

ODE TO A TREE IN A LONDON CHURCHYARD IN WINTER

Frozen, motionless you stand,
A white network of delicate tracings -
 so still;
All around is white, quiet, dead;
Away, behind those dark forbidding faces
 with their pale outlines & highlights,
 softening and enhancing their murky walls,
There's a murmur; never ceasing, never changing,
The murmur of constant traffic - red, black, green, white -
All white coated, all frosted - melting, getting greyer
But all is white and quiet here in this backwater,
This mere side street that leads - somewhere? Nowhere.

Nowhere someone breathes, and your snow-soft covering billows,
 puffs - a white cloud, it whirls,
Shrieks, blizzards, freezes and then drifts gently down
 with its brothers to the shrouded stones,
 each with its own obliterated epitaph.
A posy lies pink against the sheeted slab,
 Rest In Peace - the world rests, and you gaunt tree
Do you rest, in peace, in a persil paradise
 where all is crisp and quiet ?

A line of footsteps - crisp-crunch leads to a wreath'd shrine;
Two knees imprint the snow in silent prayer
 which rises with the frosty breath of the devout.
Above you soars a gull, a lonely snowflake
 crisp and grey against the overcast and cloudy sky
 it swoops, rises, alights and fluffs itself,
And then, as if by Midas touch, is frozen.
 Cheeky sparrows dart and chink,
 twittering meaninglessly at your guest,
Jumping from twig to twig in sharp bursts of whirring wings.
 Your twigs sway and shiver with their crystal icicles
 To an unknown melody.

A clock beats out the metronome from its gold-backed face,
Your organ shrills its piping harmonies, and
 the deep base reverberates the gargoyled tower
Windows are its cymbals, doors its drums, the clink o' change
 in the pockets of passers-by are its castanets
And you, its silent dancer - dancing in the breeze
 that flurries down between the buildings tall
Dancing, always dancing,
 going nowhere at all.