

A. C. Swinburne (1837-1909)

18 *Lady Maisie's Bairn*

“Gin ye winna cease for the pity of him,  
O cease for the pity of me;  
There was never bairn born of a woman  
Between the sea-wind and the sea,  
There was never bairn born of a woman, 5  
That was born so bitterly.”

The ship strove hard upon the wind,  
I wot it drove full mightily:  
But the fair gold sides upon the ship  
They were bursten with the sea. 10

“O I am sae fain for you, Lord John,  
Gin ye be no sae fain;  
How shall I bear wi' my body,  
It is sae full of pain?”

“O I am sae fain of your body, 15  
Ye are no sae fain of me;”  
But the sails are riven wi' the wind  
And the sides are full of sea.

O when she saw the sails riven,  
The sair pain bowed her back; 20  
But when she saw the sides bursten,  
I wot her very heart brak.

The wind waxed in the sea between,  
The rain waxed in the land;  
Lord John was happed wi' saut sea-foam, 25  
Lady Maisie wi' sea-sand;

And the little bairn between the twa  
That was to her right hand.

The rain rains saer on Duriesdyke  
To the land side and the sea;  
There was never bairn born of a woman  
That was born mair bitterly.

30

*1915*

(From *Ballads of the English Border*. Ed. with Introduction,  
Glossary and Notes by William A. MacInnes. London:  
William Heinemann, 1925)