

Flares, Grade 2 listed building

This giant brick of a church
Is frozen tight tonight
To Broad Street Birmingham,
Snow blown into deep joints
Of structural muscle,
The corner stones clenched,
Snow riming the studs of the brick belt
Strung between two plain rows of windows.
Snow points the stone architraves,
Stops up the Puritan bell tower.
This is fact in engineering brick
Laid down by the Calvinist Fathers
On solid, dissenter earth, not consecrated ground -
No Holy water softens these Staffordshire Blues.
The same fact that met
Those walking past
To witness Dickens at the Town Hall
Putting on the voices, pulling the faces
For Scrooge and the Spirit of Christmas Past.
A fact that would still be here,
After the night's flights of fancy
When they trudged, unlike Bob Cratchit, back.
And the same snow that reddens
As it swirls in front of a neon sign
Set above the high fanlight
As a girl with bare arms and legs
Plunges shrieking through the door –
'Flares' nightclub.

Ralph Ockendon