

## THE VISION OF NAHUM

As I WALKED unaware along  
A street made new with building,  
I saw it: the light of visions;  
A quality of air and sight  
That loosens a prophet's tongue.  
It was cool and quiet, as it should not be:  
The day was warm, and the street  
Was full of people happy  
And indifferent to the dust  
Of God and ancient time.

It changed an ordinary morning,  
And a street I knew so well  
I scarcely saw it underfoot:  
Air so old and hushed,—  
Everything went silent  
As the prophet's eye made cankerworms  
Of pediments and nails,  
Found a new and deadly meaning  
For the sawdust and loose pavement.  
Sound died as the light spoke;  
The street, familiar still,  
Transformed  
Into an old, dark dream.

Must He call on my young city?  
No, don't tell me,—  
Not again: how God  
In His vengeance  
Comes over even Nineveh  
As time and change. Yes,  
I see the dead are everywhere;  
I trip and slip through them  
As I lose familiar signs,—  
The cool shade of the terrace,  
Where the desert was a river.  
And yes, I know the loss:  
Where did it go?— the fun,  
The bravery and foolishness  
From when the city,— bloody city,—  
Was good, and new, and strong?

But must I have this vision now?  
How God makes locusts of us,  
Our children, once our lions, prey for flies,  
Our city unloved drifts of sand?  
Why break all the gold, the craft,  
The comfort won from death?

It is too soon, my Father,  
To bring the wrath of time  
Upon our children, although  
It's true, they pant and strain  
Well past the sense of grace.  
But still, let them be.  
Leave the desert at the door.  
God is patient, and Your fury  
Stews for ever. They will know  
It all in time.  
Great kings are always  
One step shy of dust;  
Little cities brittle clay.  
Make of us a quiet, bleeding wound:  
If it must kill us,  
Let it kill us as we sleep.

Let me blink away Your light  
And warm my days,  
Even as I know how they must end.