

# EPILOGUE

## A DEATH IN THESSALY

Μόνος Θεῶν γὰρ Θάνατος οὐ δῶρων ἐρά  
—ÆSCH., *Fr. Niobe.*

**F**AREWELL! O Light of day, O torch of  
Althæan!

The strange fruits lure me of Persephone;  
I raise the last, the memorable pæan,  
Storm-throated, mouthed as the cave-rolling sea;  
I lift the cup: deep draughts of blue Lethean!  
My wine to me.

O lamentable season of Apollo,  
When swoops his glory to the golden wave!  
As all his children, so their lord shall follow!  
The flower he slew, the maiden he would save,  
As Itylus, light woven, tuned! Oh swallow,  
Bewail their grave!

The gracious breast of Artemis may light me  
To men—yet loved I ever Artemis?  
Surely the vine-song and the dance delight me,  
The sea-blue bowers where Aphrodite is.  
Terrible gods and destinies excite me,  
The strange sad kiss.

Thus may no moon tell Earth my story after,  
No virgin sing my fame as virginal.  
Yet some night-leaves the southern stream may  
waft her,  
Some amorous nymph across the wood may call  
A loud mad chant; love, tears, harsh sombre  
laughter.  
No more at all.

Oh, mother, Oh, Demeter, in my burthen  
Let me assume thy sorrow singular;  
A branching temple and an altar earthen,  
A fire of herbs, a clayen water-jar;  
An olive grove to bind the sacred girth in  
Lone woods afar.

Let life burn gently thence, as when the ember  
In one faint incense-puff to shrineward dies.  
No care, no pain, no craving to remember,  
One leap toward the knees and destinies,  
Where shine Her lips like flames, Her breasts  
like amber,  
Like moons Her eyes.

For my heart turns—ah still!—in Sorrow's traces,  
Where sad chill footprints pash the sodden leaves;  
Where ranged around me are the cold, grey faces;  
Fallen on the stubble are the rotten sheaves;  
The vicious ghosts abound; and Chronos' paces  
No soul deceives.

Yet my heart looks to Madness as its mother,  
Remembering Who once caught me by the well;  
And the strange loves of that misshapen Other,  
The feast of blood, the cold enchanted dell,  
Where fire was filtered up through earth to smother  
Sick scents of hell.

And that wild night when vine-leaves wooed and  
clustered  
Round my wild limbs, and like a woman I went  
Over the mountains — how the Northwind  
blustered!—  
And slew with them the beast, and was content.  
The madness. Oh! the dreadful light that lusted  
The main event.

Ay! the wild whirlings in the woodland reaches;  
The ghastly smile upon the Stone God's lip;  
The rigid tremors, anguish that beseeches  
From eye to eye fresh fervours of the whip;  
The mounded moss below the swaying beeches—  
Kiss me and clip!

Why! the old madness grows!—how feebly lying  
Smooth by this bay where waves are tender  
flowers.  
Winds, soft as the old kisses were, are sighing.  
Clouds drift across the sun for silken bowers.  
The moon is up—an hastening nymph! I, dying,  
Await the Hours.

And thou, Persephone, I know thy story,  
That I must taste the terror of thy wrong:  
How Hades ride across the promontory,  
Snatch my pale body in mid over-song;  
Drag me from sight of my Apollo's glory  
With horses strong.

Nay! as Apollo half the day is shrouded,  
As Artemis twice seven nights is dark;  
Surely he shines in other land unclouded,  
Surely her shaft shall find another mark.  
So dawns the day on Acheron ghost-crowded,  
And on my bark.

I know not how yon world may prove, nor  
whither  
Hermes conduct me to what farther end.  
Yet if these bays abide, this heart not wither,  
It cannot be I shall not find a friend.  
Some pale immortal lover draw me thither!  
To kiss me bend!

Moreover, as Apollo re-arisen  
Flames, with a roaring of the morning sea,  
Up from the stricken gray, the iron-barred  
prison,  
Flashes his face again upon the lea,  
And diamond dew the woodland ones bedizen;  
So—so for me!

Some forty years this earth knew song and passion  
    Pour from my lips, saw gladness in mine eyes!  
Some forty shall I sing some other fashion,  
    Dance in strange measures, change the key of sighs.  
Then rise in Thessaly again, Thalassian!  
    Only, more wise.