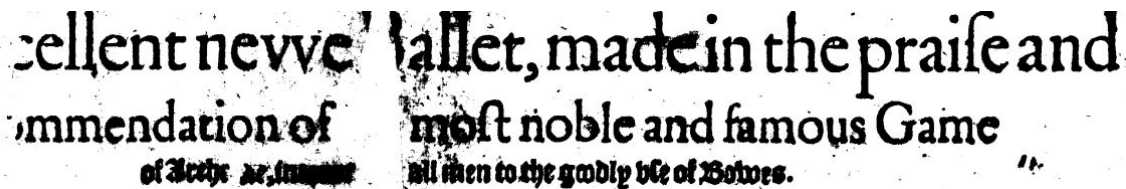
⁸ For a facsimile of “Three Blind Mice,” with links to transcriptions into modern notation, see link #13 at: <http://www.pbm.com/~lindahl/ravenscroft/deuteromelia/>

and chardonnay) were not as universally used to identify types of wine as they are today, however the varietals I mention have been in use since early antiquity, and the metonymy would have been understood by a literate person familiar with wine during the 16th century.⁹ Likewise, Woodchuck Draft Cider clearly did not exist in period, however the practice of referring to cider according to who made it cannot be a post-period innovation.

Display

Thomas Ravenscroft's songs were published as broadsides, a practice which dates back to at least 1490.¹⁰ Thus, I have chosen to display mine in the manner in which it would have been published in late 16th century England. Ravenscroft's broadsides included music for up to four voices, but I have not been able to find any examples of broadsides prior to 1600 that include musical notation. I have therefore elected to display only my text, and to perform the music for the judges.

English Broadside frequently included a long, explanatory title at the top of the page, often offering praise for the song and an idea of what it was about. While "Beer is for Girls" is a fine conventional title, I decided to incorporate it into a longer, more appropriate header for my broadside. The following image is taken from a 1590 London Broadside, and is a good example of the long, explanatory titles typical of English broadsides.¹¹



Excellent newve' Ballet, made in the praise and
commendation of most noble and famous Game
of Beere, as, sung by all men to the goodly use of Beeroes.

In addition to long, explanatory titles, English broadsides typically included a few lines related to publication at the end of the page. This information would include place and year of publication (Jararvellier, AS 45) and the name of the publisher (myself, in this case, although the writer was usually not also the publisher). Also included at the bottom was the person for whom the work was published – usually not the author, but a bookseller or patron, in this case the sponsors of the competition, their Excelencies Nordskogen. Charmingly, some broadsides include “God Save the Queen” in the same

⁹ The chardonnay grape entered Europe through France with the Romans (see <http://www.easy-wine.net/history-of-chardonnay.htm>). The cabernet sauvignon grape, on the other hand, is only about 600 years old, but was still grown in Europe prior to 1600 (<http://www.easy-wine.net/history-of-cabernet-sauvignon.htm>).

¹⁰ The earliest ballad facsimile included in the Bodelian Library's collection of broadside ballads was published in 1490. See <http://www.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/ballads/ballads.htm> and search by date.

¹¹ Bodelian Library Catalogue of Ballads, Vet. A1 a.5(5).

position. The following examples are from London, 1570 and 1582 respectively (the illuminated “I” in my broadside is taken from the 1570 manuscript).¹²

☞ **Seane / and allowyd / accoꝝyng to the Quenes
Maeſtyes Injunction.**

God ſaue the Quene

L O N D O N

Imprinted by Iohn Wolfe, for Edwarde White: And are to be
ſolde at his Shoppe, at the little North doore of Pauls Church,
at the Signe of the Gunne. 1582.

My broadside is printed in a font created by Master Aeron Harper, taken from scans of the 1594 English translation of Giacomo diGrassi’s fencing manual, *Di Grassi, His True Arte of Defence*. (Plainlie teaching by infallible Demonstrations, apt Figures and perfect Rules the manner and forme how a man without other Teacher or Master may safelie handle all sortes of Weapons as well offensive as defensive).¹³ I have incorporated some orthographic inconsistencies characteristic of 16th century English, which can be found in the given examples, such as capitalization of grammatically important words, adding an “e” after certain monosyllabic words containing an “o,” such as “songe,” and substituting “u” for “v.” The “i” for “j” substitution, also represented in these examples, is a feature of Master Harper’s font. As found in the following examples from a 1570 broadside,¹⁴ refrain lines are indicated through the use of italics, and “finis” is used to indicate the end of the text:

MAns teares and wofull plaint, hath pierst the lofty skies, (flies,
with gladſom newes in glittering robe, from heauen an Angell
the clouds now open wide, & grace ſends downe it ſhewers,
Which watereth natures barren ſoyle, with euerlaſting flowers.
The ayre therefore reſounds, Yule, Yule, a Babe is borne,
O bright and blazing day, to ſaue mankind that was forlorne.

Soli Deo, ſit honor et gloria.
FINIS.

¹² Ibid, Arch. A c.7 and Douce fragm. d.8

¹³ Ask him about it yourself, he’s here at the event.

¹⁴ Bodelian Library Catalogue of Ballads, Vet. A1 a.5(1)

Martin Said to his Man¹⁵
Thomas Ravenscroft

1. Martin said to his man
(fie, man fie!)

Martin said to his man
(who's the fool now?)
Martin said to his man
Fil thou the cup and I the can,
Thou hast well drunken man,
who's the fool now?
Thou hast well drunken man,
who's the fool now?

2. I see a sheep shearing corn,
(fie, man fie!)
I see a sheepe shearing corn,
(who's the fool now?)
I see a sheepe shearing corn,
And a couckold blow his horn,
(Thou hast well drunken man, who's the fool now?)

3. I see a man in the Moone,
Clowting of Saint Peters shoone, [fixing St. Peter's shoe]

4. I see a hare chase a hound,
Twenty mile about the ground,

5. I see a goose ring a hog.
And a snayle that did bite a dog,

6. I see a mouse catch the cat,
And the cheese to eat the rat,

¹⁵ From the Ravenscroft Songbook,
<http://www.pbm.com/~lindahl/ravenscroft/songbook/martin.html>

**A right and earnest new Songe
That is most assuredly not a Drinking Songe
Declaring truthfully and properly that
Beer is for Girls**

I am a lady slight and small,
Where do you keep your beer?
I'll harp and sing in any hall,
I'd rather have some beer.
Though men reward me when I sing,
These gentles know not what to bring.
*I'll sing no drinking songe for you,
Until I get some beer!*

They offer me their cordials fine,
Where do you keep your beer?
They say their taste's as sweet as mine.
I'd rather have some beer.
They'ue flowers, fruits and all that's sweet,
But iust one sip will rot my teeth.
*I'll sing no drinking songe for you,
Until I get some beer!*

They offer me a light white wine.
Where do you keep your beer?
Though wine is fine, when I do dine,
I'd rather have some beer.
A chardonnay won't help me play.
Try cabernet, and I'll iust say,
*I'll sing no drinking songe for you,
Until I get some beer!*

They offer ciders made with care,
Where do you keep your beer?
From apples, pears and all that's fair.
I'd rather have some beer.
The woodchuck's ace, but facts we'll face:
Spiked apple iuice is not my pace.
*I'll sing no drinking songe for you,
Until I get some beer!*

To me, a good strong brew's a treat,
Where do you keep your beer?
We maids are not all made for sweet,
I'd rather have some beer.
You'd have me play your pleasure, fine.
I'll play yours, if you play mine.
*I'll sing no drinking songe for you,
Until I get some beer!*

I am a lady slight and small,
Where do you keep your beer?
I'll harp and sing in any hall,
I'd rather have some beer.
If you'd reward me when I sing,
Now you know what not to bring.
*I'll sing no drinking songe for you,
Until I get some beer!*
Finis

Iararvellir

Imprinted by Isolde de Lengadoc for their Excellencies Nordskogen: And is to bee
Displayed at their Competition at Twelfth Night A.S. XLIV
God Saue the Queene