

"I'll teach you to handle both her and the crew,
To respond to the wings of the sea
With rhythm as heathen, caresses as light;
I'll teach you to love only me."

Perfumed spindrift pervaded her head,
His images, promises, touch.
The heat of his flesh was against her cheek;
She caught herself hearing too much.

She wrenched from his arms and tried to unspell
Them both as she chastened her heart,
For her mind was as fixed as a buoy bell,
Long before a boy hastened her heart.

She forced her gaze where a wave came to break,
For this was no boy but a man--
As tall and sure as his Petrel's masts;
She was swamped like a skiff in his wake.

"Oh sailor, you're already married to spume.
Go back to your termagant love.
Your ocean eyes and your nimbus hair
I'd never be willing to share.

"Take your ripe words far away from here;
She owns you brain and beard.
Why, even the taste of your kiss concurs,
Your thoughts at the wheel are hers!"

He laughed, "The ocean's part god, part nymph,
Most scornful of mortal blades
Who waste their sighing fantasies
On any but live young maids."

She frowned, so he said, "It's my livelihood!
There's much to both love and hate.
Whatever I am is completely yours;
I'll be a dependable mate.

"I'll even drop anchor for good some day;
I'll build a house wherever you say."
He poured out his heart and his gold-filled purse,
A song and a classical verse.