

I'll Twine 'Mid the Ringlets (1860) (aka Wildwood Flower)

words: Maud Irving, music: Joseph Philbrick Webster;
Carter Family: G, cut time, 104 bpm

I'll twine 'mid the ringlets of my raven black hair;
The lilies so pale and the roses so fair;
The myrtle so bright with an emerald hue,
And the pale aronatus with eyes of bright blue.

I'll sing and I'll dance, my laugh shall be gay;
I'll cease this wild weeping drive sorrow a-way;
Tho' my heart is now breaking, He never shall know,
That his name made me tremble and my pale cheeks to glow.

I'll think of him never I'll be wildly gay;
I'll charm ev'ry heart, and the crowd I will sway;
I'll live yet to see him, re-gret the dark hour,
When he won, then neglected, the frail wildwood flower.

He told me he loved me, and promis'd to love;
Through ill and misfortune, all others a-bove;
Another has won him, ah, mis'ry to tell,
He left me in silence no word of fare-well.

He taught me to love him, he call'd me his flower;
That blossom'd for him all the brighter each hour;
But I woke from my dreaming, my idol was clay,
My visions of love have all fad-ed a-way.

I'll think of him never I'll be wildly gay;
I'll charm ev'ry heart, and the crowd I will sway;
I'll live yet to see him, re-gret the dark hour,
When he won, then neglected, the frail wildwood flower.

(Last verse is a repeat of 3rd verse. Lines ending ";" have an ending lick. *Aronatus* may refer to *Amaranthus*, aka pigweed, commonly blue; or it may be a corruption of *amaryllis* and *violets* so blue.)

"Wildwood Flower" is a United States|American song, best known through performances and recordings by the Carter Family. However, the song predates them. The original title was "I'll Twine 'Mid the Ringlets". The song was written in 1860, with words by Maud Irving and music by Joseph Philbrick Webster (1819-1875).[1] Evolution and usage of the song

The tune was used by Woody Guthrie for the verses of his song "The Sinking of the Reuben James (Woody Guthrie song)|Reuben James" (about the USS Reuben James (DD-245)|USS Reuben James). Guthrie's song had a tune of his own devising on the chorus.[2]

Although originally a parlor music/parlor song, the song had undergone quite a bit of the folk music/folk process by the time the Carter Family recorded it. For example, the original first verse was:

I'll twine 'mid the ringlets of my raven black hair,
The lilies so pale and the roses so fair,
The myrtle so bright with an emerald hue,
And the pale aeronauts with eyes of bright blue.

The better-known Carter Family version begins:

Oh, I'll twine with my mingles and waving black hair,
With the roses so red and the lilies so fair,
And the myrtle so bright with the emerald dew,
The pale and the leader and eyes look like blue.[3]

Other variants exist; for example Iris DeMent sings "...The pale emanita and hyssop so blue...". Joan Baez sings "the pale and the leader," but retains the original reference to "raven black hair" on her self-titled debut album "Joan Baez" (1960). That is also the variant printed in "The Joan Baez Songbook" (1964). Most other singers (Roger McGuinn, for instance) substitute "amaryllis and violets so blue" here.[citation needed]

Plant expert Ed Hume reports that he is unaware of a plant known as aronatus.[4] In an unpublished monograph, Dr. Richard Blaustein, professor of sociology and anthropology at East Tennessee State University, has made a thorough analysis of the question, and identifies the amaranthus or amaranth (Latin: aramanthus), a flower of

some literary heritage,[5] as a possible source of the "aronatus" of the Maud Irving song.

However, Bryan Chalker, a well known country singer from Bath, England, following a visit to the Appalachians and collecting folk music, suggests that the last line is "The pale oleander and violets so blue." This is very close to the misheard "The pale and the leader and eyes look so blue." The oleander was introduced into America in 1841, so if the original date of the song is 1860, this is perfectly feasible. The word is also much more singable than aronatus. What's more, amaranthus do not have eyes looking blue - they are shades of white, pink and red.

Another famous mondegreen stems from a later verse:

I'll think of him never, I'll be wildly gay
I'll charm ev'ry heart, and the crowd I will sway.

Most contemporary singers render that second line,

I will charm every heart; in his crown, I will sway.

The final two lines provide the song's title and central theme:

I'll live yet to see him regret the dark hour
He won, then neglected, this frail wildwood flower.

The song was first recorded by the Carter Family in 1928 on the Victor label. The song has also become a standard instrumental piece for guitarists of all skill levels. In 1955, Hank Thompson (music)|Hank Thompson and Merle Travis recorded an instrumental that reached number 5 on the Country charts.[6]

In 1960, Joan Baez included it on her Vanguard debut album Joan Baez. Jean Ritchie recorded a version in 1955 and Hobart Smith in 1963, as did Mike Ness in 1999.

In 1974, Don Bowman (comedian)|Don Bowman appropriated the tune as a background for "Wildwood Weed", a monologue about cannabis (drug)|marijuana.[7] Performed by Jim Stafford, it peaked at number 7 on the Billboard magazine|Billboard Country chart.[8]

In the 2005 film Walk the Line, Reese Witherspoon, playing June Carter, sings "Wildwood Flower" solo while strumming her autoharp. The film also features an instrumental version performed on guitar by Bill Frisell.

US band [Trans_Am_\(band\)](#)|Trans Am included a somewhat unconventional rendition of Wildwood Flower on their EP *Who Do We Think You Are*.

Robin & Linda Williams recorded a version of the song, with the original title and lyrics, for their album *Visions of Love*. The title of the album is taken from the last line, "My visions of love have all faded away."

<http://www.cowboylyrics.com/tabs/carter-family/wildwood-flower-7456.html>

Artist: Carter Family
Wildwood Flower; A. P. Carter

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Oh, I'll twine with my mingles and waving black hair
with the roses so red and the lilies so fair
And the myrtle so bright with the emerald hue
The pale amanita and eyes look like blue.

Oh I'll dance, I will sing and my (*laugh) shall be gay
I will charm every heart, in his crown I will sway
When I woke from my dreaming, my idol was clay
All portion of love had all flown away.

Oh he taught me to love him and promised to love
And to cherish me over all others above
How my heart is now wond'ring no mis'ry can tell
He's left me no warning, no words of farewell.

Oh, he taught me to love him and called me his (*flow'r)
That was blooming to cheer him through life's dreary hour
Oh, I long to see him and regret the dark hour
He's gone and neglected this pale wildwood flow'r.

*Note: Mother Maybelle pronounces (laugh/loff) and
(flower/flow'r/flour)

[Thanks to Wilson Roberts & Diane Esser for corrections]

