

## 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.)*