

DAILY BREAD

“Grain of Hope : Slice of Heaven”

HARVESTING ART: REAPING

Wheatfield with a Reaper 1889

Vincent Van Gogh

This wheat
bristles with life; demands to be the subject
of the artist's passion, pushes the one human
off-centre, middle distance,

a reaper
clad in the receding violet of the hills
who stands no chance against this whirl and thrust
of sun-coloured energy,

which disrupts
the very surface of the canvas, thicked
with brush-swirls and made three-dimensional
with paint-gobs.

Hidden from our view
is a man considered mentally unsound;
supervised, locked up, viewing the wheat
through iron bars, mixing his 'smiling' yellows
inside a hospital cell. He sees that reaper
as 'the image of death', our own death.

Also unseen
Is mechanised death which roars, accelerates
even as Van Gogh pauses to pick up
a finer brush:

tractors advance
to crush the wheat-crop, which slowly turns
to uniformed flesh; death on industrial scale
reaps its bloody harvest in a field
bordered by trenches.

Diane Pacitti, 2020



Wheatfield with a Reaper 1889. Vincent Van Gogh

The Cornfield 1918 John Nash

if his work as a war artist had not clawed
and plucked at his day, until evening started at six,
he would not have looked at this field when sun-glitter
gives way to diffused light, when shadows are long;

If his brush was not imposing the stark lines
of trench ladders, splintered tree-trunks, guns,
he might not have felt the subtle curves of this land,
seen how the field is cupped by protecting trees;

If his palette had not been crowded with dark blobs:
khaki, earth brown; or white with the shock of snow,
he might not have seen how a shaft of golden light
falls like a blessing over the darkening field;

If he had not witnessed a land defaced and gouged,
an earth gashed by a human-crawling trench,
he might not have shown these corn-stacks elongated
by pointing shadows as mysterious beings;

If he had not been one of the few to survive
when they climbed from the trench and walked forward as
targets,
he could not have lingered in this healing space
between sun and dark, and made it a painting.

Diane Pacitti, 2020



The Cornfield 1918. John Nash



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