

Fallen Comrade

(A tribute to the 'Thomas Hardy Tree.')

The night watchman is toppled. Encircled by death,
he now lies himself devoid of breath, a lone
stump staring up to his heaven.

I realise never again will he
hear those bells peal nor rattle his leaves
to the wind's playful fight.

Its bowers have bent to shelter whispering lovers and
rain-drowned wanderers; to peer; to overhear;
to keep wise counsel. To nod its approval
at knee-bent hopefuls and shield office lunchers from
their urban hotchpotch; to exhale; to snatch up the gale;
to offer solace; an arm hooked round the solitary mourner,
claws of gnarl knitted together with clenched grief.

Rings shot through with echoes.
Never spoken.
Who weeps for you, old guard?

And St. Pancras sits, thoughtfully, silently,
aching for his comrade whilst Hardy tuts
from the churchyard corner.

He knows this is the way of things.