

TO LAURA.

MISTRESS, I pray thee, when the wind
Exults upon the roaring sea,
Come to my bosom, kissed and kind,
And sleep upon the lips of me.

Dream on my breast of quiet days,
Kindled of slow absorbing fire.
Sleep, while I ponder on the ways
And secret paths of my desire.

Dream, while my restless brain probes deep
The mysteries of its magic power,
The secrets of forgotten sleep,
The birth of knowledge as a flower.

Slow and divine thy gentle breath
Woos my warm throat : my spirit flies
Beyond the iron walls of death,
And seeks strange portals, pale and wise.

My lips are fervent, as in prayer,
Thy lips are parted, as to kiss :
My hand is clenched upon the air,
Thy hand's soft touch, how sweet it is !

The wind is amorous of the sea,
The sea's large limbs to its embrace
Curl, and thy perfume curls round me,
An incense on my eager face.

I see, beyond all seas and stars,
The gates of hell, the paths of death
Open: unclasp the surly bars,
Before the voice of him that saith:

“I will!” Droop lower to my knees!
Sink gently to the leopard's skin!
I must not stoop and take my ease,
Or touch the body lithe and thin.

Bright body of the myriad smiles,
Sweet serpent of the lower life,
The smooth silk touch of thee defiles,
The lures and languors of a wife.

Slip to the floor, I must not turn:
There is a lion in the way!
The star of morning rise and burn:
I seek the dim supernal day!

Sleep there, nor know me gone: sleep there
And never wake, although God's breath
Catch thee at midmost of the prayer
Of sleep—that so dream turns to death.

Pass, be no more! The beckoning dawn

 Woos the white ocean: I must go
Wither my soul's desire is drawn.

 Whither? I know not. Even so.