

Manfred, Act III, Scene IV, by Lord Byron

Man: I do remember me, that in my youth,
When I was wandering, – upon such a night
I stood within the Coliseum’s wall,
Midst the chief relics of almighty Rome;
The trees which grew along the broken arches 5
Waved dark in the blue midnight, and the stars
Shone through the rents of ruin; from afar
The watchdog bay’d beyond the Tiber; and
More near from out the Caesars’ palace came
The owl’s long cry, and, interruptedly, 10
Of distant sentinels the fitful song
Begun and died upon the gentle wind.
Some cypresses beyond the time-worn breach
Appeared to skirt the horizon, yet they stood
Within a bowshot – Where the Caesars dwelt, 15
And dwell the tuneless birds of night, amidst
A grove which springs through levell’d battlements,
And twines its roots with the imperial hearths,
Ivy usurps the laurel’s place of growth; –
But the gladiators’ bloody Circus stands, 20
A noble wreck in ruinous perfection!

(From the Penguin Classics edition, edited by Susan J Wolfson and Peter J Manning; original text prepared by John Wright)

