Antiope, by Michael Field

NOONTIDE'S whiteness of full sun   
 Illumes her sleep ;   
Its heat is on her limbs and one   
 White arm with sweep   
Of languor falls around her head :   
She cuddles on the lap of earth ;   
 While almost dead   
Asleep, forgetful of his mirth,   
A dimpled Cupid at her side   
 Sprawls satisfied.

Conquered, weary with the light,   
 Her eyelids orb :   
Summer's plenitude of might   
 Her lips absorb,—   
Uplifted to the burning air   
And with repletion fallen apart.   
 Her form is bare,   
But her doe-skin binds each dart   
Of her woodland armory,   
 Laid idle by.

She is curled beyond the rim   
 Of oaks that slide   
Their lowest branches, long and slim,   
 Close to her side ;   
Their foliage touches her with lobes   
Half-gay, half-shadowed, green and brown :   
 Her white throat globes,   
Thrown backward, and her breasts sink down   
With the supineness of her sleep,   
 Leaf-fringed and deep.

Where her hand has curved to slip   
 Across a bough,   
Fledged Cupid's slumberous fingers grip   
 The turf and how   
Close to his chin he hugs her cloak !   
His torch reversed trails on the ground   
 With feeble smoke ;   
For in noon's chastity profound,   
In the blank glare of mid-day skies,   
 Love's flambeau dies.

But the sleepers are not left   
 To breathe alone ;   
A god is by with hoofs deep-cleft,   
 Legs overgrown   
With a rough pelt and body strong :   
Yet must the head and piercing eyes   
 In truth belong   
To some Olympian in disguise ;   
From lawless shape or mien unkempt   
 They are exempt.

Zeus, beneath these oaken boughs,   
 As satyr keeps   
His watch above the woman's brows   
 And backward sweeps   
Her cloak to flood her with the noon ;   
Curious and fond, yet by a clear   
 Joy in the boon   
Of beauty franchised—beauty dear   
To him as to a tree's bent mass   
 The sunny grass.

*Take a look at the last stanza of the poem, and answer the following questions in partners*:

1. What words are used to describe Zeus in this stanza? How would you describe his attitude toward the sleepers?
2. What does the phrase “joy in the boon of beauty franchised” mean? Who is the rightful “owner” of this beauty? Use the following simile, “beauty dear to him as to a tree’s bent mass the sunny grass” to guide your response.