

Les Coquelicots

This picture of all others rules my days,
Claude Monet's painted poppy-littered field,
That changeless summer day
Which never was. The restless light displays
Four figures on the bank, the meadow grasses
Whitened by the breeze,
While in one corner, by a clump of trees
A sudden cloud has drowned the field in shade
But sets the pink tiles of the house ablaze.

A young girl with a parasol is seen
At first, and near her stands a dreaming child.
A reckless splash of blue
Reflects the sky. The painter's eye can scheme
And regulate his patterns; though the air,
Already turning cold,
Will drive him home, his memory will hold
Impressions of a thousand other days
To recreate this evanescent scene.

So art transforms with such a fragile power
Accumulated sorrow and lost joy,
And finds the hidden centre
Where Eastern scriptures say the lotus flower
Blooms amid a landscape where no time
Can break its slender stalk.
Imagined and unreal, these figures walk
Through summer days we all have known, giving
Darkness its true light, and sunlight its brief hour.