

John Melby: *In Darkness*

Texts by Amy Lowell

At Night

The wind is singing through the trees to-night,
A deep-voiced song of rushing cadences
And crashing intervals. No summer breeze
Is this, though hot July is at its height,
Gone is her gentler music; with delight
She listens to this booming like the seas,
These elemental, loud necessities
Which call to her to answer their swift might.
Above the tossing trees shines down a star,
Quietly bright; this wild, tumultuous joy
Quickens nor dims its splendour. And my mind,
O Star! is filled with your white light, from far,
So suffer me this one night to enjoy
The freedom of the onward sweeping wind.

New York at Night

A near horizon whose sharp jags
Cut brutally into a sky
Of leaden heaviness, and crags
Of houses lift their masonry
Ugly and foul, and chimneys lie
And snort, outlined against the gray
Of lowhung cloud. I hear the sigh
The goaded city gives, not day
Nor night can ease her heart, her anguished labours
stay.

Below, straight streets, monotonous,
From north and south, from east and west,
Stretch glittering; and luminous
Above, one tower tops the rest
And holds aloft man's constant quest:
Time! Joyless emblem of the greed
Of millions, robber of the best
Which earth can give, the vulgar creed
Has seared upon the night its flaming ruthless
screed.

O Night! Whose soothing presence brings
The quiet shining of the stars.
O Night! Whose cloak of darkness clings
So intimately close that scars
Are hid from our own eyes. Beggars
By day, our wealth is having night
To burn our souls before altars
Dim and tree-shadowed, where the light
Is shed from a young moon, mysteriously bright.

Where art thou hiding, where thy peace?
This is the hour, but thou art not.
Will waking tumult never cease?
Hast thou thy votary forgot?
Nature forsakes this man-begot
And festering wilderness, and now
The long still hours are here, no jot
Of dear communing do I know;
Instead the glaring, man-filled city groans below!

In Darkness

Must all of worth be travailed for, and those
Life's brightest stars rise from a troubled sea?
Must years go by in sad uncertainty
Leaving us doubting whose the conquering blows,
Are we or Fate the victors? Time which shows
All inner meanings will reveal, but we
Shall never know the upshot. Ours to be
Wasted with longing, shattered in the throes,
The agonies of splendid dreams, which day
Dims from our vision, but each night brings back;
We strive to hold their grandeur, and essay
To be the thing we dream. Sudden we lack
The flash of insight, life grows drear and gray,
And hour follows hour, nerveless, slack.

(All texts used in this composition are in the public domain.)