

Lenten is come

This is one of those poems that has neither an accompanying melody nor any obvious indication of its being a song. It seems to cry out for a tune, however, and several people have written settings. This is my own.

Lenten is come with love to towne
With blosmen and with briddes rowne,
That al this blisse bringeth:
Dayeseyes in thes dales,
Notes swete of nightegales—
Ech fowl song singeth.
The threstelcock him threteth o,
Away is here winter wo,
When woderove springeth.
Thes fowles singeth ferly fele,
And whiteth on here winne wele,
That al the wode ringeth.

The rose raileth hire rode,
The leves on the lighte wode
Waxen al with wille.
The moone mandeth hire blee,
The lilie is lofsom to see,
The fenil and the fille.
Woves these wilde drakes;
Miles murgeth here makes,
As strem that striketh stille.
Mody meneth, so doth mo—
Ich'ot ich am one of tho
For love that likes ille.

The moone mandeth hire light;
So doth the seemly sunne bright,
When briddes singeth breme.
Dewes donketh the downes;
Deeres with here derne rownes,
Domes for to deme;
Wormes woweth under cloude;
Wimmen waxeth wonder proude—
So wel it wil hem seme.
If me shal wante wille of on,
This winne wele I wil forgon,
And wight in wode be fleme.

Spring has arrived bringing love to the world,
With blossoms and with birdsong,
Bringing all this joy:
Daisies in the dales,
Sweet notes from the nightingales—
Every bird sings a song.
The thrush chides continually,
Winter is gone away from here,
When the woodruff blooms.
The birds sing in great numbers,
And warble about their wealth of joys,
So that the whole wood rings.

The rose displays her redness,
The leaves on the bright wood
Grow joyously.
The moon sheds her radiance,
The lily is lovely to see,
The fennel and the thyme.
The wild drakes woo;
(Animals?) gladden their mates,
As a stream that glides silently.
The passionate man complains—
I know that I am one of those that are wretched
Because of bad luck in love.

The moon sheds her brightness;
So does the beautiful, bright sun,
When birds sing gloriously.
Dews wet the downs;
Animals with their own calls,
Secretly communicating;
Worms woo underground;
Women grow amazingly proud—
It pleases them to do so.
If I do not have my will of one,
I shall forgo this wealth of joys,
And become a fugitive in the wood.

Brid one breere

This song is a good example of the haphazard ways in which English medieval music has come down to us—the lyrics and tune were written on the back of a papal bull.

Brid one breere, briht brid one trewe.
Kynd is come, of Love love to crave:
Blithful bird, on me, on me thu rewē;
or greith, leef, greith thu me, thu me my grave.

Ich am so blithe, so briht brid one breere,
whan I see that hende, hendest in halle.
He is whit of lim, of lim and leere;
he is fayr, and flur, and flur of alle.

Mihte ich hire, hir at wille have,
stedefast of love, loveli, trewe
(of mi sorw he may, he may me save),
joy and blis wer er, wer er me newe.

Bird on a briar, bright bird on a tree,
Nature has come to beg for love from Love:
Blissful bird, on me, on me have pity;
or prepare, beloved, prepare for me, for me my grave.

I am as happy as a bright bird on a briar
when I see that gracious one, most gracious in hall.
She is white of limb, of limb and face;
she is fair, and the flower, the flower of all.

If I could have her, have her at will,
steadfast in love, lovely, true
(from my sorrow she can, she can cure me),
joy and bliss for me would be ever, be ever renewed.

A wayle whyt

In these verses and in others not presented, the repeated references to the narrator as singing make this poem a natural choice to set to music. I do not know whether it was originally a song, however.

A wayle whyt ase whalles bon,
A grein in golde that godly shon,
A tortle that min herte is on,
In tounes trewe,
Hire gladshipe nes neuer gon
Whil Y may glewe.

Hyre heye haueth wounded me, ywisse,
Hire bende browen that bringeth blisse.
Hire comely mouth that mihte cusse,
In muche murthe he were;
Y wolde chaunge myn for his
That is here fere.

Herkneth me, Y ou telle,
In such wondryng for wo Y welle,
Nys no fur so hot in helle
Al to mon
That loueth derne ant dar nout telle
What him ys on.

Ich vnne hire wel ant heo me wo;
Ycham hire frend ant heo my fo;
Me thuncheth min herte wol breke atwo
For sorewe ant syte.
In Godes greting mote heo go,
That wayle whyte.

A beauty white as ivory,
A gem set in gold, shining brightly,
A turtle-dove my heart is set on,
Known for truth everywhere,
Her happiness is never neglected
While I can make songs.

Truly, her eyes have wounded me,
Her arched eyebrows which give delight.
Anyone who could kiss her lovely mouth
Would be full of joy;
I would exchange mine (my fate) for the man's
Who is her partner.

Listen to me, I tell you,
I burn in such distress through grief,
There is no fire so hot in hell
Kept for the man
Who loves secretly and dares not say
What the matter is.

I wish her well, she wishes me ill;
I am her friend and she my enemy;
It seems to me that my heart will break in two
Out of grief and distress.
May she walk with God's blessing,
That white-skinned beauty.

The milde Lomb

The milde Lomb, isprad o roode,
heng biurnen al o bloode
for ur gelte, for ur goode,
for he ne gelte nevre nout.

Few of his him warn bileved;
dred hem had him al bireved
wan he seyen here heved
to so schanful deth ibrou.

His moder, that him stood bisiden,
ne let no ter on other biden
wan hoe sei hir child bitiden
swich pine, and deien gelteles.

Saint Johan, that was him deere,
on other halve him stood eek feere
and biheld with murne cheere
his maister that him loved and ches.

Sore and hard he was iswungen,
feet and handes thurw istungen;
ac mest of all his othre wunden
him ded his modres serwe wo.

In al his pine, in al his wrake
that he drei for mannes sake,
he sei his moder serwe make;
wel reufullich he spac hir to.

He seide, "Wiman lou! me heere,
thi child, that thu to manne beere.
Withuten sor and weep thu weere
tho ich was of thee iborn;

ac nu thu must thi pine dreien
wan thu sicst me with thin eien
pine thole o rood, and deien
to helen man that was forlorn."

Saint Johan the vangelieste
hir understood thurw hes of Criste;
fair he kept hir, and biwiste,
and served hir fram hand to foot.

Reuful is the meneginge
of this deth and tis departinge;
tharin is blis meind with weepinge,
for tharthurw us kam alle boot.

He that starf in ure keende
leve us so been tharof meende
that he give us atten eende
that he hath us to ibout.

Milsful moder, maiden cleene,
mak on us thi milce seene
and bring us thurw thi sweete beene
to the blis that faileth nout.

The gentle Lamb, spread on the cross
hung entirely drenched with blood
for our guilt, for our benefit—
for he never sinned at all.

Few of his remained by him;
fear had deprived him of all of them
when they saw their leader
brought to so shameful a death.

His mother, who stood beside him,
let no tear wait for another
when she saw her child experience
such pain, and die without guilt.

St. John, who was dear to him,
stood on the other side as his friend,
and beheld with sorrowful countenance
his master who loved and chose him.

Sorely and hard was he beaten,
feet and hands pierced through;
but beyond all his other wounds
his mother's sorrow grieved him.

In all his pain, in all his agony
which he suffered for man's sake,
he saw his mother lamenting;
very compassionately he spoke to her.

He said, "Woman, lo, hear me,
your child, whom you bore to men.
You were without sorrow and weeping
when you gave birth to me

but now you must endure your pain
when with your eyes you see me
suffer pain on the cross and die
to save mankind, which was lost."

St. John the Evangelist
maintained her at Christ's command;
he kept her well and looked after her,
and served her hand and foot.

Pitiable is the remembrance
of this death and of this parting;
in it bliss is mingled with weeping,
for by this means came all our good.

He who died in our nature
grant us to be so mindful thereof
that he may give us at the end
what he has bought for us.

Merciful mother, pure maiden,
make thy mercy evident in us
and bring us by thy sweet intercession
to the bliss which does not fail.

Edi be thu—instrumental

Ar ne kuth

Ar ne kuth ich sorghe non,
nu ich moot imane mi mon;
karful, wel sor ich siche.
Geltles, tholich muchel schame;
help, God, for thi sweete name,
king of hevene riche.

Jesu Crist, sooth God, sooth man,
loverd, thu rew upon me!
Of prisun that ich in am
bring me ut and make free.
Ich and mine feeren sume
(God wot ich ne lyghe noht)
for othre han misnume
been in thys prisun ibroht.

Almihti,
that wel lihtli
(bales hal and boote,
hevenking)
of this woning
ut us bringe moote.
Foryef hem,
the wikke men,
yet it is thi wille,
for wos gelt
we been ipelt
in this prisun ille.

Hope non to this live,
heer ne mai he bilive;
heeghe theh he astighe,
deth him felleth to grunde.
Nu hath man wele and blisse,
rath he shal tharof misse;
worldes wele, mid wisse,
ne lasteth but on stunde.

Maiden that bar the hevenking,
biseech thi sune, sweete thing,
that he habbe of us rewsing
and us bring of this woning
for his muchele milse.
He us bring ut of this wo
and us tache werchen swo
in this lif, go wusit go,
that we mooten ey and o
habben the eeche blisse.

Formerly I knew no sorrow
now I must give voice to my grief;
full of care, I sigh in great distress.
Guiltless, I suffer great shame;
Help, God, for thy sweet name,
rich king of heaven.

Jesus Christ, true God, true man,
Lord have pity on me:
From the prison that I am in,
bring me out and meake me free.
I and some of my companions
(God know I do not lie)
for the misdeeds of others
have been cast into this prison.

Almighty,
who very easily
(remedy and cure of pain,
King of heaven),
out of this misery
may you bring us.
Forgive them,
the wicked men,
if it is thy will
for whose guilt
we are thrust
into this evil prison.

Let none trust in this life.
Here he cannot remain;
high though he ascend,
death fells him to the ground.
Now man has prosperity and bliss,
soon he shall lose them;
worldly prosperity, for certain,
lasts only for an hour.

Maiden who bore the King of heaven,
beseech thy son, sweet thing,
that he have pity on us
and bring us from this misery,
of his great mercy.
May he bring us from this woe
and teach us so to act
in this life, however things may go,
that we may for ever and ever
have eternal bliss.

Man mai longe lives weene

Man mai longe lives weene
ac him lighet oft the wrench;
vair weder oft went into reene,
veerlich maket hit his blench.
Thervore, man, thu thee bithench;
al ssel valewi thi greene.
Weilawei! nis king ne queene
thet ne ssel drink of deathes drench.
Man, er thu vall of thi bench,
thi senn aquench.

No mai strong ne starc ne keene
ayee deathes witherclench,
ne yung ne ald, ne briht and sseene;
al he rivet an his strenth,
vor vox and veerlich is his wrench.
No mai no man theertoyeenes,
weilawei, ne threat ne beene,
meede, ne list, ne leeches drench.
Man, let senn and lustes stench;
wel do, wel thench.

Do bi Salomones reede,
man, and so thu sselst wel do;
do also he thee taht, and heede
hwet thin ending thee bringth to,
ne sselstu never eft misdo.
Sore thu might thee adreede,
weilawei, swich weenst wel leede
long lif and blissen undervoo,
theer death luteth in thi ssoo
to thee vordo.

Man, hwi neltu thee bicnowe?
Man, hwi neltu thee bisi?
Of velthe thu art erst isowe;
wermes mete thu sselst bi.
Heer nafstu blisse daies thri;
al thi lif thu drihst in wowe.
Weilawei! death thee ssel throwe
dun, theer thu weendest heeghe sti;
in wo ssel thi wele ti,
in woop thi gli.

Werld and wele thee biswiket;
mid iwis hi byeth thi vo.
If thine werld mid wele sliket,
thet is vor to do thee wo.
Thervore let lust overgo,
man, and eft hit wel thee liket.
Weilawei! hu sore him wicket
thet in o stunde, other two,
wercth him pine evermo!
Ne do, man, swo!

Man may expect long life,
but the trick often deceives him;
fair weather often turns into rain—
suddenly it plays its trick.
Therefore, man, take heed;
all your greenness shall wither.
Alas! There is neither king nor queen
that shall not drink Death's draught.
Man, before you fall from your seat
put an end to your sin.

Never can the strong or the mighty or the bold
prevail against Death's hostile grip,
nor the young nor the old, nor the bright and beautiful;
he tears everything to pieces in his strength,
for crafty and sudden is his twist.
Never can any man prevail against that,
alas, nor can threat or entreaty,
bribery or cunning or a physician's potion.
Man, leave sin and the stink of lust;
do well, think well.

Act in accord with Solomon's advice,
man, and then you will do well;
do exactly as he taught you,
and take heed what your end will bring you to—
never again shall you sin.
Sorely you may fear for yourself,
alas, you who expect to lead well
a long life and to enjoy pleasures,
where Death lurks in your shoe
to destroy you.

Man, why will you not acknowledge your nature?
Man, why will you not consider yourself?
You are first begotten from filth;
you will become the food of worms.
You do not have happiness here for three days;
all your life you endure in misery.
Alas! Death will throw you down,
where you expected to rise high;
your prosperity shall give place to misery,
your merriment to weeping.

The world and its wealth deceive you;
for certain they are your foes.
If your world flatters with prosperity,
that is in order to do you harm.
Therefore let desire pass by, man,
and afterwards things will please you well.
Alas! What a grievous service he does himself
who in one hour, or two,
earns himself torment for ever more!
Man, do not so!

Nou goth sonne under wod

This text is from Archbishop Edmund's *Speculum Ecclesiae*, of about 1240, and was almost certainly never a song. The words struck me, however, and I thought it worth setting. This crucifixion lyric relies on the similarity between "sun" and "son," a pun which works in Middle English as well as modern English, and plays on the common reference to the cross as a tree. Its sunset metaphor also draws on the Gospel of John, which refers to Christ as the Light of the world. Finally, "rood," usually translated as "face," is probably also a play on the Middle English (and modern English) word for cross: rood/rode.

Nou goth sonne under wod.
Me reweth, Marie, thi faire rood.
Nou goth sonne under tre.
Me reweth, Marie, thi sonne and thee.

Now the sun sets into the wood.
I pity, Mary, your fair face.
Now the sun sets under the tree.
I pity, Mary, your son and thee.

Lutel wot hit any mon

The repeated refrain suggests that this lyric may once have been a song, but any tune it may once have had has been lost. Here is my own setting.

Lutel wot hit any mon
Hou derne loue may stonde,
Bote hit were a fre wymmon
That muche of loue had fonde.
The loue of hire ne lesteth nowyht longe,
Heo haueth me plyht ant wyteth me wyth
 wronge.

Refrain

Euer ant oo for my leof Icham in grete thohte;
Y thenche on hire that Y ne seo nout ofte.

Y wolde nemne hyre today,
Ant Y dorste hire munne;
Heo is that feireste may
Of vch ende of hire kunne.
Bote heo me loue, of me heo haues sunne;
Wo is him that loueth the loue that he may ner
 ywynne.
Euer ant oo, et cetera.

Myry hit ys in hyre tour
Wyth hatheles ant wyth heowes;
So hit is in hyre bour
With gomenes ant with gleowes.
Bote heo me louye, sore hit wol me rewe.
Wo is him that loueth the loue that ner nul be
 trewe.
Euer ant oo, et cetera.

No-one fully realizes
The nature of secret love,
Unless it were a noble woman
Who had great experience of love.
Her love does not last at all long;
She has made promises to me, and blames me unfairly.

Refrain

Constantly the one I love is in my thoughts;
I think about her whom I do not see often.

I would give her name today,
If I dared to mention her;
She is the most beautiful girl
Of her whole family.
Unless she loves me, she is treating me badly.
It is hard on the man who loves the love that he can
 never win.
Constantly, etc.

It is pleasant in her tower,
With brave men and servants;
So is it in her chamber,
With games and with music-making.
If she does not love me, it will give me great distress.
It is hard on the man who loves a love who will never
 be faithful.
Constantly, etc.

Angelus ad virginum—instrumental

Stond wel, moder, under roode

This is a dialogue between the dying Christ and Mary. While crucifixion songs are one of the staples of medieval music, this song depicts Christ and Mary in an unusually human light, portraying them as frustrated, angry, and even (at least in this translation) momentarily sarcastic. We have chosen to accompany Christ's lines with recorder and Mary's lines with harp. The song closes with prayers for intercession, which we accompany with both instruments.

"Stond wel, moder, under roode,
Bihold thi child with gladde moode;
Blithe moder might thu be."
"Sun, hu mai I blithe stonde?
I see thi feet, I see thin honde,
Nailed to the harde tree."

"Moder, do way thy weepinge;
I thole this deed for mannes thinge;
For owne gilte thole I non."
"Sun, I feel the dedestunde;
The swerde is at min herte grunde
That me bihighte Simeon."

"Moder, reu upon thi beren!
Thu wash away tho bloodi teren
that do mi werse than mi ded."
"Sun, hu might I teres werne?
I see tho bloodi floodes erne
Ut of thin herte to mi feet."

"Moder, nu I may thee seye,
Better is that ich one deye,
Than al mankin to helle go."
"Sun, I see thi bodi swungen.
Thi brest, thin hond, thi foot thurghstungen.
No seli nist tho me be wo!"

"Moder, if I dar thee telle,
If I ne deye, thu gost to helle;
I thole this ded for thine sake."
"Sunne, thu beest me so minde.
Ne wit me nought; it is mi kinde
That I for thee this sorwe make."

"Moder, merci, let me deye!
For Adam ut of helle beye,
And al mankin that is forloren."
"Sunne, what sal me to reede?
Thi pine pineth me to deede;
Let me deye thee beforen."

"Moder, nu tarst thu might lere
What pine thole that childre bere,
What sorwe have that child forgon."
"Sun, I wot I can thi telle:
Buten it be the pine of helle,
More sorwe ne wot I non."

"Stand well, mother, under the cross,
behold your child with glad spirit;
a happy mother may you be."
"Son, how can I stand happily?
I see your feet, I see your hands
nailed to the hard tree."

"Mother, put away your weeping;
I suffer this death for man's sake—
for my own guilt I suffer none."
"Son, I feel the pangs of death;
the sword is at my heart's ground
that Simeon promised me."

"Mother, have pity on your child!
Wash way those bloody tears,
which trouble me worse than my death."
"Son, how could I refrain from tears?
I see those streams of blood
run out of your heart to my feet."

"Mother, now I can tell you,
it is better that I alone die
than that all mankind go to hell."
"Son, I see your body beaten,
your breast, your hand, your foot pierced through;
it is no marvel if I am unhappy."

"Mother, if I dare tell you,
if I do not die, you go to hell;
I suffer this death for your sake."
"Son, you are so thoughtful for me;
do not blame me, it is my nature
that I show this sorrow for you."

"Mother, mercy; let me die
in order to buy Adam out of helle,
and mankind that is lost."
"Son, what am I to do?
Your pain pains me to death;
Let me die before you."

"Mother, now for the first time you learn
what pain they suffer who bear children,
what sorrow they have who lose a child."
"Son, I know, I can tell you—
unless it be the pain of hell,
I know no greater sorrow."

“Moder, reu of moder kare,
Nu thu wost of moder fare,
Tho thu be clene maidenman.”
“Sunne, help at alle neede,
Alle tho that to me greede—
Maiden and wif and fol wimman.”

“Moder, mai I no leng dwelle;
The time is cum, I fare to helle;
The thridde day I ris upon.”
“Sun, I wille with thee funde.
I dey, iwis, of thine wunde.
So reuful ded was never non.”

Wan he ros, then fel thi sorwe.
Thi blisse sprong the thridee morwe.
Wel blithe moder wer thu tho.
Moder for that ilke blisse,
Biseech ur God ur sinnes lisse;
Thu be ur sheeld ayen ur fo.

Blissed be thu, queen of hevne.
Bring us into hevne levne
Thurgh thi deere sunnes might.
Moder for that highe bloode
That he shad upon the roode,
Led us into heven light.

Amen.

Worldes blis

Worldes blis ne last no throwe;
it went and wit away anon.
The langer that ich hit iknowe,
the lass ich finde pris tharon;
for al it is imeind mid care,
mid serwen and mid evel fare,
and atte laste povre and bare
it lat man, wan it ginth agon.
Al the blis this heer and thare
bilucth at ende weep and mon.

Al the blis of thisse live
thu shalt, man, enden inne weep;
of hus and hom, of child and wive,
a, sali man, nim tharof keep.
For thu shalt al bileven heere
thet eighte warof lord thu weere;
wan thu list, man, upon the beere
and slapst that swithe dreeri slep,
shaltu have with thee no feere
but thine werkes on a hep.

“Mother, have pity on the troubles of mothers,
now that you know about a mother’s condition,
though you are a pure virgin.”

“Son, help in every need
all those who cry to me,
maiden and wife and foolish woman.”

“Mother, I can stay no longer,
the time has come that I go to hell;
I rise on the third day.”

“Son, I will journey with you.
I die, indeed, of your wounds;
there was never any death so pitiful.”

When he rose, then fell thy sorrow;
thy bliss sprang up on the third morning—
a happy mother indeed wert thou then.
Mother, for the sake of that same happiness,
beseech our God to remit our sins;
be thou our shield against our foe.

Blessed be thou, queen of heaven;
bring us out of the flame of hell
through thy precious son’s power.
Mother, for the sake of that noble blood
that he shed upon the cross,
lead us into the light of heaven.

Amen.

Worldly bliss does not last for a moment;
it goes and passes away presently.
The longer that I know it,
the less value I find in it;
for it is all mingled with care,
with sorrows and with ill fortune,
and at the last, poor and bare
it leaves man when it departs.
All the bliss which is here and there
amounts at the end to weeping and grief.

All the bliss of this life,
you shall, man, end in weeping;
of house and home, of child and wife,
o, silly man, none of them shall you keep.
For you shall leave here all
of which you were once lord;
when you lie, man, upon the bier
and sleep that swift and dreadful sleep,
you will have with you no companion
but your piled-up deeds.

Thinc, man, werto Crist thee wroute,
and do wey preed and felth and mood.
Thinc wu deere he thee aboute
o roode mid his sweete blood.
Himselven he yaf for thee in pris
to beien thee blis, yif thu be wis;
bithinc thee thanne, and up aris of senn,
and gin to werche good
tharwils time to werchen is,
for siker elles thu art wood.

Al day thu might understonde,
and ti mirour bifor thee seen,
wat is to doon and what to wonde
and what to holden and to fleen;
for al day thu sicst mid thin eie
wu this world went and wu men deie.
That wite wel, that thu shalt dreie
as othre dede, and eek ded been;
thar ne helpth nowight to leie,
ne may no man be deth ayeen.

Think, man, for what purpose Christ created you,
and put away pride and filth and wrath.
Think how dearly he redeemed you
on the cross with his precious blood.
He gave himself as a ransom for you,
to buy you bliss if you are prudent;
bethink yourself then and rise up
from sin and begin to do good
while there is time to act,
for certainly otherwise you are mad.

Every day you may understand
and see as if in a mirror (lit. "see your mirror") before
you
what is to be done and what avoided,
and what to be kept and what to flee;
for every day you see with your eyes
how this world goes and how men die.
Know this well, that you shall suffer
as others have done, and also die;
in that matter it does not help at all to lie—
no man can oppose death.

The songs of St. Godric

Normally, we don't know who wrote a medieval song, or even if there was one author as such, since in that time and place there wasn't a sense of ownership of a song, and people felt free to tinker with the words and the music. However, we can be certain of the authorship of three songs: Sainte Marie viergene, Crist and Sainte Marie, and Sainte Nicholas. These were written by St. Godric and included in his biography, written by Reginald of Durham. Since St. Godric died in 1170, we can establish these songs as the oldest songs written in English with extant melodies.

Reginald describes him this way:

"For he was vigorous and strenuous in mind, whole of limb and strong in body. He was of middle stature, broad-shouldered and deep-chested, with a long face, grey eyes most clear and piercing, bushy brows, a broad forehead, long and open nostrils, a nose of comely curve, and a pointed chin. His beard was thick, and longer than the ordinary, his mouth well-shaped, with lips of moderate thickness; in youth his hair was black, in age as white as snow; his neck was short and thick, knotted with veins and sinews; his legs were somewhat slender, his instep high, his knees hardened and horny with frequent kneeling; his whole skin rough beyond the ordinary, until all this roughness was softened by old age..."

Born around 1069, Godric began as a traveling peddler and eventually worked his way up to being part owner of a few ships and engaging in international trade. (Well, possibly piracy, but never mind.) He decided to become a hermit after becoming increasingly religious and completing multiple pilgrimages. He did not find it easy to leave the life of the world behind, however. After a time alone, he joined another hermit, Aelric, and after Aelric's death made another pilgrimage and recommenced his life as a merchant for a while. He returned to being a hermit, however, and after trying out two other locations, finally settled down in Finchale on the Wear, where he stayed for fifty years.

Godric was known for his sympathy for and communication with animals. He is said to have freed trapped animals, warmed shivering animals with his body, and sheltered the hunted, many of which ran to his hut as a place of safety. He also told deer and rabbits to leave his garden and orchards alone, and they are said to have obeyed.

Godric was said to have had the gift of prophecy, foretelling the deaths of St. Thomas a Becket and Bishop William of Durham. He would also stop mid-sentence to pray for ships that he perceived were in distress. (Tip of the day: can't arrange to page yourself during an annoying conversation? Tell people you've suddenly perceived that a ship is in danger and start praying.) Godric claimed to have been troubled by

devils in visible form for the last eight years of his life.

Crist and Sainte Marie

At one point, Godric was worried about the fate of his dead sister, Burgwen. In a vision, Burgwen appeared to him with two angels, reassuring him about the state of her soul with this song.

Angel to the right of the altar: Kyrie eleison
Angel to the left of the altar: Christe eleison

Burgwen: Crist and Sainte Marie
swa on scamel me iledde,
that ich on this erthe ne silde
with mine bare footen itredde.

Lord have mercy,
Christ have mercy.

Christ and St. Mary
thus brought me to the [altar] table,
so that I on this earth should not
tread with my bare feet.

Sainte marie viergene

Godric told his biographer that he had seen a vision of the Virgin Mary and Mary Magdalene. The Virgin taught him to sing this song, telling him that if he were tired or in pain or felt himself succumbing to temptation, he should sing this song and she would come immediately to his aid.

Sainte Marie viergene, moder Jesu Cristes
Nazarene,
onfoo, schild, help thin Godrich;
onfange, bring heyliche with thee in Godes
riche.

Sainte Marie, Christes bur,
maidenes clenhad, moderes flur,
dilie min sinne, rix in min mood;
bring me to winne with the selfe God.

St. Mary the Virgin, mother of Jesus Christ the
Nazarene,
receive, shield, help thy Godric;
when received, bring [him] honorably with thee into
God's kingdom.

St. Mary, Christ's bed-chamber
(virginal purity, flower of mothers),
blot out my sin, rule in my spirit,
bring me to bliss with the very God.

Sainte Nicholas

Godric's biographer writes that during an Easter visit to Godric's hermitage, he was awakened by Godric singing this song. When asked the reason for his song, Godric explained that he had seen St. Nicholas and some angels singing at the grave of Christ, and that he couldn't help but join in.

Sainte Nicholas, Godes druth,
tymbre us faiere scoone hus.
At thi burthe, at thi bare,
Sainte Nicholas, bring us wel thare.

St. Nicholas, God's darling,
graciously prepare for us beautiful dwellings.
By [the merits of] thy birth, by [the merits of] thy bier,
St. Nicolas, bring us safely there.

Brid by a strem—recorder improvisation

When the nightgale singes

One of the few lyrics in which we think, just maybe, that she might love him back, this text has lost any accompanying tune it may have had. Here is my own setting.

When the nightgale singes, the wodes waxen
grene;
lef and gras and blosme springes in Averil, I wene,
and love is to myn herte gon with one spere so kene:
night and day my blood it drinkes, myn herte deth
me tene.

Ich have loved al this yer, that I may love na more;
ich have siked many sik, lemman, for thyn ore;
me n'is love never the ner, and that me reweth sore:
swete lemman, thench on me! Ich have loved thee
yore.

Swete lemman, I praye thee of love one speche;
whil i live in world so wide other n'ille I seche.
With thy love, my swete leef, my blis thou mightes
eche;
a swete coss of thy mouth mighte be my leche.

Swete lemman, I praye thee of a love-bene:
If thou me lovest as men says, lemman, as I wene,
And if it thy wille be, thou loke that it be sene;
So muchel I thenke upon thee that al I waxe grene.
Betwene Lincolne and Lindeseye, Northamptoun
and Lounde,
Ne wot I non so fair a may as I go fore y-bounde.
Swete lemman, I praye thee, thou lovie me a stonde!
I wile mone my song
On whom that it is on y-long.

When the nightingale sings, the woods grow green;
leaf and grass and blossom spring forth in April, I
think,
and love has gone to my heart with such a keen
spear:
night and day my blood it drinks, my heart hurts
me to death.

I have loved all this year, in such a way that I can
love no more;
I have sighed many a sigh, beloved, for your mercy;
love is never the nearer to me, and that grieves me:
sweet beloved, think on me! I have loved you a long
time.

Sweet beloved, I beg you for one word of love;
while I live in the world so wide, no other [woman]
will I seek.
With your love, my sweet darling, my happiness
you could increase;
a sweet kiss of your mouth could be my physician.

Sweet beloved, I beg you for a sign of your affection,
if you love me as men say, beloved, as I hope.
And if it be your will, see that it is apparent!
So much do I think upon you that I grow all green.

Between Lincoln and Lindsey, Northampton and
Lincolnshire,
I know no maiden so fair as she for whom I go
enchained.
Sweet beloved, I pray you, love me for a while!
I will declare my song
to her whom it concerns.

– Robin Snyder

Caveats and credits:

I have obtained the Middle English texts from anthologies, some of which have substituted other medieval spellings for those in the original source.

The modern English translations are taken from several sources; I have made occasional minor changes. The translations for *Brid one breer*, *The milde Lomb*, *Ar ne kuth*, *Man mai longe lives weene*, *Stond wel, moder*, *under roode*, *Worldes blis*, *Crist and Sainte Marie*, *Sainte Marie viergene*, and *Sainte Nicholas* come from *Medieval English Songs*, E.J. Dobson and F.Ll. Harrison, Cambridge University Press, New York, 1979. The translations for *Lenten is come*, *Lutel wot hit any mon*, and *A wayle whyt* come from *Wessex Parallel Web Texts*, <http://www.soton.ac.uk>. The translation for *When the nightgale singes* is based on the notes in *The Oxford Book of Medieval English Verse*, eds. Celia and Kenneth Sisam, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1973. The translation for *Nou goth sonne under wod* is my own.