

Mosti ryden by Rybbesdale
The fair maid of Ribblesdale

Most I ryden by Rybbesdale
Wilde wymmen forte wale,
Ant welde wuch Ich wolde,
Founde were the **feyrest on**,
That ever wes mad of blod ant bon,
In boure best with bolde.

Ase sonnebem, hire bleo ys briht —
In uche londe heo leometh liht,
Thourh tale, as mon me tolde.

The lylie lossum is ant long,
With riche rose ant rode among,
A fyldor fax to folde.

Hire hed when Ich biholde apon,
The sonnebeem aboute noon
Me thohte that Y seye;
Hyre eyyen aren grete ant gray ynoh;
That lussom, when heo on me loh,
Ybend wax eyther breye.

The mone with hire muchele maht
Ne leneth non such lyht anaht
(That is in heovene heye)
Ase hire forhed doth in day!

For wham, thus, muche Y mourne may
For duel to deth Y dreyye!

Heo hath browes bend an heh,
Whyt bytuene ant nout to neh;
Lussum lyf heo ledes.

Hire neose ys set as hit wel semeth;
Y deye for deth that me demeth,
Hire speche as spices spredes.
Hire lockes lefly aren ant longe,
For sone he mihte hire murthes monge
With blisse, when hit bredes.

Hire chyn ys chosen, ant **eyther cheke**
Whit ynoh ant rode on eke
Ase roser when hit redes.

Heo hath a mury mouht to mele,
With lefly rede lippes lele,
Romauns forte rede;

Hire teht aren white ase bon of whal,
Evene set ant atled al,
Ase hende mowe taken hede;

Swannes swyre swythe wel ysette,
A sponne lengore then Y mette,
That freoly ys to fede.

Me were levere kepe hire come
Then beon pope ant ryde in Rome,
Stythes upon stede.

¶ If I were to ride through Ribblesdale
To choose among **sensuous** women,
And possess whichever one I wanted,
I would discover the **fairest one**,
Who was ever made of blood and bone,
In the finest bower for the bold.

Like a sunbeam, her face is radiant —
In every land she shines brightly,
By all accounts, as someone told me.

The lily is lovely and slender,
With pink and rose richly intermingled,
A gold thread to bind her hair.

When I gaze upon her head,
The sunbeam at around noon
I thought I saw;
Her eyes are large and deeply blue;
That lovely one, when she smiled at me,
Curved became both her brows.

The moon with her great power
Does not grant such light at night
(Which is high in heaven)
As does her forehead in the day!

For this one, thus, I must sorely yearn
As mortal anguish I endure!

She has brows arched and nobly high,
White between and not too close;
A delightful life she leads.

Her nose is shaped as well beseems it;
I die a death, as she condemns me,
Her speech wafts like spices.
Her locks are beautiful and long,
And readily she might be festive
With joy, when it falls loose.

Her chin is adorable, and **each cheek**
Beautifully white and also rosy
Like the rosebush when it reddens.

She has a merry mouth for speaking,
With lips a lovely red and true,
By which to read romances;

Her teeth are white as bone of whale,
Evenly set and all arranged,
As the courteous may observe;

A swan's neck very well proportioned,
A span longer than any other I've met,
Is there to feed that beauty.

I would rather await her arrival
Than be the pope and ride in Rome,
Most powerful on a steed.

<p>When Y byholde upon hire hond, The lylie-white lef in lond, Best heo mihte beo; Eyther arm an elne long (Baloygne mengeth al bymong), Ase baum ys hire bleo. Fyngres heo hath feir to folde: Myhte Ich hire have ant holde, In world wel were me! Hyre tyttes aren anunder bis As apples tuo of parays — Ouself ye mowen seo.</p> <p>Hire gurdel of bete gold is al: Umben hire middel smal, That triketh to the to, Al whith rubies on a rowe Withinne corven, craft to knowe, Ant emeraudes mo. The bocle is al of whalles bon: Ther withinne stont a ston That warneth men from wo; The water that hit wetes yn, Ywis, hit wortheth al to wyn! That seyen seyden so.</p> <p>Heo hath a mete myddel smal, Body ant brest wel mad al, Ase feynes withoute fere: Eyther side soft ase sylk, Whittore then the moren mylk, With leofly lit on lere. Al that Ich ou nempne noht, Hit is wonder welywroht — Ant elles wonder were! He myhte sayen that Crist hym seye That myhte nyhtes neh hyre leye — Hevene he hevede here!</p> <p>Original text, edited by Fein. S. G.</p>	<p>When I gaze upon her hand, The lily-white treasure on earth, Best she must be; With either arm an ell long (Whale-bone white mingles overall), Like balsam is her skin. She has fingers fair to clasp: Were I her to have and hold, In world I would be well! Her breasts are under fine linen Like two apples of paradise — As you yourself may see.</p> <p>Her belt is all of delicate gold leaf: Around her slender waist, It hangs down to the toe, Adorned with rubies in a row Exquisitely carved, with knowing craft, And emeralds besides. The buckle is of pure whale's bone: There within stands a stone Guarding men from woe; The water in which it's dipped, Indeed, completely turns to wine! They who've seen have said so.</p> <p>She has a well-shaped narrow waist, Body and breast all well designed, Like phoenix without peer: Either side as soft as silk, Whiter than the morning milk, With lovely hue in cheek. Everything I don't name for you Is itself wondrously well made — Or else that would be strange! He might claim Christ favors him Who can at night lie near her — Heaven he would have here!</p> <p>Translated text</p>
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