Quest for a Kingdom
(written to a set topic for a Meistersing by the Tanist of the East)

Comes now an errant knight of Tregirtsea;
How can I quest a kingdom who have found
An empty throne beside the eastern sea
And know that more than serfs are sovereigns bound.
All quests are ended when a King is crowned;
It were for England a more fortunate thing
Had Barbarossa lived and Richard drowned
For where is quest sufficient to a King?

But what and where’s my Kingdom? Can it be
This tattered cloak, this faded purple gown,
An empty chair beside the restless sea?
To such dead things must Eastern Kings be bound?
Nay, few would fight for such a leaden crown.
Not though the land were gardens in the spring
And mine to watch it blooming from the ground;
There were no quest sufficient to a king.

Only the crown descendeth unto me.
The Kingdom’s no more solid than a sound
That must be built on air unceasingly
And to that labor must a King be bound.
There is the light that burns above the crown,
Fair goal and farthest grail of wandering;
The new crowned King who searches far around
Will find no quest sufficient to a King.

A Kingdom is all dike-land and must drown
Save that its Lord do battle with the sea.
To that long labour must a King be bound.
There is the quest sufficient to a King.

[Tournaments Illuminated, very many years ago]

Dawn Over Barrendown

There in the east the sky grows grey,
Paling the stars. No clouds today
To mirror dawn above the sun.
The stars go out, the sky is bright,
One last blue day before the night,
The long night is begun.

And now the links of hammered steel,
Heavier than before; their feel
Is cold, but in their heavy smell
Twelve battles bitter long, and her,
Cold fingers on Excalibur.
My comrades of those battles swell
Mordred’s grim ranks this quiet day.
Above my head the sky pales grey;
The sunlight touches on the hill;
Only the guards are up, and I
To seek some aid from the empty sky.
I hear no bird, the leaves are still.

There is no voice to answer me,
Lancelot dreams beyond the sea;
Neither forgiveness, hope, nor fear
May call him back in time. Most wise
Merlin sleeps drowned in Nimue’s eyes,
While far away dreams Guenivere.

Alone at last, and I am old,
And age has dulled my sword edge, cold
Has warped my grain. The lance will break.
And these new knights that ride with me
Are only children. Do they see
There where the oak shadows the lake
More than the morning mist? I see
A northern axe against the tree,
A floating leaf with a dragon head.
Mirror smooth the silver lake
But spring will come, the North wind wake,
And the quiet beach run red.

At last the time is come to die,
My last sun burns across the sky,
Britain’s last wall comes down today.
I, Comes Brittanorum, I
My last sun hurries up the sky
To burn that name away.

(Written in 1965, before the SCA existed)
William the Marshall is come into France
To win him renown with his sword and his lance;
In all that fair country no knight can be found
In battle or tourney to cast William down.

William the Marshall right loyal was he
And valiant in service to good King Henry;
On the helms of the French knights he made his steel ring
And beside them fought Richard, the son of our king.

King Philip of France thought the war he had won
When he leagued with Count Richard, our king's eldest son,
For an aging king's knights very rarely are known
To blithely bear steel 'gainst the heir to the throne.

Count Richard was doughty and heavy of hand
And called no man master through France or England
But William the Marshall, through all of the West,
Had fought in no combat save he proved the best.

It chanced that our army had suffered a rout
From which fled the king with but few men about;
Them did Count Richard most fiercely pursue
And his company likewise was valiant but few.

Quoth Henry "Good comrades, the foe follow fast;
We have fought many battles, but this is the last."
"Nay Sire" said William "I think it not so.
By Your leave I remain here to hinder the foe."

So William the Marshall, with one knight beside,
His leige lord to save turned him back in his ride;
His shield on his arm and his lance couched low
He wheeled round his horse and rode straight at the foe.

Count Richard leads rashly, with three men or four,
So quickly he'd come that no armor he wore;
Straight at the leaders rides William in wrath
With Richard Plantagenet right in his path.

They say that Count Richard was valiant and fell,
A Lion in battle, as many tales tell,
But even a hero is apt to get hurt
When the best lance in Europe comes aimed at--his shirt.

Count Richard was valiant and royally proud,
Yet he stood in his stirrups and shouted aloud:
"O slay me not Marshall, for armor I've none
And to slay me unarmored right basely 'twere done."

Sir William replied, for his rage it was hot,
"The Devil may slay you, the Marshall will not."
He slackened not his charge and he bent not his course
But his lance point came down and he slew--Richard's horse.

This only remains: ere a month passed away
King Henry of England upon his bier lay;
In grief were his knights there, all standing around,
When to them came Richard, the Heir to the crown.
Seeing the Marshall he called him apart:
"But lately you sought with your lance for my heart. You charged me unarmored and I would be dead But your lance struck my arm and my horse died instead."

"Nay Sire" said William "you do me great wrong My eye is still clear and my arm is still strong. I struck where I aimed; had I wished it instead Your horse would still live and his rider be dead."

"I sought for your death neither then nor before But would think it no crime to have slain you in war."
"Be pardoned" said Richard "I'll bear you no ire And pray that men serve me as you served my sire."

(Part 3)

For loyally serving his dying lord
William the Marshall was given in ward
A virtuous maiden, wise and fair,
Strongbow's daughter and only heir.

The rest of that tale is easy to tell;
William is wedded with Isabel.
The bachelor knight who lived by his sword
In the space of a night is become a lord,

Mighty in men and gold and rights;
Her Norman lands feed forty-three knights,
In Pembroke itself, if all else fails,
He can rule like a prince on the Marches of Wales.

But better still does Isabel bring;
Her mother was daughter to Leinster's king,
A quarter of Ireland wedded and won
By Richard Strongbow—who had no son.

Long in tourney and battle field
Has William labored with lance and shield,
First and foremost in all men's sight,
Never defeated in any fight.

But now the knight plays a bigger game,
Earl of Pembroke in all but name,
A wealthy baron in Normandy,
All but a king by the Irish sea.

The Angevin holdings everywhere
Are held from Richard as Henry's heir
Save only that John, by their father's command,
Is paramount lord of Ireland.

A baron in England or Normandy
Holds from Richard his lands in fee;
But William holds, by Isabel's hand,
A fourth of a kingdom from John Lackland.

Richard is off on the long crusade,
England is full of rumor and raid,
Each against all with an eye to the throne—
William sits silent and guards his own.

Richard is taken and held for gold,
Now is the hour when truth is told;
John goes after his brother's crown.
William stands loyal and John goes down.

Richard is back, and at his side
The Bishop of Ely stands in pride,
A baseborn clerk but a loyal man
Who serves his King with a heavy hand.

"Sire, safe you can never be
While John is a sovereign across the sea;
It would therefor be wise in defense of your crown
That the Irish Barons to you should kneel down."

"My brother John holds Ireland free
From our father's hand and not from me.
In England John has no strength to stand
But how am I sovereign of Ireland?"

"Sire, though John has a weighty claim,
You are his master in might and fame.
Though strong in law his case must yield
For parchment is not proof to steel.

On either side of either sea
What lord to John shows loyalty?
If Ireland you claim today
Where is the knight to say you nay?"

Ely fell silent, and looked at his lord.
The king stood in thought with a hand on his sword
Looking out over the glittering crowd
Then turned to the Bishop and cried out aloud:
"By the legs of sweet Jesus, see there where there stands
The greatest Baron in Ireland.
Go speak to the Marshall and prove here tonight
If the barons of Ireland kneel or will fight."

As straight and as silent as arrow from string
The Bishop sped off at the word of the king
And passing by many of power and pride
Went straight to the Marshall and drew him aside.

"Good Marshall, Sir William, as all men can see,
Prince John is defeated in base treachery.
Therefore I bring you King Richard's command
That you kneel now to him for your Irish land."

The knight replied "I will bow down
For English land to the English crown,
Richard by right holds the English throne
But how can he claim what he does not own?

I am a knight and owe my sword
For English lands to my English lord
But Leinster never was English land
Nor Richard Sovereign of Ireland."  

So loud his voice rang through the hall
That men could hear him from wall to wall;
Richard stood silent and all beside
While loud the Bishop in wrath replied.

"I see a knight to his sovereign's cost
Planting a garden against the frost.
None can doubt it a prudent thing
To serve a prince who may yet be king."

The knight replied, "as you desire,
Plant, Sir Priest, with vine or briar;
Some might think it a perilous thing
To stand for justice against a King.

But a knight must cleave with lance and sword
And all his strength to his spoken word;
Pembroke I hold from Richard's hand
But Leinster as his brother's man.

When John went after his brother's crown
I did my best to pull him down.
If Richard is claiming his brother's land
I will withstand him as best I can."

Richard strode to the Marshall's side:
"It seems, good Bishop, your test is tried.
And I think my crown I can safely wear
While my knights hold true to the oaths they swear."

Two Voices

There is nothing above the King,
No power to speak him nay;
This is the hour of anything,
The dawn of my golden day.

This is the law behind the king:
Greater power, greater bond.
Who might order anything
Must bend to the breeze like a willow wand.

There is nothing written above my throne.
No strength can cast me down.
The kingdom and power are mine alone
By the sword that won my crown.

This is the law behind the king:
In feast or famine, in peace or war,
He is not master of anything,
The poorest peasant is richer far.

The knights with their shining swords;
By right of might they are mine.
The people, their beasts and their lords;
Ghost be gone with thy riddle rhyme.

Son be done with thy foolish words;
No man may rule my land,
No man can master a hundred swords
Whatever the strength of his hand.

Rule for power and pride
Alone in an empty hall;
Serve or step aside
The King is a servant or nothing at all.
Hildebrandslied
*(Lay of Hildebrand. Old German c. 800 A.D.)*

I have heard it told
How between two hosts the heroes
Hiltibrant and Hadubrante
Son and father fought together
Fought apart. The heroes fasten
Well tried war coats. Over ring shirts
Belt their brands on, ride to battle.
Hiltibrant the ancient hero
Asked the other his ancestry
Who among the hosts his father
What his family. "Noble folk
Ken I all within the kingdom
So your sire's name suffices."
Hadubrant spoke Hiltibrantson
"Ancients of the tribe have told me
Hiltibrante hight my father
I hight Hadubrant.
He fled east from Odoacer's
royal wrath fled Hiltibrante
With his warriors to Theotrih.
Left behind him wife in bower
Babe and young wife both behind him.
Theotrih that was so friendless
First of all his men my father
Loved who loathing Odoacer,
Joyed in battle brave at forefront
Brave men knew him well he died
I doubt not long ago."
Hiltibrant spoke, Heribrantson
"God hold witness from the heavens
Never be thou battle met
With so close to thee a kinsman."
Drew the arm rings, king gifts golden,
From his arm the Hun king's presents
"These I give thee glad in friendship."
Hadubrant spoke, Hiltibrantson,
"Such things seek I with my spear point
Point to point in open battle.
You are old in craft, most cunning,
When your words make me unawary
Then your spear throw quick will kill me
You grew old by such deception.
Word comes over western waters
Sailors bring it, say in battle
Dead is Hiltibrante Heribrantson."
"From your brand and bright ring jerkin
I can see your lord is kindly.
From his hand thou never had
Exile and cruelty, God me pity Comes my fate.
Thirty summers, thirty winters, I have wandered
Held the front in each fierce battle
Stormed before the walls still no man
Brought me death in any battle.
Now my son's brand batters me down
Else I slay him with my sword.
If thou hast courage come with death
Winning warcoat from warrior old
An easy task to him who for such things has any
right.
Not the most fearful of Eastern folk
Could fight deny, thou art so eager come; see of us
who
Gives up his battle coat who brings home two."
The heavy ashen spears they hurl like rain
To cluster in the shields. They close on foot
Breaking the battle shields with heavy blows
Splitting them till the fragments fall apart
Broken by blows...
*(The original ends here; apparently the copyist ran
out of room)*
...Now blade is loud on blade
Twice Hiltibrante bleeds, but not heart's blood.
A third time Hadubrant brings down his sword
Full on his father's helm.
The blade falls, fountains fire, the helm
Groans like a gong glances the blow.
Then Hadubrant cries aloud "Curse on the
crippled blade
The old hun's head is hard as fire rock
His helm defends him though his blade is dumb
His craft is in this treasure and his tongue
I'll split them both." Throws down his broken shield
With both hands wheels his sword up to the height.
Hadubrant lets fall the blow. Hiltibrant flings high
his shield.
The broken oak binds fast the falling blade.
Then Hiltibrante, hot with rage
Strikes with a heavy hand. The blow goes home
Bursting the rings beneath the helmet rim
Through golden collar and through collar bone,
Broken, battering a way.
Hadubrant falls. With both hands
Hiltibrant tugs out the blade. Blood follows.
Hadubrant, Hiltibrantson
Dies in his blood while weeps above
Hiltibrant, Heribrantson.
The Merry Holt
(Melody by Johanna of Dendermonde)

There is a holt, a Merry Holt,
Below the Tree Girt Sea
And there Two Maidens sit them down
With certain Ladies of Renown
A mock to make of King and Crown
And half the chivalry.

They wrote a song, and another song
And another two or three;
They held not back from any sin
They spared them neither kith nor kin
Nor their good lord sweet Laurelin
From scorn and mockery.

When winters come and breezes numb
Blow from the Treegirt Sea
The Ladies of the Merry Holt
They mostly ward them from the cold
As Tristram warded Queen Iseult
And Isolde of Brittany.

Alas the maids have no such aids
To keep them snug and warm;
All winter long these maidens sweet
Maintain their blood at fever heat
Inventing tales I'll not repeat
And thereby do great harm.

Such serpent's tongue in head so young
A wonder it must be
But it is told in Merry Holt
For maids so fair to grow so old
And keep their Heads the ladies hold
A greater prodigy.

There is a holt, a Merry Holt,....

The Bees' Tale

There was a lonely castle
On a little travelled way;
A weary knight came riding there
At the close of an autumn day.

The drawbridge came a-clanging down
The door swung open wide;
The Castellan stood there himself
To bid the knight inside.

"Be welcome here most noble sir
As long as you would bide;
To guest all weary travellers
It is my boast and pride."

"For I have sworn a mighty oath
By her I held most dear:
Not hungry, nay nor thirsty goeth
Any man from here."

The knight was bathed in water warm
And garbed in linen white,
Then joined that merry Castellan
And feasted through the night.

The feast was fine, the hall was fair,
With rushes on the floor.
Such mead as there unstinting flowed
He'd tasted not before.
An hour before the sun came up  
They staggered off to bed.  
The hour was late for journeying  
When the knight raised up his head.

The hour was late for journeying,  
The host he bade him stay  
Another night to rest him ere  
He went upon his way.

Another night he feasted and  
The mead in gallons flowed;  
The sext-bell rang for noontime  
Ere he was upon his road.

The sext bell rings for noontide but  
The vespers sets the sun;  
He heard it ring above him and  
He knew the day was done.

He heard it ring above him from  
That castle fair to see,  
Returned there, ye may suppose,  
By subtle sorcery.

But truth to tell there was no spell  
Save such as all men know.  
If he returned it was because  
He did not wish to go.

For errant knights see quite a lot  
Of war and desperate deeds  
Of maids, crusades and bloody raids  
But very little mead.

So every night he drained his cup  
And filled it up again.  
Both host and guest we may suppose  
Were very merry men.

The knight was gaunt when first he came  
But he started filling out,  
For seven gallons every night  
Would make a hermit stout.

The barrels of that buttery  
Were wide and deep indeed;  
But seven gallons every night  
Is quite a lot of mead.

So while the guest waxed fatter  
The buttery waned thin;  
The Castellan grew worried so  
He called his daughter in.

Now the daughter of that Castellan  
Was known far and wide  
As a paragon of virtues, but  
Her brewing was her pride.

She walked among her honey bees  
And told them what to do;  
She set the garden buzzing then  
She started in to brew.

She scoured her largest cauldron;  
She filled it to the top.  
She buzzed around her kitchen like  
A human humming top.

The knight he kept on drinking, but  
The mead-line did not sink;  
The daughter filled the barrels up  
As fast as he could drink.

But when a month had passed so  
Though he was fain to stay  
The knight told the Castellan he  
Must be upon his way.

He set off for his castle old  
And it was strange to see  
His steed, though sleek and full of grass  
Yet labored wearily.

He labored wearily to bear  
What he had born before,  
For though the beast was nothing less  
The man was something more.

So off he goes and you suppose  
That ends at last my song.  
So did that much tried Castellan  
And both of you are wrong.

For on a day in early May  
The knight came back again  
And at his back his squires rode  
Full seven thirsty men.

The Castellan he watched them come  
And oh his heart was sore;  
But he thought upon his mighty oath  
And opened wide the door.
He opened wide the door to them
Although his heart it sank;
The knight and seven squires came in
And drank and drank and drank.

Now God forfend my tale should end
With every barrel dry;
No faster can the brewer brew
Nor honeybees can fly.
Despair is on the daughter's face,
A tear is in her eye.

And so the knight he found her
In a garden full of bees;
He took her hand in both of his
And sank upon his knees.
"I have returned to ask" he said
"If thou wilt wed with me.
For mead is not the treasure
That brings me back to thee."

The maiden she consented,
The Castellan did too,
Though he ill could spare his daughter
Yet at the least he knew
It was someone else's problem to
Fill up that thirsty crew.

The wedding was a merry one
Proclaimed throughout the land
And so Sir Gyrth was wedded to
The gentle Melisande.

The moral of my story
Is plain enough to see:
The fool's content with honey;
The wise man takes the bee.

**Two Provençal Poems**

**Dawn Song Us cavaliers si jazia**
*by Bertran d'Alamano (fl. 1230-1260)
or Gaucelm Faidir (fl. 1180-1215)*

A knight beside his sweet desire
Between his kisses makes inquire:
Sweet, what is to do my dear?
Dark must end as day draws near.
I hear the watchman's 'Up away,'
On the heels of dawn runs day.

Sweet, if day and dawn for ever
Ended were that lovers sever,
Best of blessings where true knight
Lies beside his best delight.
I hear the watchman's 'Up away,'
On the heels of dawn runs day.

Sweet be there is no smarting
Pain can match with lover's parting;
I myself can count its pains
By how little night remains.
I hear the watchman's 'Up away,'
On the heels of dawn runs day.

Sweet, I go but leave thee knowing
I am thine wherever going:
Keep me ever in thy mind
For my heart remains behind.
I hear the watchman's 'Up away,'
On the heels of dawn runs day.

Sweet, without you death would find me,
Love put all my life behind me.
I'll be back as soon as fled,
For without you I am dead.
I hear the watchman's 'Up away,'
On the heels of dawn runs day.

*Riposte Ma domna am de bona guiza*
*Anonymous*

My Lady hath my heart to rule
Yet am I not some lovesick fool.

I pray the Lord to save me not
If ere I gave save as I got.

Her love in truth is what I pray for–
But will not have if I must pay for.

Her love for me is honor–yes
But mine for her no honor less

(based on prose translations by Willard R. Trask
The Froggy Woods

Composed in honor of the Most Noble Baron
Sir Francois du Vent
At His Investiture in His Barony of Draconia
(To the tune of The Tailor and The Mouse)

With sword and spear to have a romp
Hi-diddle-ump-cum feedle
We all went down to the Dragon Swamp
Hi-diddle-ump-cum feedle

Chorus:

Hi-diddle-ump-cum
Tarum, Tantum
Through the froggy woods oh
Hi-diddle-ump-cum over the lea
Hi-diddle-ump-cum feedle

Just at the first watch of the night
Hi-diddle-ump-cum feedle
We heard the frogs to left and right
Hi-diddle-ump-cum feedle

(Chorus)

But when the night was half along
Hi-diddle-ump-cum feedle
It seemed that half the frogs were gone
Hi-diddle-ump-cum feedle

(Chorus)

And when the dawn was growing near
Hi-diddle-ump-cum feedle
Not a croak assailed the ear
Hi-diddle-ump-cum feedle

(Chorus)

If you know where the frogs have gone
Hi-diddle-ump-cum feedle
Then you have understood my song
Hi-diddle-ump-cum feedle

(Chorus)

Francois says that dinner's hot
Hi-diddle-ump-cum feedle
Guess what's bubbling in his pot
Hi-diddle-ump-cum feedle

The Devil and Eugénie

(Tune: The Devil and the Farmer's Wife)

It chanced to the Baron of Isleway
Rightfu, rightfu, titty fy day
It chanced to the Baron of Isleway
That the Devil came to him and to him did say
With a rightfu rightfu, titty fy day.

"See here Baron John I have come for your fool
Who has served us so well under both of our rule."

So the Devil tossed Eugénie up on his hump;
With a flick of her wrist she laid open his rump.

Then down to Hell with her he did jump;
When she got there she complained of the bump.

"If you don't bring me down here more gently and skilled
I fear you will make me unfit for the guild."

There stood three small devils the lady to flay;
She gave them one look and they melted away.

When all but one devil away they had fled
She noticed him there and she bit off his head.

The Devil tossed Eugénie back in his pack;
They were three days coming but one going back.

It chanced to the baron of Isleway
That the Devil came to him and to him did say

"See here Baron John I've brought back Eugénie
For Hell hath no fury to match such as she

12 Days of Battle

(Tune: Twelve Days of Christmas)

1. On the first day of battle, my leige lord sent to me,
a Patri in a pear tree.
2. ...Two tiny Dukes, ...
3. ...The whole Herlathing, ...
4. ...Four fighting maids, ...
5. ...Five fierce knights, ...
6. ...Six Saxon's swinging, ...
7. ...Seven scared squires, ...
8. ...Eight Aetheling idiots, ...
9. ...Nine pursuivants punning, ...
10. ..Ten Tygers terrible, ...
11. ..El of the Two Knives, ...
12. On the twelfth day of battle, I sent to my
leige lord, 12 Dragon's Tails, borne by El ... etc
Two poems in praise of the Ladies of Caid

On a time it chanced that, travelling in the kingdom of Caid, I came upon a hall where the King of that land held feast and revelry, with his people about him. At that place was held a court of love, in the Frankish fashion, and to that court I presented a charge against the Ladies of Caid—to wit, that they were too beautiful, and so a temptation to sin for those of us permitted, by the Law of our Lord the Prophet (on whom be the peace and the blessing), only four wives. The court conceded the justice of my charge, yet (most unjustly) sentenced me, rather than the ladies, the sentence being that I was to write a poem in praise of the Ladies of Caid. Further, His Majesty, in delivering the verdict and sentence, chose to interpret my remarks as if I had asserted that the Ladies of Caid were more beauteous than the Ladies of other kingdoms, which thing I had most certainly not intended.

Being desirous to obey His Majesty's charge while correcting any misunderstanding, I wrote the following two poems:

**Villanelle**

Written on Command in Praise of the Ladies of Caid

Caidan ladies, fair and wise,
For whom full many knights do sigh,
Though my own Love, whom most I prize

Most strictly veils my wandering eyes
Yet through my lashes still I spy
Caidan ladies, fair and wise

Nor can I wholly then disguise
My admiration from the eye
Of mine own Love, whom most I prize,

Yet pray it cause no false surmise
If I appear entranced by
Caidan ladies fair and wise.

For though no knight might e'er despise
Such lovely ladies passing by
It is my own whom most I prize

And I must own my glad surprise
When ladies in Caid I spy
Almost as gentle, fair and wise
As mine own love, whom most I prize.

**Verses In Praise of the Ladies of Caid**

Written at the Command of the King Thereof

Caid must seem a garden fair
Whose blossoms bloom in many climes
To errant knight that wanders there;
Her beauties praise I in my rhymes.

First met, and here by rights first told
(Though beauties grow in every clime)
The golden bloom of Gildenholt;
I praise thy garden in my rhyme.

And last the warded flower that grows
(For blossoms bloom in many climes)
Beneath the Dragon and the Rose
I praise her beauties in my rhymes.

The flowers spread like wildfire
(Well may I praise them in my rhymes)
From Calafia to Rieslinshire
For beauties bloom in many climes.

Yet, King who guard this land so rare,
(That gladly praise I in my rhymes)
Think not that others are less fair;
For gardens grow in many climes.
XIII

At the fourth Pennsic War, Allah (the Compassionate, the Merciful) let fall upon us the Seas that are Above the Earth and it rained and it rained and it rained. To that War came thirteen fighting peers of the East, knights and masters together. Twelve fought and fell; one returned home, being displeased with the weather.

My belt is white, as white as snow,
My chain is bright as fire
And I would be a fool to go
With them into the mire.

There wars my King, and by his side
Fight knights of great renown.
My snowy belt is all my pride;
I think I'll stay in town.

They pile in heaps the foemen dead
And die above them, yet
My place is here, for it is said
That blood is very wet.

My sword, my arms, might rust, and O
Unless my blade is bright
How will the pretty ladies know
I am a valiant knight?

Fly Dragon Fly

Fly, dragon, fly
Although it may upset you;
Fly, dragon, fly
The tyger's come to get you.

The tickling claws of cats they say
Make dragons catch their breath;
A pussycat is on his way
Who tickles them to death.

Fly, dragon, fly
The tyger's come to get you.
Fly, dragon, fly
As far as he will let you.

The dragon is designed to scare,
His face drives foes in flight;
But whoever heard a story where
The dragon slew the knight?

Fly, dragon, fly
And pray we may forget you;
Fly, dragon, fly
The tyger's come to get you.

Old Smaug was feared for miles around;
He fought a one worm war.
A single archer brought him down
And we have brought a score

Fly, dragon, fly
They have not come to pet you;
fly, dragon, fly
The tyger's here to get you.

Dragons have teeth and claws and things
And armor like a knight;
And best of all great leather wings
For flying from a fight.

Fly, dragon, fly,
Although it may upset you;
Fly, dragon, fly
The tyger's come to get you

(These are both Pennsic songs; the dragon is the token of the Middle Kingdom, as the Tyger is of the East. Andrew of Seldom Rest, sometime King of the Middle, bears a dragonfly upon his shield.)
I've fought at Pennsic a time or two,
_Fie, man, fie;
I've fought at Pennsic a time or two
_Who's the fool now?
I've fought at Pennsic a time or two
And just as the other warriors do
I've a tale that might be true
_Who's the fool now?

After the bodies are carted away
_Fie, man, fie
After the bodies are carted away
_Who's the fool now?
After the bodies are carted away
The warriors feast till the break of day
And I sit silent and hear what they say
_Who's the fool now?

We lost the war, as we most times do
_Fie, man, fie
We lost the war, as we most times do
_Who's the fool now?
We lost the war, as we most times do
Which never stopped us telling anew
What each of us did, and how and to who
_Who's the fool now?

Of all our host that the foeman slew
_Fie, man, fie
Of all our host that the foeman slew
_Who's the fool now?
Of all our host that the foeman slew
There wasn't a man or a woman who
Didn't take at least one or two
_Who's the fool now?

For glory in the ladies' sight
_Fie, man, fie
For glory in the ladies' sight
_Who's the fool now?
For honor in their ladies' sight
The squires fought with main and might;
Every squire slew a knight.
_Who's the fool now?

The deeds of their lords were fierce and fell
_Fie, man, fie
The deeds of their lords were fierce and fell
_Who's the fool now?

The deeds of their lords were fierce and fell
Twelve men Visivald sent down to hell;
Ferd slew a score, or so the tales tell.
_Who's the fool now?

Gavin is certain of twenty-four
_Fie, man, fie
Gavin is certain of twenty-four
_Who's the fool now?
Gavin is certain of twenty-four
But Tamara counted thirty more;
Add them up and he won the war.
_Who's the fool now?

The host of Atlantia slew and slew
_Fie, man, fie
The host of Atlantia slew and slew
_Who's the fool now?
The host of Atlantia slew and slew
Just how many no man knew
But at least they're certain of forty-two.
_Who's the fool now?

It comes to a hundred and ninety-four
_Fie, man, fie
It comes to a hundred and ninety-four
_Who's the fool now?
It comes to a hundred and ninety-four
We slew for certain–there might be more;
The rest should have drowned in that sea of gore.
_Who's the fool now?

Knights and nobles of high degree,
_Fie, man, fie
Knights and nobles of high degree,
_Who's the fool now?
All the East's nobility,
This is their tale as they told it to me.
But the Middle started with fifty-three,
_Who's the fool now?

So we lost the battle but slaughtered the foe,
_Fie, man, fie;
So we lost the battle but slaughtered the foe,
_Who's the fool now?
So we lost the battle but slaughtered the foe,
I may be wrong but I think I know
What really happened at Roncevaux.
_Who's the fool now?
A Song in Praise of the Warriors of the Middle Kingdom

(Tune: Battle Hymn of the Republic, unfortunately)

The warriors of the Middle are as brave as brave can be;
Each summer ere the leaves turn red they turn them easterly
Where they know their death is waiting with the Eastern King's army
Praise to the Dragon Throne.

(Chorus)
Glory, glory what a beautiful day to die,
Glory, glory what a beautiful day to die,
Glory, glory what a beautiful day to die,
To die for the Dragon Throne.

There is none can fault the courage of the Middle Chivalry
Though some believe they suffer from some dreadful sorcery
That herds them east like lemmings who will never reach the sea,
To die for the Dragon Throne.
(Chorus)

The Marches of Debate are where the Flower of the Brave
When tired of the tourney field come east to find a grave.
We welcome them right royally and grant them what they crave
To die for the Dragon Throne.

(Chorus)

The Ansteorran Tale

(To “The Rising of the Moon”)

Oh, the Ansteorran warriors have one trick that never fails;
One body is a hundred when it comes to telling tales.
The smallest border skirmish is a fight where hundreds fell;
And the Ansteorrans won it in the tales their warriors tell.

Oh, the Ansteorran ladies, like ladies everywhere,
Are fair and wise and virtuous, and chaste and wise and fair,
But it's only Ansteorra where, when they get into a tiff,
The women all are warriors—like Sif, and Sif, and Sif.

Oh, the Ansteorran warriors on Pennsic's fields were few,
But they littered up the landscape with the multitudes they slew.
Each squire felled a score at least, each knight brought fifty low;
We know that's how it happened cause Duke Sigmund told us so.

Oh, the Ansteorran warriors have one trick that never fails;
One body is a hundred when it comes to telling tales.
The smallest border skirmish is a fight where hundreds fell;
And the Ansteorrans won it in the tales their warriors tell.
Limericks

Franks find that bloodshed and strife
Occupy most of their life–
The proper reward
For serving a lord
While ardently courting his wife.

When pursuing a maid who is very
Passionate, proper and wary
You first must assure her
Your amor is pura
And then demonstrate the contrary.

The favor of ladies is bought
So the learned Andreas has taught
With fainting and sighs
But a lover who dies
Has done rather more than he ought.

Dame Eugénie is lacking in front
Said a suitor whose language was blunt
A part love requires
To quench its fierce fires.
I presume that the part which he meant
was the heart.

Though Shaums have a sound that is froggy
They should never be played when it's foggy,
Lest ships go aground
Through mistaking the sound
For a foghorn—which makes sailors soggy.

The Limerick Song
(Chorus by Yang, Tune "traditional"—i.e.
modern)

Middle Kingdom Verses (ancient)

When two tall sons of one mother
The brothers de Tahe fight each other
The loser must kneel
Say "I yield to your steel
But my brother can still beat your brother."

(Chorus)

Ai, yai, yai yai
Your knives are too ready to hand
If I stick to verity
You'll show me no charity
So here's all the truth you can stand.

The trouble with fighting with Andy
Unless you're both hearty and handy
Is he gives you one leer
Then makes it appear
Like he's knocking down babies for candy.

You can fight with the horde if you wanna;
You'll see plenty of blood, guts and honor.
While you're turning them green
With your shield work supreme
Watch out for the left hand katana.

His Grace or Her Grace, it depends,
Whenever the Dark Horde descends
With chickens and goats
Three Serbs and four Croats
Says "My friends? I thought they were your
friends."

(An excellent parody/reply to this verse was
written by a horde bard; perhaps you can find
someone who still remembers it)

Though he mocks us with vigor and vim
I have seen Azareal looking grim.
To make myself terse
He loves pointed verse
Except—when it's pointed at him.

For the Instruction of Pages

Address all unknowns as "gentle."
Treat ladies as if sacramental
Unless their bare arms
Loose hair and bold charms
Announce that their favors are—rental.

As the she-wolf and lioness feel
for their cubs, so the knight for his steel.
When looking at such
Ask leave ere you touch
Or instead of seeing, you'll feel.

Be still when a bard holds the hall.
Join the dancing or stand by the wall.
Don't boast of your might
Till you learn how to fight
Or after—or ever at all.
The magical music machine
That someone complained she had seen
Is a box made of tin,
A small mandolin,
And the Lady Diana Alene.

The trouble with fighting the Duke
Is enough to make anyone puke;
You cut at his thigh
And the Marshall cries "high"
"You're shaving the Ducal puruke."

I tell this story since it's
The one Thorvald's said to wince at:
The sign that's above
When he rides out to love
Is "In hoc Signe Vincet."

The trouble with listening to Yang
Is that every damn song the man sang
Was either illicit,
Immoral, explicit
Or lower Mongolian slang.

**East Kingdom Verses**

Murad, a reliable source,
Informs me that Akbar's discourse
Is usually cryptic
Or curt and elliptic
Or spoken—alone—to his horse.

Sir Eolf strides out in shining mail,
Clutching a cat and biting its tail,
Or so it appears
To my eyes and my ears
Though he swears it's the pipes of the Gael.

A blade is a maid's last appeal
To prove her refusal is real;
De______, I'm told,
Being timid and bold,
Now courts in a full suit of steel.

**Atlantian Verses**

Sir Alaric Rotstern Graf Von
When standing can just see the dawn
Coming up in the East
At the close of the feast
When the last of the sunset is gone.

Mistress Moira o Seaumus Maureen
When in yellow or brown she is seen
Is as meek as a child
But a thunderstorm's mild
Beside Mistress Moira in Green.
[Moira was Triton Herald]

Fair Tanis of far Tyr y Don
Deserves to be praised in a song
With trumpets and lutes
And a consort of flutes
Which I haven't and so I'll move on.

Alura's a Lady, no doubt,
Who would never get angry or shout
Or glower or roar
Stamp her staff on the floor
So her twin must be often about.

Once at the end of a feast
Having finished three oxen at least
And drunk half a tun
Ragnar swore by Thor's thumb
To make Foebane the queen of the east.
[Foebane is Ragnar's axe.]

If you're looking for Donal the tall
You'll find it no trouble at all;
He's the fellow you see
By the lovely lady
Who makes even Donal look small.

I am certain there must be a few
One could probably find one or two
Gentle arts, I've no doubt,
Giovanna's without
But everything else she can do.

In the lists of things great you won't read it
But Rome and Cathay would concede it;
The small city state
Has a wall that is great
For putting wherever you need it.
(The Dinas Moryn shield wall)
**Barak's Song**  
*(Tune: An Irish Ballad by Tom Lehrer. Suitable for post-revels.)*

About a bold Viking I'll sing a song  
*Singing plunkety plinkety pling*

About a bold Viking I'll sing a song  
Who wasn't a Jomsviking very long.

Though once the Jomsvikings were fierce and strong  
Jarl Hakon did most of them in, them in,  
Jarl Hakon did most of them in.

*(continue refrain line and repeats for every verse)*

Now a Jomsviking never may show any fear  
However black things may appear

But then the fleet started to disappear  
Along with his kith and his kin.

Only one ship refused to run;  
They killed the crew off one by one  
And Orm became a Khazarian  
Though his Yiddishe accent was thin.

He wandered East and he wandered South  
Through feast and famine, floud and drouth,  
Till he came to a host by the Dnieper's mouth  
Wearing yarmulkas made out of tin.

He hardly had started to brag and to boast  
When they welcomed him into the Khazar host  
For the Persians were marching up the coast,  
And they would let anything in.

He plucked at a string and he started a tale  
The Khazar host began to wail  
"It isn't enough we've got Azareal  
Another one's come for our sins."

But a Khazar warrior old and grey,  
Said "Don't send the bards away,  
They're a gift from God to save the day  
They're the only way we can win."

"There are just two gates in the mountain wall,  
Put a bard in each and let them squall,  
They'll hold the passes from spring to fall,  
The Persians will never come in."

And that's why the emirs, shahs, and shiekhs,  
Never crossed the Caucasian peaks;  
If you don't believe me, hear his shrieks,  
But first let me out of the inn, the inn,  
But first let me out of the inn.

**Trouble on the Field**  
*(Somewhere there should be a tune for this, distantly related to Brennan on the Moor.)*

There's none can match with Bork in trees,  
At fencing Yang's a whiz;  
Dagen once slew a dozen men--  
But six of them were his.

*Trouble on the field, brothers,  
Trouble on the field  
We can't keep up the image if  
You can't keep up your shield.*

The Ninja they are mighty men  
And masters of the steel;  
They'd cut our foes in little bits  
If only they were real.

*Trouble on the field, brothers,  
Trouble on the field ...*

Post-revel we are past all count  
In rumour past all dream  
And when the sun is underground  
We scheme and scheme and scheme.

*Trouble on the field, brothers,  
They've got us three to one;  
We can't keep up the image if  
We vanish in the sun.*

Our Yurts are simply beautiful,  
Our Troubador's a pearl;  
If we only had an army we'd  
Be masters of the world.

*Trouble on the field, brothers,  
Trouble on the field  
We can't keep up the image if  
You can't keep up your shield.*

Logistically we're past compare;  
Three kingdoms fear our spies.  
But its hard to fight an army with  
Three girls and seven guys.

*Trouble on the field, brothers,  
Our lines are getting scant.  
The foemen say our women fight  
Because our warriors can't.*

*Trouble on the field, brothers,  
Trouble on the field  
We can't keep up the image if  
You can't keep up your shield.*
The Maple Tree
(Tune: The Willow Tree)

There was a Khan, a cruel Khan
In the Northwoods Barony;
Six great kings he had betrayed
By a lonely maple tree.

As he held speech with the Eastern King
Where the battle was to be
An evil thought there came to him
By that lonely maple tree.

"Give up, give up your golden crown
Your scepter yield to me
For I claim lordship of all your lands
From here to the eastern sea."

"If your golden crown you'll not give up
Then answer me this riddle:
Where will you find a host to fight
Both me and the Middle?"

"If my golden crown I must give up
Then answer me one riddle:
When you, the Khakhan, are Eastern King
How fares it with the Middle?"

"When I, the Khakhan, am Eastern King
The Middle must yield to me
For I claim lordship of all their lands
From here to the Tree girt sea."

"Come out, come out, my Cousin dear"
The Eastern King cried he
And the King of the Middle he came out
From behind the Maple tree.

"Die there, lie there, you cruel Khan,
Lie there, die there" cried he.
Six great kings you have betrayed
Go keep them company."

They buried him at the forest's edge
With his Mongol company;
No living thing shed a tear for them
Save a Silver Maple tree.

Verses in Honor of Shaugn Rubaru

From Ireland, where, I've been told,
The men are fair, the women bold,
Where faith is strict and fancy free
A warrior fared across the sea.

Through foam of wreck and raid and war
The shortship floundered to the shore
And out a tattered bundle threw
That struggled straight as–Rubaru.

Then cursing a blue streak about
(A passing Celt in woad, no doubt)
He whirled his broad sword round his crown
And brought the shortship's maintwig down.

Dressed in mail from toe to head
The brave crew swam like lumps of lead;
Too courteous to stand and scoff
Rubaru went striding off.

And coming on a homeless cow,
An orphaned chicken, and a sow,
A little distance from the sea
He gave them–Irish charity.

Then, leaving all his pets at peace,
He wiped his mouth and beard of grease
And moaning loud for want of beer
Started for a farmhouse near.

Told the farmer he had seen
His cow and sow loose on the green
And having so dispatched the lout
Sought his wife and daughter out.

Asked for drink and–something more.
But alas for his amour;
Though their principles were few
They drew the line at Rubaru.

Drew the line and not the beer,
Flung him out upon his ear,
Barred the door and windows tight;
Rubaru set them alight.

And having quenched ni thirst ni lust
Started off as dry as dust.
When will they ever learn?
First you plunder then you burn.
This is what it is to be a knight

To be able to perform two dances common at court
to know the moves of chess
to know how to blazon the picture on your shield
Metals and tincture, argent
jingles in the pocket, azure
is a fine color for
costumes
Gules (is the color of blood
Brave blood out of Roland's lips
Over the mouthpiece of crying Oliphant)

That is chivalry, and, O yes
To stand in a playing field with a stick of rattan
or a roll of toilet paper on a handle, wrapped with canvas,
and a piece of plywood tied to your left arm
and win a game. That is chivalry.
(A breeze slips through silk, touches
The bare brown skin of Mauretania's King
Riding alone and weaponless into the Emperor's camp)
that is all it is – a game. Costumes. Calling
pretty girls Lady, when you remember, or Mistress,
Knowing your tricks, saying your lines,
Passing the
examination,
cribbing tinctures scribbled on your tunic sleeve
with a quill pen.

That is all.

Wine is only a drink colored red.
Blood is only a red leak. Put a bandaid on it.
Chivalry is only something
to do with horses.
(Galled by base labor, dragged to Carl's hall,
Beiffrer greets Ogier like a trumpet call.
Twice Bayard struggles to his master's side;
At the last, masterless, dies.)
Now the Pavane
left together, right together, left, right, left together.
Let us all learn Chivalry
with Ogier and Lancelot
and Arthur Murray.
Old Things

A Report, in Verse, Presented to His Majesty Iriel of Brannoch, King of the Middle Kingdom, at Twelfth Night.

(some general verses about rumours of war. "Border Lords sharpening swords" etc. then...)

Young knights and squires only care
To prove their valour to ladies fair;
Border lords sharpen their brands
With a greedy eye on their neighbors' lands.

I am neither a squire nor a border lord
Nor a new dubbed knight with a thirsty sword;
I do not make war for an idle game
I fight for my king and my kingdom's gain.

For three long months at feast and field
As close as I watch my foeman's shield
I have watched the play of the Eastern lords;
Ere three months more I will try their swords.

I watch a hand that is near a knife;
I listen to rumours of civil strife,
To tales of knights and their tourneying
To the least little word that may aid my king.

I say again as once before
That only a fool goes blind to war.
I have served as eyes for the Middle King;
Harken all to the word I bring.

To match with our Middle Chivalry
Are four great lords by the Eastern Sea
Fit to stand on a bloody field
And fight our fiercest, shield to shield.

From lands beyond the morning sky
The valiant Shogun, Rakkurai.
From southron jungles hot as hell
The dusky giant they call Lord El.

From the house that bears Old Murad's name
The noble Duke hight Akbar came;
His sire, Old Murad, wise men tell
For a seasoned warrior, fierce and fell.

With divers squires by their side
These are the four must break our tide;
If these four fall the kingdom's down
And you will have loot of the Eastern Crown,

And you will have loot of the Eastern lands
Their castles and palaces under your hands
To do your will with all things dear,
Women and horses and castles and gear.

But if these four with their folk beside
Break our ranks, then woe betide;
So ere you lead out your gathered powers,
Hear how I match their strength with ours.

Lord El's a mountain of a man,
No knight so tall in your hall stands,
With strength to move his giant's height
And will and skill enough to fight.

Yet I think a sword of Seldom Rest
Dividing him below the crest
About the level of the eyes
Could cut El down to Andrew's size.

Cast your Grim Hawk adown the sky
Against the noble Rakkurai;
The Shogun's tall and bitter strong
But Thorvald's blade men say is long.

Set good Sir Franz at my right side
Or if the Baron cannot ride
His valiant Squire and we'll defy
House Murad's thrice crowned chivalry.

As for the Shogun's common men
My brother Bashta and his men
Who feast beside us here tonight
Could face them all in open fight.

Has the East Barons? Two or three,
But theirs cling to the Eastern sea,
While every march of the border land
Is loyal to my King's command.

But let them come, with all their might,
To put those baronies to flight
Remains beneath the King's own hand
A mighty host of the Middle Land.
Barin and Finnvairr, brothers tall,
The squires that feast in Thorvald's hall
With all the marches' gathered bands,
Rough levies of the cloven lands.

The little lands are scattered far
But loyal to their King in war,
The triple Hills, the valiant Flame,
Castel Rouge on her northern plain.

I say again as twice before
That only a fool goes blind to war;
I have served as eyes for the Middle King
Harken all to the word I bring.

The Shogun has heroes under his hand
But we can match them man for man;
The Shogun has hosts by the Eastern Shore
But my King's hosts are as many and more,
Sire, my word is War, War, War.

Verses prepared by the Ambassador of the Middle, Bringing the War Arrow to Rakkurai, Against a Contingency That did not Occur

How deep the dungeon where I guest
I still can whistle when the wind blows west;
And that wind blows through an apple tree
In a grove by the shore of the Tree Girt Sea
Where mine own lady waits for me.

When the wind is loud in her apple trees
I can whistle in the west running breeze
And that same gale blow back to me
The loyal swords of Tregirtsea,
The dark horde under the command
Of my brother, Bashta of the Bloody Hand,
And maybe a prince, or a border lord,
Or an errant knight with a thirsty sword,
For my Lady waits by her apple tree
Where half a kingdom does courtesy
To Her Grace, Diana de Tregirtsea.
A Brother's Tale

This is a tale of days long ago, and of matters that loom very small, it may be, in the affairs of great
kingdoms. Yet to me it is of some moment, and it may be there is a lesson in it, even for these latter days.
It is the tale of how I, who in my birth was given but one sister for sib, found for myself a brother, and
that most strangely.

In those days I dwelt in my own lands in the Middle Kingdom, on the southern shore of the Tree Girt Sea.
There chanced into the kingdom—it is a matter on which many tales touch—a wandering Mongol band.
Between them and the Warriors of the Middle there was little love, for the Warriors of the Middle held
the Sword Brothers of the Horde in scorn, thinking them poor foes unworthy of their steel, while to the
Sword Brothers it seemed that the Warriors cared too much for victory and not enough for how it was
won, and they believed, nor did they always scruple to say, that they themselves held closer to the codes
befitting a warrior than did many a knight.

It chanced at a tourney, that same where Iriel of Brannoch was crowned King and Andrew of Seldom
Rest won the right to be his heir, that there were many melees, the Sword Brothers of the Horde fighting
against the Warriors of the Middle, and they were in numbers greatly outmatched. Seeing which I lent to
them my aid, which I think no man else in the Kingdom did, though little enough good it did them. And it
may be that is part of my tale, and it may be not.

On another day was a tourney held in the Canton of the Three Hills, and to it came the horde, and the
Warriors of the Middle, I among them. It had been proposed that in that tournament some fight in a
fashion then new to the kingdom, holding matches by the blow, each man permitted to strike so many
blows and no more, the winner judged by a panel of fair ladies. There came to me Yang, the spokesman
of the horde, and he proposed that we fight so, not one bout but five, with divers weapons. It seemed to
me a brave thing that he did, for he was reputed more skillful with tongue than sword, and I was then
young and in the fullness of my strength and accounted a great warrior among my peers.

So we fought first with spear and shield, and he proved a fell foe, quick and skilled. Yet it chanced, in the
noble fury of battle, that he struck the blows allotted to him, all five, and there remained to me yet one
blow more. Thinking it no fit part of chivalry to chase about the field a foe who could do me no harm, I
touched his shield with my spear point, and that was my fifth blow. I think no man saw it, save my foe
alone. In the next match it chanced, through my carelessness or pride, that I struck all the allotted blows
at him, and there remained one more to him, or it may be two; he touched my shield, and that was his
blow. So the day went on. When our combats were done he filled a great cup, and offered it to me, and
for what I spoke I make no excuse, for I was young then, and full of joy and pride to do battle with so
noble a foe. The toast was "To Ourselves. There are damn few of us left." And we drank the toast, we
two, from one cup.

It chanced another time, some weeks thereafter, that high feast and revelry was held in a great hall in my
own lands, in the province of the Tree Girt Sea. There came Yang attired as a minstrel, and with him
many of his folk. When the feasting was done he sang songs for the company, and last one of his making.
It was called the ballad of the Griffin and Snake, for Yang bears on his shield for a sign a snake, red as
blood. That song by fortune you may hear from his lips.

Think then that this is that high hall, all about a bright company, at their head Iriel, King of the Middle,
garbed black as a raven, with a hauberk of rings overall, and by him Morna, robed green as grass, than
whom few fairer queens has any land known. There is a great stillness of all that company, and in it a
The song ceased. He called me forth into the hall, and to me gave a knife, and with it his oath of aid whenever and wherever I had need of it, and likewise I did for him. We have called each other brother since that day. His oath he repaid ere a year had passed, on a muddy hill, fighting at my side with a long spear against a foe that came and came and there was no end to them.

**Pennsic I: Before the Battle**

It is the morning before battle; the King of the East sits enthroned, and to him comes the spokesman of the Dark Horde, his warriors about him:

*Cariadoc*: Welcome, welcome most noble Yang. Have you come here with your valiant Sword Brothers to fight under the banner of the East against our common enemies of the Middle?

*Yang*: No.

(Brief Silence)

*Cariadoc* (slightly less enthusiastically): Forgive me, most noble and subtle Yang, by some called Silvertongue, Spokesman of the Dark Horde, if I misspoke. What I meant to ask was, have you come here to fight under your own banners, beside the East Kingdom as its allies, against our common enemies of the Middle?

*Yang*: No

(Longer Silence)

*Cariadoc*: Tell me then, oh most subtle and devious Yang, why have you come?

*Yang*: You may remember, Brother, that some while ago I promised you my aid if you had need of it. Well, brother, today you have need of it.