

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)