

The Sleeper

Sopor Aeternus

At midnight, in the month of June,
I stand beneath the mystic moon.
An opiate vapour, dewy, dim,
Exhales from out her golden rim,
And, softly dripping, drop by drop,
Upon the quiet mountain top,
Steals drowsily and musically
Into the universal valley.
The rosemary nods upon the grave;
The lily lolls upon the wave;
Wrapping the fog about its breast,
The ruin moulders into rest;
Looking like Lethe, see! the lake
A conscious slumber seems to take,
And would not, for the world awake.
All Beauty sleeps!-and lo! where lies
Irene, with her Destinies!

O, lady bright! can it be right
This window open to the night?
The wanton airs, from the tree-top,
Laughingly through the lattice drop
The bodiless airs, a wizard rout,
Flit through thy chamber in and out,
And wave the curtain canopy
So fitfully - so fearfully
Above the closed and fringed lid
'Neath which thy slumb'ring soul lies hid,
That, o'er the floor and down the wall,
Like ghosts the shadows rise and fall!

Oh, lady dear, hast thou no fear?
Why and what art thou dreaming here?
Sure thou art come o'er far-off seas,
A wonder to these garden trees!
Strange is thy pallor! Strange thy dress,
Strange, above all, thy length of tress,
And this all solemn silentness!

The lady sleeps! Oh, may her sleep,
Which is enduring, so be deep!
Heaven have her in its sacred keep!
This chamber changed for one more holy,
This bed for one more melancholy,
I pray to God that she may lie
For ever with unopened eye,
While the pale sheeted ghosts go by!

My love, she sleeps! Oh, may her sleep
As it is lasting, so be deep!
Soft may the worms around her creep!
Far in the forset, dim and old,
For her may some fall vault unfold
some vault that oft has flung its black
And winged panels fluttering back,
Of her grand family funerals
Some sepulchre, remote, alone,

Against whose portal she hath thrown,
In childhood, many an idle stone
Some tomb from out whose sounding door
She nier shall force an echo more,
Thrilling to think, poor child of sin!
It was the dead who groaned within.