

END OF AN ERA, LINGERING LOVERS OF BALEFUL BAY

In the Great Auk Inn at Keelsontown,  
The old salts toast the warlock winds  
Then tell their tales of love and sails  
And watch the birds dive down.

The sea still hums old threnodies  
For the green-eyed girl, Noreen,  
A clipper ship, the Petrel,  
And her captain caught between.

Their portraits hang above the bar;  
Men stare at hers and talk of him.  
The frames are carved from the Petrel's spar,  
Her binnacle brass as trim.

His name was Jason Wesley Woods;  
He owned that sailing ship.  
He ran her tight and record-fast,  
Her hold packed full of goods.

His name was soft as a sleeping surf  
But his will was anchor strong.  
Noreen was afraid of his fancy tongue  
And his eyes when he looked too long.

She fled, but he caught and kissed her well.  
"I've vowed to be rich," he said.  
"I'll ply every port from here to hell,  
But I must have you in my bed.

"You'll see a new world on your wedding trip,  
You'll get a new feel in your feet.  
You'll learn the ship with your ears and nails  
As you lean from the Petrel's rails.

"Her teakwood is smooth and her ribs are sound,  
And she's soaked with a spicey smell.  
We'll take you and wake you to things unbelieved  
By folks who are tied to the ground.

"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."

(cont.)