

Yet Another Traumatic Christmas Memory, Perhaps

Mary Kennan Herbert
Long Island University, Brooklyn, New York

Tulsa, OK?

An Oklahoma fragment.

I am perched on a stool by the ubiquitous
family radio, there is always a radio
in old photos, in Norman Rockwell paintings
for magazine covers crumbling into our past,
even as I speak.

Bing Crosby is singing “I’m Dreaming
of a White Christmas” just to me,
while I stare dreamily at our tree,
that ominous balsam, that deep, dark green
monster in the living room, bloated
with its gleaming balls reflecting
lost light.

Oddly, it reveals its fearful visage
only in daytime. Yet, in the twinkling
evenings, the lights are plugged in, and instant
sparkle reassures and quarreling shadows
are sidelined. Der Bingle sings and rings
three little chimes, rhymes, echoes
to elevate my young heart.

All so simplistic, and how people love
that song! Even a love-struck girl age five,
learns how words can tame a gothic forest,
sometimes. Guests arrive,
she is requested to sing a carol, a hymn
to the holiday, “Silent Night,” while perched
on a stool, a stage, feeling naked.