

“The Cultivation of Christmas Trees” (1954)

There are several attitudes towards Christmas,
Some of which we may disregard:
The social, the torpid, the patently commercial,
The rowdy (the pubs being open till midnight),
And the childish - which is not that of the child 5
For whom the candle is a star, and the gilded angel
Spreading its wings at the summit of the tree
Is not only a decoration, but an angel.

The child wonders at the Christmas Tree:
Let him continue in the spirit of wonder 10
At the Feast as an event not accepted as a pretext;
So that the glittering rapture, the amazement
Of the first-remembered Christmas Tree,
So that the surprises, delight in new possessions
(Each one with its peculiar and exciting smell), 15
The expectation of the goose or turkey
And the expected awe on its appearance,

So that the reverence and the gaiety
May not be forgotten in later experience,
In the bored habituation, the fatigue, the tedium, 20
The awareness of death, the consciousness of failure,
Or in the piety of the convert
Which may be tainted with a self-conceit
Displeasing to God and disrespectful to children
(And here I remember also with gratitude 25
St. Lucy, her carol, and her crown of fire):

So that before the end, the eightieth Christmas
(By "eightieth" meaning whichever is last)
The accumulated memories of annual emotion
May be concentrated into a great joy 30
Which shall be also a great fear, as on the occasion
When fear came upon every soul:
Because the beginning shall remind us of the end
And the first coming of the second coming.