

William Motherwell (1797-1835)

10 *The Mermaid*

“The nicht is mirk, and the wind blaws schill,
And the white faem weets my bree,
And my mind misgi’es me, gay maiden,
That the land we sall never see!”
Then up and spak’ the mermaiden, 5
And she spak’ blythe and free,
“I never said to my bonnie bridegroom,
That on land we sud weddit be.

“Oh! I never said that ane erthlie priest
Our bridal blessing should gi’e, 10
And I never said that a landwart bouir
Should hauld my love and me.”
“And whare is that priest, my bonnie maiden,
If ane erthlie wicht is na he?”
“Oh! the wind will sough, and the sea will rair, 15
When weddit we twa sall be?”

“And whare is that bouir, my bonnie maiden,
If on land it sud na be?”
“Oh! my blythe bouir is low,” said the mermaiden,
“In the bonnie green howes of the sea: 20
My gay bouir is biggit o’ the gude ship’s keels,
And the banes o’ the drowned at sea;
The fisch are the deer that fill my parks,
And the water waste my dourie.

“And my bouir is sklaitit wi’ the big blue waves, 25
And paved wi’ the yellow sand,
And in my chaumers grow bonnie white flowers
That never grew on land.
And have ye e’er seen, my bonnie bridegroom,
A leman on earth that wud gi’e 30
Aiker for aiker o’ the red plough’d land,
As I’ll gi’e to thee o’ the sea?

“The mune will rise in half ane hour,
And the wee bright starns will schine;
Then we’ll sink to my bouir, ’neath the wan water 35
Full fifty fathom and nine!”
A wild, wild skreich gi’ed the fey bridegroom,
And a loud, loud lauch, the bride;
For the mune raise up, and the twa sank down
Under the silver’d tide. 40

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