

Ballad: The Sailor Boy To His Lass

In the ballad "The Sailor Boy to His Lass," the narrator, a sailor boy, addresses his beloved Matilda as he prepares to set sail. The poem opens with his departure for an undisclosed location, as the captain, Captain Hyde, keeps the destination a secret from the crew. The sailor boy expresses frustration over being kept in the dark due to his lowly position but quickly moves past this grievance to focus on matters of the heart.

He eagerly questions Matilda about their future, specifically whether they will wed upon his return. Matilda's responses, however, are less than enthusiastic. She physically shows her reluctance and skepticism – her eyes are red, she bows her head, and at one point, she even sticks out her tongue and makes faces, signaling her disdain. This reaction is further emphasized by her verbal rebuff, indicating she is not as committed to their future together as he is.

Despite her dismissive attitude, the sailor boy pleads with Matilda, reminding her of their past and the emotional toll their relationship has taken on him. He recounts a time of jealousy when Matilda was seen interacting closely with an older man, which troubled him deeply. The ballad oscillates between his pleas for a future together and Matilda's apparent reluctance to commit, underscoring the sailor boy's unrequited love and devotion.

In essence, the poem weaves a narrative of love, expectancy, and despair, portrayed through the sailor boy's departure and his anticipation of a future that seems increasingly uncertain with Matilda's ambivalent and rejecting gestures. The ballad's style, maintaining a rhythmic and rhyming structure, captures the emotional oscillation between hope and heartache, ending on a note of longing and unresolved affection.