

Poppies

By Jane Weir (1963 -)

1. Three days before Armistice Sunday
and poppies had already been placed
on individual war graves. Before you left,
I pinned one onto your lapel, crimped petals,
5. spasms of paper red, disrupting a blockade
of yellow bias binding around your blazer.

- Sellotape bandaged around my hand,
I rounded up as many white cat hairs
As I could, smoothed down your shirt's
10. upturned collar, steeled the softening
of my face. I wanted to graze my nose
across the tip of your nose, play at
being Eskimos like we did when
you were little. I resisted the impulse
 15. to run my fingers through the gelled
blackthorns of your hair. All my words
flattened, rolled, turned into felt,

- slowly melting. I was brave, as I walked
with you, to the front door, threw
20. it open, the world overflowing
like a treasure chest. A split second
and you were away, intoxicated.
After you'd gone I went into your bedroom,
Released a song bird from its cage.
 25. Later a single dove flew from the pear tree,
and this is where it has led me,
skirting the church yard walls, my stomach busy
making tucks, darts, pleats, hat-less, without
a winter coat or reinforcements of scarf, gloves.

30. On reaching the top of the hill I traced
the inscriptions on the war memorial,
leaned against it like a wishbone.
The dove pulled freely against the sky,
an ornamental stitch. I listened, hoping to hear
35. your playground voice catching on the wind.