

The station . . . was murmurous with the immense and distant sound of time. Great, slanted beams of moted light fell ponderously athwart the station's floor and the calm voice of time hovered along the walls and ceiling of that mighty room, distilled out of the voices and movements of the people who swarmed beneath. It had the murmur of a distant sea, the languorous lapse and flow of waters on a beach. . . . Few buildings are vast enough to hold the sound of time, and . . . there was a superb fitness in the fact that the one that held it better than all the others should be a railroad station. Here, as nowhere else on earth, men were brought together for a moment at the beginning or end of their innumerable journeys, here one saw their greetings and farewells, here, in a single instant, one got the entire picture of human destiny. Men came and went, they passed and vanished, all were moving through the moments of their lives . . . but the voice of time remained aloof and unperturbed, a drowsy and eternal murmur below the immense and distant roof.

Thomas Wolfe

**M**ost of the big shore places were closed now and there were hardly any lights except the shadowy, moving glow of a ferryboat across the Sound. And as the moon rose higher the inessential houses began to melt away until gradually I became aware of the old island here that flowered once for Dutch sailors' eyes—a fresh, green breast of the new world. Its vanished trees . . . had once pandered in whispers to the last and greatest of all human dreams; for a transitory enchanted moment man must have held his breath in the presence of this continent . . . face to face for the last time in history with something commensurate to his capacity for wonder.

F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby*

[Is] New York the most beautiful city in the world? It is not far from it. No urban nights are like the nights there. I have looked down across the city from high windows. It is then that the great buildings lose reality and take on magical powers. Squares and squares of flame, set and cut into the ether. Here is our poetry, for we have pulled down the stars to our will.

Ezra Pound, 1913