

A. C. Swinburne (1837-1909)

10 *The Earl of Mar's Daughter*

It was intill a goodly time,  
The first morning in May,  
The bonny Earl of Mar's daughter  
Went forth hersell to play.

She's tane her to the bonny birkenshaw 5  
Among the fair green leaves;  
There she saw a bonny doo  
Sat on the leaf o' the tree.

"O Coo-me-doo, my love sae true,  
Gin ye'll come down to me, 10  
I'll gie ye a cage of good red gowd  
For a cage of green shaw tree."

"Gowden hingers roun' your cage,  
And siller roun' your wa',  
I'll gar ye shine as bonny a bird 15  
As the bonniest ower them a'."

She hadna weel these words spoken,  
Nor yet she hadna said,  
Till Coo-me-doo flew frae the leaves  
And lighted on her head. 20

And she's tane hame this bonny bird,  
Brought him to bower and ha';  
She's garred him shine the bonniest bird  
That was out ower them a' [.]

When day was gane and night was come 25

In ae chamber they were that tide;  
And there she saw a goodly young man  
Stood straight up at her side.

“How cam ye in my bower-chamber,  
For sair it marvels me, 30  
For the bolts are made o’ the good red gowd  
And the door-shafts of a good tree.”

“O haud your tongue now, May Janet,  
And of your talking let me be;  
Mind ye not on your turtle-doo 35  
That ye brought hame wi’ ye?”

“O whatten a man are ye,” she said,  
“Fu’ sair this marvels me;  
I doubt ye are some keen warlock  
That wons out ower the sea.” 40

“O come ye here for ills?” she says,  
“Or come ye for my good?  
I doubt ye are some strong warlock  
That wons out ower the flood.”

“My mither is lady of strange landis 45  
Stand far out ower the sea;  
She witched me to a birdie’s shape  
For the love of your body.”

“My mither is queen of the witch-landis  
Lie baith to north and south; 50  
She witched me to a birdie’s body  
For the love of your goodly mouth.”

“She can well of witches’ work,  
She maketh baith mirth and meen;  
She witched me to a little bird’s body 55

For the love of your twa grey een.”

“It was a’ for your yellow hair  
That I cam ower the sea;  
And it was a’ for your bonny mouth  
I took sic weird on me.” 60

“O Coo-me-doo, my love sae true,  
Nae mair frae me ye’se gae.  
The stanes shall fleet on the wan waters  
Before we twain be twey.”

“O Coo-me-doo, my love sae true, 65  
It’s time we were abed.”  
“O weel for you, my ain sweet thing,  
It’s be as ye have said.”

Then he’s dwelt in her bower-chamber  
Fu’ six lang years and ane, 70  
And seven fair sons she’s borne to him.  
Fairer was there never nane.

The first bairn she’s borne to him  
He’s tane him ower the sea;  
He’s gien it to his auld mither, 75  
Bade well-nourished it should be.

The seventh bairn she’s borne to him,  
He’s tane him frae his make;  
He’s gien it to his auld mither,  
Bade nourice it for his sake. 80

And he’s dwelt in her bower-chamber  
Fu’ six years thro’ and three;  
Till there is comen an auld grey knight  
Her wed-lord for to be;  
She had nae will to his gowden gifts 85

Nor wad she to his fee.

Out then spak the bonny bird,  
He heard what they did say;  
Says; "Waes be to you, ye auld grey man,  
For it's time I were away." 90

Then Coo-me-doo took flight and flew  
He flew out ower the sea;  
He's lighted by his mither's castle-ha'  
On a tower of gold fu' hie.

1917

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