

Scarlet poppies

The guardsmen's coats
are scarlet poppies.
They strut like peacocks
past dark railings
lined like a rack of spears.

On the balcony,
Lytton Strachey
sips afternoon tea
from fine bone china,
perusing the park

while visitors gaggle
like geese below.

Opposite, a tree's withered trunk
charred by shell fire –
a burnt barley-sugar twist of pain;

And a woman waits forlorn
dreaming of poppies and the past –

while a meringue swan
cruises the pond
where children scatter
bread and laughter
like petals.

It's May –
and the park blossoms!

Pie Corbett

