

Field of Flowers

There are no neat rows of marble gravestones here.
Just an old bench to sit on in a field of flowers.
Sadly nodding poppies. Tighter he holds my hand.
His vellum skin inscribed with fading blue ink veins
The absence in his age-blind eye crystallized.

Just a tear in fields of poppies where warriors lie.
They nod their heads in the windless summer air
Acknowledging his disbanded regimental beret
Proudly worn with the strip of ribbons stitched
To his heart through his navy blazered breast,

He asks about the million poppy flowers in the corn
I see the purple pollen on the paper—veined petals
It leaves a dark skull-stain, a mark of remembrance.
Where he lost his best friend all those years before
I say they are in their red dresses like pretty dancers

He asks of the poppies memory, I see the slow sap
On the growing green of stems and swelling buds
Resin scabbed scars, a mark of forgetfulness,
An end to pain. red petals shade their empty eyes
I answer they are a chocolate box by Renoir

He walks among the flowers unable to see any of it
I am holding his hand. He can visualise the rivulet
Of crimson bleeding through the ruptured ground
His medals clink among the hollow-eyed flowers
Of golden dreams, of death, of scarlet wounded passion

Claire and Oliver Smith, 2009