

WAVES OF WORDS



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LAURA QUIGLEY

A Day Out

When I die, you'll bring the kids,
Leave me flowers,
And I'll watch you walk away.
One hundred years before today
Artists sent to paint
The glory of the war,
Found themselves recording
Hell as human clay, one hundred
Shades of mud, glad of poppies
To add colour to their brush.
Under fire, the terrified,
Dug out the dead, brought
Them home broken and frozen:
The mobilised returned immobile.
The ones they couldn't find,
On land or sea, the lost,
Sank into blood and mud, solidified,
The petrified made petrified,
And from all that clay, in every town
Mausoleums rise.

For there are ghosts upon the Hoe.
The Argyll Pals kick a ball between the flags.
The Janner lads smoke fags,
Puzzled as new towers rise on their horizon.
What's that all about?

Drowned souls fret about the climate -
If the seas rise, will they find us?
Will they ever bring us home?
The kid from Swilly,
Under-age when they signed him,
Climbs the memorial like a mast,
Shoves his tin hat atop the frozen globe,
Sets it rattling in the wind.
And as he falls, he laughs -
He was expecting wings.

Instead he crashes into poppies,
Sinks beneath a frozen wave.
The dead, they find it funny:
Clay flowers for men of clay
And a sea of visitors waving phones.
How the living love, unknowing
Every shot they take is
Photo-bombed by ghosts.
The after-life clicks eighteen million likes.

It's a day out for the dead
Who hover by the volunteers
Eager to find out just why they died –
How did treaties turn to towers and men to clay?
But there's no answers as
6000 ceramic flowers draw the crowds.
Be glad that you see poppies,
Not anxious, ghostly faces
Who remember how they died.
Bring the kids, see the flowers,
And listen as you wander – for, they say,
The dead cry out as the living walk away.

GABI MARCELLUS-TEMPLE

Names

This is an accusatory finger. It's visceral. It bleeds.

Wet stone can't know who you were, you irregular man, man not from here,
man not of woman born.

These names are handwritten, not carved in stone.

We feel.

We bleed.

We breed, again and again and again.

One, Hamish is gone.

Two, Hamishes born.

Both so alike, but this one not to die and not to mourn.

She owed them money when he died, so, to pay her back, they carved his
name in stone and told her what she had to do.

Honour.

Glorify.

Remember.

Remember the dead.

But she held him dear, held his daughter in her womb, her blood and flesh, his
flesh and blood, our flesh and blood.

They threw her onto the street, onto the street, to drink and fight and love and
fear, to fear to fear no more.

Such damage done.

Such humanity, all oozing out through polished stone. All broken heart and
breaking bones. And all those nights with you, alone.

Our blood is tainted now, a crimson sea turned foul on the tide. Flesh of my
flesh, knitted mirror-image in the same rotten cradle, then kicked and beaten
into guns and bombs and broken glass.

Were you in Kensington today? Should I call you, darling?

THOM BOULTON

I See A Great Hand Reaching Out

His hand reached out like a wave of poppies.
The stains of blood like crushed berries, the
juice of the laboured fruits trickling in the cracks.

Stretched digits clawed at a towering figure above,
a pair of shoulders strapped to an obelisk of flesh.
Intimidation was the first impression but, with the
escaping moments, worries dried and crusted.

When the hands of the pocket-watch cross they
briefly touch, a minute is all they get. His silver fob
dented by a bullet.

Each ear drum burst by the bolero of war. Perforation
had occurred across the whole of his frame, ripped
his pigment from him, colourless cheeks slapped cruelly
by trodden blades.

At the going down of the last supper the commanding
officer tore bread. He wondered if anyone would remember him.

The silence of the field
scared
the horses back to life.

The smoke of the guns
pistol whipped the fog
that had lain in waiting.

His emotions escaped his eyes, glassy combers
that poured out and washed over the tall figure.
The wide gape of his jaws didn't help the words
escape. They remained trapped in his mind along
with all his future plans.

He stared into the face of the cold above.

Looking at the eye of a raven before it picks
your bones clean can fill you with regret. The
glare of the presence mistaken for hunger,
studying closer he saw it as anger.

The figure bent down and revealed herself.
Even yew trees bow when they sink caskets.

Her brow marked with cobalt paint that
flecked into shrapnel, blue shards cast down
adding to the mess. Each speck undressed,
noticing not paint but tears, tears that
left bitter trails.

Swaddled by his damp uniform, she scooped
him up, nestled him to her chest and carried
him away to the land of the ever-young.

Boots once again stomped upon grasses,
each halm squashed, cut down by her force.
When the heel lifted, a wild flower grew, tender
thing that cast a shadow which engulfed the world.

"Will they never let this happen again?"

Her gaze missed its smile.

"No dear, but they'll remember they haven't
every time they touch your posy."

LAURA REINBACH

Past the Patina - In Memory of Poppy: Wave Installation

It's a beautiful thing, as it rises, it rises, it rises,
A blood red wave in the shadow of
A wave of blood in the shadow of
A wave of blood to symbolise the names on
The memorial that pierces the sun.
It's visually stunning the way the poppies reflect
In the puddles,
A sea of red heads made duller
Lost their colour –
Are they dying or have they already...?
No water can nourish these roots already
They are dead heads fallen like shadows of
Biplane fighters in brave flocks
The resurrected phantoms of their names on
The memorial that pierces the sun.
I'm in awe as it rises, it rises, it rises –
We'll be home by Christmas –
It's still rising towering narrowing looming reaching...
It's stopped
Why did it stop?
They can't stop it's not over they're too young there are too many too many
Too many flowers.
They were real people – note the 'were' –
Maybe you knew them
Can you pick them out?
Each face is a flower
A life struck out
But a legend no doubt
Of whom without
You could not take picture after picture after picture
Of your son in the shadow of
A graduation in the shadow of
A life made perfect by the shadow of
The memorial that pierces the sun.
I will stand and stare and remember
As it pours forth its floral fountain
A sympathetic tributary flood

A blood tide
To dissipate like a wave at my feet,
To dissipate dissolve disperse decompose
Into Flanders Field exalted in clay
Into Flanders Field exalted
In Flanders Field
They want us to remember
But what am I remembering,
Who must I not forget?
I never met him
You won't forget him
I never met him
You can't forget him
I never met him
You shouldn't forget him
As he crawls through the wire
That tangles protects mangles resurrects
That reaches from the shadow of
Protects the beaches in the shadow of
Beyond our reach in the shadow of
The memorial that pierces the sun.
As daylight fades, the lights come up,
The colours pop, shine like rain-jewelled petals,
Like glacé buds
Like patent blossom,
Like blood-soaked soil -
The only kind fertile enough for such seeds
With such ravenous needs
That six thousand strong must feed the flock
By conceding to bleed to stop the clock.
But still it rises, it rises, it rises
And it can't be stopped why won't it stop the names are the same the fight is
not is not
It's not over yet –
We are infected in retrospect,
Cannot forgive out of respect –
So no one surrenders in the shadow of
We keep remembering in the shadow of
A day not just of peace but
A memorial that pierces the sun.

SIMON TRAVERS

Fake Floor

She assures everybody,
'It's built on a fake floor.'

Silver heels and blusher
for the bride framed by
the pretty red poppies.
Flash! The camera fires.
Gather up the petticoats
and back to the car.

'There's 6000 poppies.
It's a fake floor.'

A dad gets a close up of
a 3 year old pushing
his pedalless bike.
A boy bumps a knee
dismounting his scooter
for a family portrait.

'It's a fake floor.
There's 6000 poppies'

and sixty thousand selfies;
keepsakes we carry home.
If we capture our best side
memorializing, overlay filters
of all we would want said
and done, if we promise,
if we really promise;
it couldn't happen here.

No brides without husbands,
no fathers without sons,
no missing generation
from the family portraits,

no one to remember at the
going down of the sun,

just the slow Plymouth rain
drumming on a fake floor.

PART OF THE ANCILLARY PROGRAMME FOR POPPIES:WAVE IN PLYMOUTH,
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COMISSIONS.

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