

Spreads like some scented flower of death,  
Over the grove; the lovers' boon  
Of sleep shall steal upon them soon,  
And lovers' lips, from lips withdrawn,  
Seek dimmer bosoms till the dawn.

Yet on the central altar lies  
The sacrament of kneaded bread,  
With blood made one, the sacrifice  
To those, the living, who are dead—  
Strange gods and goddesses, that shed  
Monstrous desires of secret things  
Upon their worshippers, from wings  
One lucent web of light, from head  
One labyrinthine passion-fed  
Palace of love, from breathing rife  
With secrets of forbidden life.

But not the sunlight, nor the stars,  
Nor any light but theirs alone,  
Nor iron masteries of Mars,  
Nor Saturn's misconceiving zone,  
Nor any planet's may be shown,  
Within the circle of the grove,  
Where burn the sanctities of love:  
Nor may the foot of man be known,  
Nor evil eyes of mothers thrown  
On maidens that desire the kiss  
Only of maiden Artemis.

But horned and huntress from the skies,  
She bends her lips upon the breeze,  
And pure and perfect in her eyes,  
Burn magical virginity's  
Sweet intermittent sorceries.  
When the slow wind from her sweet word  
In all their conchéd ears is heard.  
And like the slumber of the seas,  
There murmur through the holy trees  
The kisses of the goddess keen,  
And sighs and laughters caught between.

For, swooning at the fervid lips  
Of Artemis, the maiden kisses  
Sob, and the languid body slips  
Down to enamelled wildernesses.  
Fallen and loose the shaken tresses;  
Fallen the sandal and girdling gold,