

Alternative Endings to an Unwritten Ballad

Paul Dehn (1912–1979)

I stole through the dungeons, while everyone slept,
Till I came to the cage where the Monster was kept.
There, locked in the arms of a Giant Baboon,
Rigid and smiling, lay ... MRS RAVOON!

I climbed the clock-tower in the first morning sun
And 'twas midday at least ere my journey was done;
But the clock never sounded the last stroke of noon,
For there, from the clapper, swung MRS RAVOON.

I hauled in the line, and I took my first look
At the half-eaten horror that hung from the hook.
I had dragged from the depths of the limpid lagoon
The luminous body of MRS RAVOON.

I fled in the storm, thorough lightning and thunder,
And there, as a flash split the darkness asunder,
Chewing a rat's-tail and mumbling a rune,
Mad in the moat squatted MRS RAVOON.

I stood by the waters so green and so thick,
And I stirred at the scum with my old, withered stick;
When there rose through the ooze, like a monstrous balloon,
The bloated cadaver of MRS RAVOON.

Facing the fens, I looked back from the shore
Where all had been empty a moment before;
And there, by the light of the Lincolnshire moon,
Immense on the marshes, stood ... MRS RAVOON!

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Various

- I (??) Yesterday's fight saw her punched on the jaw
 We knew she'd be angry, and probably sore —
 The swelling looked much like a weather balloon
 Obscuring the features of MRS RAVOON
- II (GD) The orchestra cuts are not a success.
 They've saved us some money, but Oh what a mess!
 The first violin and second bassoon
 must be played at the same time by MRS RAVOON.
- III (GD) "You're a clever, unprincipled, self-serving liar,
 You're a confident, ruthless, ambitious high-flier,
 You're charming, you're mad, you can play the buffoon,
 You should go into politics MRS RAVOON!"

- IV (NH) She stood by a tree trunk, with pistol in hand,
 And there in the jungle she made her last stand,
 Facing fierce warriors of far Cameroon
 Defiant and dauntless stood MRS RAVOON.
- V (AD) The narcotics cartels, both US and Hispanic
 Were shaking with fear that bordered on panic,
 For the drug dealer's murder in downtown Cancún
 Bore the grizzly callsign of MRS RAVOON.
- VI (GD) It seemed that the robber had run out of luck.
 The getaway quad bike had hit a big truck
 There in the wall, just like in a cartoon
 Was a hole in the shape of MRS RAVOON.
- VII (GD) Round the rim of the object appeared a thin crack
 Recalling 'The Alien' I took a step back:
 There in the darkness from a fibrous cocoon
 Emerged the first larval instar of MRS RAVOON.
- VIII (JM) "She's awa'!" cried McTavish "She left wi' the tide
 Wi' the brave wee girl rowin' an' Prince Charlie beside;
 For the hopes o' oor nation and the fate o' oor croon
 All gae wi' the lassie called MRS RAVOON."
- IX (??) Although she had told him he was totally wrong
 He would not desist from his passionate song
 The poor lovelorn gypsy continued to croon
 hopeless sweet nothings to MRS RAVOON
- X (VC) In darkest deep Sussex as the sukebind writhed
 The Starkadders klettered their dishes and cried
 For the woodshed nemesis of Aunt Ada Doom
 At last stood revealed as MRS RAVOON.
- XI (NH) And she fell in love with that soldier so smart,
 The man from the military captured her heart.
 That day she was wed to a Heavy Dragoon,
 And Emily Smith became MRS RAVOON.
- XII (??) I fell to my knees by the pit in the sands
 I lifted the casket with trembling hands;
 But I found in the chest not a single dubloon
 Just a jade-inlaid bust of MRS RAVOON.
- XIII (GD) "Is there life on that planet?" the scientists wondered.
 There's a clue to be found in sequence 400;
 These are shots of the flank of a desolate dune,
 Emerging from which is MRS RAVOON.
- XIV (GD) Jim's passion was seaweed in all of its guises.
 He'd gather up fragments of all shapes and sizes.
 With dulse and with wrack the walls he'd festoon
 in the ancestral dwelling of MRS RAVOON.

- XV (VC) Sleepless, sinuous, sliding and slow
 She slipped into the swamp where the water was low
 Slinking and swimming like a viper (Gaboon)
 The sinister shape of MRS RAVOON.
- XVI (NH) Oh, 'twas the Dread Lurgy, the outlook was poor.
 Just then a great doctor walked in at the door.
 Spike Milligan cured her – that prominent Goon.
 A lucky escape there, for MRS RAVOON!
- XVII (GD) The captain looked up and turned white as a bone.
 He collapsed on the deck and emitted a groan.
 There on the iceberg with a monstrous harpoon
 Stood his sable-clad nemesis MRS RAVOON.
- XVIII (NH) Onto the scaffold the prisoner was led,
 Down onto the block she lowered her head,
 And the from her shoulders her head it was hewn.
 Thus died the traitorous MRS RAVOON.
- XIX (GD) Though rotten tomatoes were winging my way,
 On the podium I was determined to stay.
 There was anger because I had dared to impugn
 The fascist agenda of MRS RAVOON.
- XX (JM) Not his Bond-baddie hairstyle nor his increasing girth,
 Nor the hats of his generals were free from her mirth...
 But his patience wore thin, and Great Leader Jong-Un
 Fired a nuclear missile at MRS RAVOON.
- XXI (GD) The aliens landed, of that there's no doubt.
 Some folks were abducted; trees wandered about.
 The corn circles came, in the last days of June
 And they all showed the visage of MRS RAVOON.
- XXII (GD) The quarryman's find was a media sensation
 Now in the museum, on view to the nation
 It's a large limestone slab from an ancient lagoon
 Containing a fossil of MRS RAVOON.
- XXIII (EC) I crawled to the summit one shadowy night
 I reached for the cairn; I crumpled with fright
 For prone on the corpse of a lumbering loon
 Black-clad and cackling, lay MRS RAVOON.
- XXIV (GD) The sale-of-work ladies were in a right state;
 the cake stall had suffered a terrible fate:
 the only thing left was a half macaroon,
 bearing the teeth-marks of MRS RAVOON.
- XXV (GD) They rowed to the small uninhabited isle,
 The victim was drugged but would wake in a while.
 These intelligent folk were about to maroon
 The Republican Candidate MRS RAVOON.

- XXVI (GD) Wearing a cape and a weird pointy hat
 She tootled a nose-flute and hopped round a mat.
 With a loud clap of thunder began the monsoon,
 For this was the rain-dance of MRS RAVOON.
- XXVII (EC) I fled to the beaches, sought solace in sand
 But peace was denied me: up struck the band
 And dancing the tango with Ban Ki Moon
 Was a banshee in Lycra: MRS RAVOON.
- XXVIII (??) What decided the battle was a small group of peasants
 Brandishing pitchforks and dressed up as pheasants.
 And leading the charge of this motley platoon
 On a stampeding rhino rode MRS RAVOON.
- XXIX (NH) Into the night the Beast dragged her away.
 Her only defender too timid to stay:
 Abandoned to die, by that shameful poltroon,
 Unworthy defender of MRS RAVOON.
- XXX (GD) The casino was crowded, the place was a riot,
 When all of a sudden the whole show went quiet;
 The hand was three sevens, a ‘royal pontoon’,
 And it netted three million for MRS RAVOON.
- XXXI (GD) The mathematician repeatedly said
 He’d had nightmares where some THING had sat on his bed.
 This incubus looked like a vast mouldy prune;
 ’Twas the Fourier transform of MRS RAVOON.
- XXXII (??) Across her pale profile the candlelight danced,
 Her measured tones held the party entranced:
 Who was the sire of that noble quadroon?
 Nobody knew save MRS RAVOON.
- XXXIIIa (GD) The spell had malfunctioned, the outcome was curious:
 He wasn’t Prince Charming - in fact he was furious.
 He most closely resembled a rabid raccoon
 As he poured out invective at MRS RAVOON.
- XXXIIIb (NH) Impaled on the antlers of a very large moose,
 Both eyes were pecked out by a savage grey goose,
 And her throat was torn out by a rabid raccoon,
 Thus ends the sad saga of MRS RAVOON.
- XXXIV (??) The night was cold, and the weather was hailey
 As I stepped from the darkness and into the ceilidh
 But there on the platform drumming a brisk rigadoon
 Was the one that I most feared — MRS RAVOON
- XXXV (GD) After months on the trail I caught up with my foe.
 My six-gun was loaded; I was ready to go.
 In the hot dusty street outside the saloon
 I confronted the outlaw MRS RAVOON.

- XXXVI (AD) We set out from Prince Rupert on Highway sixteen;
for the Yellowhead route is slow but serene
 We went by the North road, as in Saskatoon
 We hoped to revisit old MRS RAVOON
- XXXVIIa (GD) Our eponymous heroine sat on a shelf
Composing much doggerel naming herself,
 When up spoke the ghost of Siegfried Sassoon:
 “These are crimes against literature, MRS RAVOON”
- XXXVIIb (??) Who dares to shatter the peace of the quad?
Those who behave thus must answer to God!
 There, declaiming the poems of Siegfried Sassoon
 With passionate anguish was MRS RAVOON
- XXXVIIIa (GD) Saint George lay concussed by the Dragon’s dread tail
The maiden continued to struggle and wail
 When down through the bracken, not a moment too soon
 In full shining armour rode MRS RAVOON.
- XXXVIIIb (??) The taps and the hinges were crusted with rust
The loo bowl was cracked and layered with dust
 I tugged at the flush not a moment too soon —
 There in the U-bend lurked MRS RAVOON!
- XXXIX (AD) I knew right away that a duel was quite certain,
her revolver was aimed through the saloon back curtain
 So I spat out my tobacco in the bar room spittoon
 And rose to do battle with MRS RAVOON
- XL (JM) We knew she and the cook had come here to fight
But not of the outcome, ’till later that night;
 From the tureen we ladled, with a large slotted spoon
 The mortal remains of MRS RAVOON.
- XLI (??) The ogres were feasting, on Midsummer’s night
I twisted in torment, I fled from the sight
 Too late! All around me, I spotted, were strewn
 The last toasted titbits of MRS RAVOON.
- XLIIa (EC) No! cried the cabinet (all from south o’ the border)
Yes! cried the PM: she’ll keep Boris in order
 Hammond was dropped for the MP from Troon
 That merciless martinet MRS RAVOON.
- XLIIb (GD) From her drivers and irons the divots fly out.
They wanted to ban her but she’s got friends with clout.
 On the courses of Scotland from Cullen to Troon
 There ne’er was a golfer like MRS RAVOON.
- XLIII (GD) Carnarvon and Carter were nearing their goal
Together with wonder they peered through the hole
 There in the chamber of Tutankhamun
 Amid all the treasure sat MRS RAVOON.

- XLIV (??) A force was unleashed that razed homes to the ground
 Burst bedrock asunder and, with a sickening sound
 Lifted the seas in a fearsome typhoon
 With the kindling fury of MRS RAVOON.
- XLV (VC) I scoured Flemish libraries with might and with main
 Seeking gothic romances — but all in vain:
 The tepid embrace of a phlegmatic Walloon
 Aroused little passion in MRS RAVOON.

Author Abbreviations

?? Unknown.	GD Giles Droop.	VC Viv Cripps.
AD Alastair Droop.	JM Jane Marczewski.	
EC Elizabeth Cripps.	NH Nick Hornigold.	