

Maiden in the Mor Lay

(Words: 14th Century English anon)

Maiden in the mor lay,
In the mor lay;
Sevenight fulle,
Sevenight fulle,
Maiden in the mor lay;
In the mor lay,
Sevenightes fulle and a day.

A maiden on the moor lay,
On the moor lay;
Seven whole nights,
Seven whole nights,
A maiden on the moor lay;
On the moor lay,
Seven whole nights and a day.

Welle was hire dring.
What was hire dring?
The chelde water of the -
The chelde water of the -
Welle was hire dring.
What was hire dring?
The chelde water of the welle-spring.

She drank very well.
But what did she drink?
The icy water of the -
The icy water of the -
The well was her drink?
What did she drink?
The well-spring. s icy water.

Welle was hire bowr.
What was hire bowr?
The rede rose and the -
The rede rose and the -
Welle was hire bowr.
What was hire bowr?
The rede rose and the lily flour.

Well-appointed was her bowr.
But what was her bowr?
The red rose and the -
The red rose and the -
Well-appointed was her bowr.
But what was her bowr?
The red rose and the lily flower.

Who is this enigmatic maiden?

There are a number of possible explanations:

she may be a fairy spirit of the well, or perhaps a girl being ritually purified.

"At a Springe-Wel" has a similar subject matter, with clearer references to the Virgin Mary.