

Girl in Oilskin

White girl, black dog on rain-fresh streets
backgrounded by damp walls
and patient city trees
whose many-fingered branches stencil space:
white pillar, black beast at the base
undermining youth before our eyes . . .

It was only a girl fresh from school
still shining with the soap of easy discipline
going to and from her first new city job.
We passed her in the morning and at night
on our way through those teeming streets:
she wore an oilskin - white - that caught the eye
before we saw that she was beautiful
and she remained, a snowy monolith
imprinted on the mind,
a metropolitan child-Diana.

With downcast eyes and wind-laced hair
she cleaves the leaden wave of dawn;
her whiteness, soiled by the dying moon,
shimmers towards the young sun's light.

All day she swallows dregs of life -
typing, filing, men's bullseyes -
in a colourless and dusty land
where a veneer of normality
is preserved by dull routine.

White turns to yellow as the lamps are lit;
she hurries, homeward-drawn by thoughts of food.

The black beast follows, slavering.

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