

BLACK CAT AND EVENING STAR

Fred Chappell

Tabitha.

I most admire your serenity.
You sail alone and motionless
Within a slowly purpling sea,
As hour by hour the sun grows less.
Your course is steadfast from eve to dawn.
Golden and aloof you poise
Above the world you gleam upon
Of reliable sorrows and infrequent joys.
Lone you are, and loneliness
Is what you lighten and what you bless.

Hesperus.

I envy your engagement with the night.
To its great shadow you abandon your own.
Omnipresent in the absence of light,
You are everywhere at once till night is gone.

The world is yours to reconnoiter at will
When the sun departs the unreluctant sky
And twilight smudges the steeple and the hill
And the last breeze passes with a passive sigh.

Fred Chappell is professor emeritus at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro and was the poet laureate of North Carolina from 1997 to 2002. His most recent book is *Shadow Box: Poems* (2009), reviewed by David Middleton in these pages (Summer 2011).

Then you join the anonymity
Of numberless shades of shadows that crowd the dark
With their numberless darknesses, a unity
Of separate beings without name or mark.

Moral.

*With Self-possession I may meet the Night
And guide my Self by my own Light;
Or at the Advent of that long Nightfall
Give over my Self and embrace the All.*