

1. Where to start: Quotes, Texts and Sources

Poverty Knock

The Song Lyrics

(Roud 3491; trad. Tom Daniel from Batley, West Yorkshire)

Chorus: poverty poverty knock, me loom it is saying all day
 poverty poverty knock, th' gaffer's too skinny to pay
 poverty poverty knock, we've always one eye on the clock
 I know I can guttle when I hear me shuttle
 go poverty poverty knock

up in the morning at five,
it's a wonder that we stay alive
it sets me a-yawning to greet the cold dawning
and back to that dreary old drive

oh dear, we're going to be late,
the gaffer 'e's stood at the gate
we'll be out of pocket our wages he'll docket
we'll have to get grub on the slate

sometimes a shuttle flies out
and gives some poor woman a clout
while she lies there bleeding there's no bugger heeding
for who's going to carry her out

the tacker should see to me loom,
but I just can't get 'im to come.
he's too bloody busy a-courting our Lizzie
and 'e always sits on his bum.

our lizzie's so easily led,
we think that he takes her to bed
she used to be skinny, now look at her pinny
we think it's high time they were wed.

Quotes about its Origins

Source: <https://mainlynorfolk.info/folk/songs/povertyknock.html> (accessed 2.2.2016)

Peter Coe (artist recording a version 1989 on *A Right Song and Dance*):

The probable writer of Poverty Knock was Tom Daniel, a weaver from [Batley]. I met him in about 1970, shortly before he died. He was born around 1890, left school at 11 and worked in various mills around Western Yorkshire and did other jobs too, outside of weaving. The story he

apparently told was that he'd remembered bits of the song from his early years. However, the song bears striking resemblance to many of the poems that he did write. The collector of the song, Tony Green, reckons he wrote it too. I'm told there's no surviving relatives to claim royalties so as it's been designated a "traditional" song for so long, that's how it's usually referred to.

The song also appeared on Roy Harris' LP, *The Bitter and the Sweet* (1972). A.L. Lloyd commented in the sleeve notes:

This song has taken on a new lease of life since 1965 when A.E. Green recorded it from an elderly weaver of Batley, who had started work in the mills some sixty years previously, and remembered the song from then. The clatter of the old Dobbie loom sounded as if it was saying: "Poverty knock!" all the time. One verse refers to a woman injured by being struck by a flying shuttle. That no-one went to her aid was not due to hardheartedness but to the economic anxiety of poor weavers on piecework, who lost money if they stopped.

Social Comment

Source: <https://mainlynorfolk.info/folk/songs/povertyknock.html> (accessed 2.2.2016)

Chumbawamba in the "English Rebel Songs 1381-1984" (reissue 2003) sleeve notes:

Poverty Knock is a factory-workers' song, written to be sung over the rhythm of the flying shuttles and clankings of mill machinery. Conditions of the cloth mills of the 1890's, when this song was written, were hot, noisy, and dangerous. Injury and even death from the awkward and unsafe weaving machines was commonplace. And yet the continual knocking of the shuttle was at least a surety that you'd be able to eat—"guttle"—in a time when unemployment still meant virtual starvation and misery.

Far from bringing safer, more leisurely work, the advances of automation meant only that the bosses could screw more production out of fewer people for less money. From the Luddites to the cotton-machinists to the print workers of today, the master/boss relationship is unchanged. Threat of unemployment keeps wages low, keeps workers in fear of a willing workforce waiting to take any available job, keeps the boss's profits high. For how long will these songs be sung? When will we sing only of pleasure, leisure, and victory?

Differences in tunes words

Search results on Youtube for Poverty Knock

https://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=poverty+knock

Some versions that illustrate variations

Jim Moray: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bRdO_jpg3Lo

Houghton Weavers: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Blw5_H9aw-U

Chumbawamba: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nfwJ387cs00>

Peter Coe: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3hoyXmJGXHo>

Raymond Croke: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UtPk9U2Ukbo>

Roy Harris (Topic Records 1972): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JgXiYJzb5bw>

Definition of Folk Song

As given by the International Folk Music Council:

Folk music is the product of a musical tradition that has been evolved through the process of oral transmission. The factors that shape the tradition are: (i) continuity which links the present with the past; (ii) variation which springs from the creative impulse of the individual or the group; and (iii) selection by the community, which determines the form or forms in which the music survives. The term can be applied to music that has been evolved from rudimentary beginnings by a community uninfluenced by popular or art music and it can likewise be applied to music which has originated with an individual composer and has subsequently been absorbed into the unwritten living tradition of a community.

The term does not cover composed popular music that has been taken over ready-made by a community and remains unchanged, for it is the refashioning and re-creation of the music that gives it its folk character. (*Journal of the International Folk Music Council* 7 (1955), p. 23.)

The Unquiet Grave

The Unquiet Grave

Hammond D. 483, Jane Hann, Stoke Abbot, Dorset, June 1906

The musical score is written in 4/4 time with a key signature of one flat (Bb). It consists of four staves of music, each with a label above it: Part A1, Part A2, Part B, and Part A2. The lyrics are written below the notes. Chords are indicated above the staff lines.

Part A1: Dm Bb F C Dm Am
How plea-sant is the wind to night I feel some drops of rain

Part A2: Dm Bb F C F G Dm
I ne-ver had but one true love and in green-wood she lies slain

Part B: F Dm C Am Dm Am
I'll do so much for my true love as a - ny young man may

Part A2: Dm Bb F C Dm G Dm
I'll sit and mourn all on her grave for a twelve-month and a day.

The twelve-month and one day being up,

The ghost began to speak.

Why sit you here and mourn for me

And will not let me sleep?

What do you want of me, sweetheart

Or what is it you crave?

I want one kiss of your lily-white lips,

And that is all I crave.

My lips they are as cold as clay,

My breath be heavy and strong.

You have one kiss of my lily-white lips,

Your life will not be long.

My life be't long or short, sweetheart,

But that is all I crave,

Then I shall be along with you,

A-lying in my grave.

'Twas down in Cupid's Garden,

Where you and I would walk

The finest flower that ever was there

Is withered to a stalk.

Is withered to a stalk, sweetheart,

The flower will never return,

And since I lost my own sweetheart,

What can I do but mourn?

Oh don't you see the fire sweetheart

The fire that burns so blue?

Where my poor soul tormented is,

While I stay here with you.

And if you wasn't my own sweetheart

As I know well you be,

I'd rend you up in pieces small,

As leaves upon the tree.

Mourn not for me, my dearest dear,

Mourn not for me, I crave.

I must leave you and all the world,

And turn into my grave.