

“New York at Night”

Lowell, Amy, 1874-1925

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!

