

## FROST DAMAGE

Stars surrender earthwards  
as midwinter glistens under a crookbacked moon.  
Frost handcuffs the sparse fruit, long rotted on bare branches,  
arrests last, resistant, dried up leaves,  
arms empty seedpods with slender razors.

Rows of cabbages disguised in spiky, fur-lined hoods,  
keep guard, while silken threads dipped in metal hang:  
gleaming traps.  
Berry laden bushes bend,  
heavily bandaged, contemptuously carved and cowed.

The lawn a uniform plain of silver, then -  
deep grey footprints appearing, one by one,  
deliberate and slow,  
dark pressed shadows -  
first under the stone archway,  
circling the frozen pond, random searching,  
hesitating at the crazy paving, as if someone, paused  
awhile, staring at the house....

But no-one, nothing, not even a night shadow, and the  
indentations spring softly back as  
heavy boots retreat, the frosty blades rising one by one in turn.  
The lawn regains its innocent sparkle,  
the garden a wrapped up, blindfold winter silence.

Watching warily from within, a dog whimpers, ears acock.

She, too, glances with trepidation, then turns away, half  
wishing for finality, from any crazy world at all.

Next morning, smudgily drawn,  
defacing fractals of fern frost on grimy glass ,  
a frozen mark, a sign -

*'Zavtra.'*

by Jane Muir