Robert Southey (1774-1843)

4 Donica

"In Finland there is a Castle which is called the New Rock, moated about with a river of unsounded depth, the water black, and the fish therein very distasteful to the palate. In this are spectres often seen, which foreshow either the death of the Governor, or of some prime officer belonging to the place; and most commonly it appeareth in the shape of a harper, sweetly singing and dallying and playing under the water."

"It is reported of one Donica, that after she was dead, the Devil walked in her body for the space of two years, so that none suspected but she was still alive; for she did both speak and eat, though very sparingly; only she had a deep paleness on her countenance, which was the only sign of death. At length a Magician coming by where she was then in the company of many other virgins, as soon as he beheld her he said, 'Fair Maids, why keep you company with this dead Virgin, whom you suppose to be alive?' when, taking away the magic charm which was tied under her arm, the body fell down lifeless and without motion."

The following Ballad is founded on these stories. They are to be found in the notes to The Hierarchies of the Blessed Angels; a Poem by Thomas Heywood, printed in folio by Adam Islip, 1635.

High on a rock whose castled shade Darken'd the lake below, In ancient strength majestic stood The towers of Arlinkow. The fisher in the lake below $\mathbf{5}$ Durst never cast his net, Nor ever swallow in its waves Her passing wing would wet. The cattle from its ominous banks In wild alarm would run, 10Though parch'd with thirst, and faint beneath The summer's scorching sun. For sometimes when no passing breeze The long lank sedges waved, All white with foam and heaving high 15Its deafening billows raved. And when the tempest from its base The rooted pine would shake,

The powerless storm unruffling swept Across the calm dead lake.	20
And ever then when death drew near The house of Arlinkow, Its dark unfathom'd waters sent Strange music from below.	
The Lord of Arlinkow was old, One only child had he, Donica was the Maiden's name, As fair as fair might be.	25
A bloom as bright as opening morn Suffused her clear white cheek; The music of her voice was mild, Her full dark eyes were meek.	30
Far was her beauty known, for none So fair could Finland boast; Her parents loved the Maiden much, Young Eberhard loved her most.	35
Together did they hope to tread The pleasant path of life, For now the day drew near to make Donica Eberhard's wife.	40
The eve was fair and mild the air, Along the lake they stray; The eastern hill reflected bright The tints of fading day.	
And brightly o'er the water stream'd The liquid radiance wide; Donica's little dog ran on And gamboll'd at her side.	45
Youth, health, and love bloom'd on her cheek, Her full dark eyes express In many a glance to Eberhard Her soul's meek tenderness.	50

Nor sound was heard, nor passing gale Sigh'd through the long lank sedge; The air was hush'd, no little wave Dimpled the water's edge:	55
When suddenly the lake sent forth Its music from beneath, And slowly o'er the waters sail'd The solemn sounds of death.	60
As those deep sounds of death arose, Donica's cheek grew pale, And in the arms of Eberhard The lifeless Maiden fell.	
Loudly the Youth in terror shriek'd, And loud he call'd for aid, And with a wild and eager look Gazed on the lifeless Maid.	65
But soon again did better thoughts In Eberhard arise, And he with trembling hope beheld The Maiden raise her eyes.	70
And on his arm reclined she moved With feeble pace and slow, And soon with strength recover'd reach'd The towers of Arlinkow.	75
Yet never to Donica's cheeks Return'd their lively hue; Her cheeks were deathy white and wan, Her lips a livid blue;	80
Her eyes so bright and black of yore Were now more black and bright, And beam'd strange lustre in her face So deadly wan and white.	
The dog that gamboll'd by her side, And loved with her to stray, Now at his alter'd mistress howl'd,	85

And fled in fear away.

Yet did the faithful Eberhard Not love the Maid the less;	90
He gazed with sorrow, but he gazed	00
With deeper tenderness.	
with deeper tenderness.	
And when he found her health unharm'd	
He would not brook delay,	
But press'd the not unwilling Maid	95
To fix the bridal day.	
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And when at length it came, with joy	
He hail'd the bridal day,	
And onward to the house of God	
They went their willing way.	100
But when they at the altar stood,	
And heard the sacred rite,	
The hallow'd tapers dimly stream'd	
A pale sulphureous light.	
And when the Youth with holy warmth	105
Her hand in his did hold,	
Sudden he felt Donica's hand	
Grow deadly damp and cold.	
But loudly then he shriek'd, for lo!	
A Spirit met his view,	110
And Eberhard in the angel form	
His own Donica knew.	
That instant from her earthly frame	
A Dæmon howling fled,	
And at the side of Eberhard	115
The livid corpse fell dead.	

1796

(From *The Poetical Works of Robert Southey*. Vol. 6. Collected by Himself. 10 vols. London, 1838)