

## THE ARCHÆOLOGIST

To *Ctesse* —

The carmined lips of your moustachioed mouth ;  
The fading fires in your debauched grey eyes  
    With the black grooves about them, each a trench  
    Where some dead soldier rots, a sterile stench—  
All of you, ripe and rotten, athwart the lies  
Of paint and powder, false fanfares of youth  
    That blare, yet passionate ache their tongue were true—  
Hag of the pit, what should I make of you ?

I will legitimize the bastard spell !  
    Take all your falsehood, weld it with my force.  
Now then, Canidia, match thy miracle  
With mine, old medlar ! Though the reek of hell  
    Gush from thy gorge, I hold my knightly course,  
Dragon ! I love thee, and I love thee well  
    Who am like a shipwrecked sailor that should skry  
On the horizon some scarred citadel  
    Or, smoking still, a volcan threat the sky,  
    Or hairy with burnt forests, wracked and rent,  
    Some ruin of an earthquaked continent !

It is not love, but worship most religious,  
    This abject me, this wallowing at thy knees !  
    I am like a pilgrim ; the blue-faced baboons  
    Of Christ receive him ; he prostrates him, swoons  
In rapture ; slobbers on some leprous piece  
Of flesh torn from Saint Damien—prestigious !  
    Yet, that were relic of an holy man,  
    And thou the carcass of a courtesan !

Beneath my seas thy creaking timbers tremble,  
    Gallant old barque ! I shake thee, stem and stern,

With furious kisses in blind rage at Time  
Who hath wrought on thee his cold and common crime.  
So now I rise, laughing with love, and burn!  
Those dissolute embers of thy lust grown dun,  
The ashen horrors of thy face, resemble  
The dull red glare of a November sun.