

a roll call of names of casualties begins

Home to Blighty
Back to home fires
Tipperary
Leicester Square

After the trenches
After the burning
After the tanks
After the gas

When this rotten war is over
No more soldiering for me.
I shall kiss the sergeant major
Oh how happy he will be
(Oh how happy....
When this rotten war is over
No more soldiering for me)
After the football
After the singing
(No more soldiering for me)
After the transport
After the stinging
(No more soldiering for me.)

We were all just decent chaps
Stuck in those infernal maps
Whizzbangs landed in our laps
Something shudders, something snaps.
Stuck in that infernal field
(No more soldiering for me.)
Stuck in a trench, told not to yield
(No more soldiering for me.)
Stuck in the open, unconceal'd
Stuck in the mud without a shield
(When this rotten war is over
No more soldiering for me.
I shall kiss the sergeant major
Oh how happy we shall be..)

What has become of memory? I have forgotten.
What has become of my limbs, my nerves?
What has become of the wound grown rotten?
What is the fate a man deserves?
We are at home in a land fit for heroes
We are the heroes or what is left of us.
We have emerged from a thousand zeros
Re-entering zones once bereft of us.
We can recite you the names of our dying,
We can bring you the wrecked houses

We can soften the wind with our sighing
(We can recite you the names of our dying)
We can darken your eyes with our bruises.
We are the world caught in its changing
Nothing will ever be quite the same again.

Now is the time for the final avenging
Now comes the counting of heads, of women and men
Comes the moment of silence.

the roll call of names begins again

And 'mid this tumult Kubla heard from far
Ancestral voices prophesying WAR! *(Coleridge)*

the roll call of names begins again

We hear as from afar the noise of thunder
We hear as from afar the rumbling of machines

The land without water
Is a hungry nation

We hear as from afar the resentments and suspicions
We hear as from afar the demands and conjurations.

The land without water
Is an angry ocean.
The contingencies of war:
Those driven here
Must wait at the borders
Those driven here
Must be following orders

The anxieties of war:
We hear as from afar the advance of strange people
We hear as from afar the pursuit of interests
We hear as from afar the beatings up in villages
We hear as from afar the discontent of the suburbs
(We hear as from afar, afar...)

The disease in the wind
Is the fault of strange tongues
(No more soldiering for me)
The disease in the wind
Infects our pure lungs
(No more soldiering for me)

The accusations of war:
The possession of territories
With vital resources

The possession of territories
By hostile forces

(We can recite you the names of our dying)
The requirements of war:

the roll call of names begins again

Since we must return to our origins
To the hamlets, villages, towns we left behind
To the great cities with their suburbs and slums
To the tenements and terraces
We come bearing gifts.

I bring you the gifts of terror and courage
That you may lay down in bed beside your pillow.
You may wake to the terror and face it with courage
You may brave the sun and shrink back from the wind
You may stand with the oak or bend with the willow.

I bring you the gifts of comradeship and loss
That you may enjoy your evening with company
And not feel the loss when the light goes out.

I bring you the gifts of the body as we know it
The body no longer a body, the body as pleasure
The body blown into pieces, the body right there
Under your clothes, as this is my own body.
A body you may touch, weigh and measure.

I bring you the gifts of memory and forgetting.
The poppy, forget-me-not or forget everything.
Consider carefully what you choose to remember.
The rules of rememb'ring are strict
(The rules of forgetting are strict)

the roll call of names begins again

My darling, I miss you but can't tell you much
My voice is broken, my tongue's on the latch
I dream of you nightly, my longing is such
Look, I am whole, not a wound, not a scratch.

the roll call of names begins again, and continues relentlessly throughout the next section, despite being overshadowed at times by the singing

Hear me, I am calling....
from Hitchin, from Ware, Abbot's Langley, Potters Bar, Accrington, Ashworth Colliery, Halifax...
from Swansea, from Merthyr, Fife, Swindon, Kirkcaldy...
Hear me, I am calling, I am calling....

HEAR ME!

Hear me, I am calling, I am calling....

(roll call fades)

See, here are trains crossing a landscape
Hesitating at recently patched bridges
Stopping nowhere in particular to let off a figure
Carrying a package, the remnants of a life;
The return of the ravaged through hazardous woods
Where the dead and the living collide in the shadows,
(Where the dead and the living collide...)

And the owl's hoot has a distinctly martial sound
And the wolf that is man is once again merely a wolf

Like ghosts in the house of their childhood,
*(like ghosts in the house of their childhood...
where the dead and the living collide...)*
I am the gap between the living and the dead.
(dying, dying, dying).

I enter the house, the ghost of my childhood.
I hear the owl's hoot and the padding of wolf feet.
My voice unfamiliar, even to me, as I enter.
Here is the package I'm carrying. What can be in it?
Whose life is this? Whose ghost? Whose remains?
*(Where the dead and the living collide...
Hear me, I am calling, calling...
Where the dead and the living collide...)*

the roll call of names begins again, briefly

Death will be local and fixed to a name
On a map, in a street, in a ditch.
It happens in moments, it comes without shame,
In any old form, in a lull or a storm
And it hardly matters in which.
How often we've met and have gone our own ways
Without so much as a glance.
Death has its seconds and minutes and days
And it tends to call, as luck happens to fall
On a whim, or a mood, on a chance.

In war though your chances are cut to the quick
Life lies in the lap of the gods
You can try to get off but the charges will stick
And no bookie stands by to watch as you die.
You don't get to cheating the odds.

My darling, my sweet, my flower, my bud
Let us gamble on life when we can.
Death can be found in the air or in mud.
It comes down to this, as mortals we kiss,
Not angels but woman and man.
(*You don't get to cheating the odds*).

the roll call of names begins again

I woke to the sound of bells. It was late
and deep in the country where even the clouds
seemed to be ringing and clanging above me.
I woke to the sound of cries in the street
round by the post office, close to the grocer's,
and listened out hard but the street was empty.

I woke to the sound of sirens in the distance
and a full moon stuck in the helpless sky
and the beat of the wings, the roar of the engines.
I woke to hear him whispering beside me,
his sigh like the movement of curtains,
his hands like the wind brushing the treetops.
(*I woke to hear him whispering beside me*)
We are waking,

(*waking...*)

Waking to this and to that
To the darkness, to the light
To winter or summer
(*Waking, we are waking...*)

Waking to new worlds
Hatched out of old ones
Watching what emerges
(*Waking, we are waking...*)

To ourselves, to our loss,
To the names we were born with.
(*Waking, we are waking...*)
These are the names we become.

the roll call of names begins again

Listen!
We are the people, the nation and the state,
We are the inscriptions, the documents,
The declarations, the pomp and circumstance,
The official face of the face in the mirror,
Listen!
We are the people, the nation and the state.
We are the stamps you must lick, the forms you must fill,
The dues you must pay, the creditor at your door,

We are the duplicate, triplicate, infinitude
Of all you must say once, then twice and again
Until you have said it to our mutual satisfaction,
Listen!

We are the people, the nation and the state,
The statues in squares, the grave monoliths,
The bones of survival, the blindfolded judge,
We are your heroes, your champions in the field,
We are your long and terrible shadow.
Listen!

We are the Law, the Statutes, the Orders,
We are your guardians from cradle to the grave,
We rock your frail cradle, we give you the weapons,
We are the insignia, the medals, the honours,
We are your hope beyond which there's nothing,
(*nothing...*)

We sing you the God eternally present,
We sing you the God of the hierarchs, the pews,
The aisles, the naves, the domes, spires and crossings
The thrones and regalia, the sceptre and mitre,
The aircraft carrier and the wreck'd jet fighter.
(*We are the people, the nation and the state*)
Listen!

We are gather'd here to remember those
whom we have continued to forget
Forgive us Lord, for our life is a round of forgetting.
We are the living, and the living must consider
the possibility of no longer living
Forgive us Lord, for in living we are yet forgivable
For in so far as we have killed and been killed
we are part of the forgetting.
Lord we remember our death and forgetting
For we are all forgettable and therefore we remember
those we have forgotten. Our heroes, our martyrs,
our scapegoats, our idols, our foes and our loved ones.
Lord we remember our loved ones, even down to their names.
We remember the cutting short of lives cut short,
We remember the hunger of those who have hungered.
We remember the necessity of forgetting.
lest we remember, O Lord. Lest we forget, forgive us,
(*forgive us*).

(*Ancestral voices heard from far,
Ancestral voices prophesying, prophesying
WAR!*)

We welcome you home wherever your home is
That's if you're still left with a home.
We welcome you to the ruins of buildings,
To the burned-out farms, to the smashed roof.
(*When this rotten war is over*)

*No more soldiering for me.
I shall kiss the sergeant major,
Oh how happy he will be)*

We welcome you home with flowers and fanfares
With ceremonies, with statues, with bandages.
(No more soldiering for me)
We welcome you home to verses and legends
(No more soldiering for me)
The trench-song, the torch-song...
(No more soldiering for me)
...the tension, the tear-falls.
We welcome you home to the high halls of history
*(When this rotten war is over
No more soldiering for me)*
We welcome you home with garlands of victory.
*(I shall kiss the sergeant major,
Oh how happy we shall be)*
We welcome you back to the bosom of the family.
*(When this rotten war is over
No more soldiering for me)*

There are the just wars, there are true causes
Our earthly spans are not measures of justice.
There exist tyrants, there are moments for sacrifice.
There are the months of darkest melancholy.
The sight-lines and deadlines of human folly.
We vanish into the books with our names in
We do not know how we fit into the pattern.

*(Now is the time for the final avenging.
Now comes the counting of heads, of women and men
Comes the moment of silence)*

*"Here is the core, but now extend the map,
unfold it, keep unfolding, over country beyond country,
each village with its small memorial. Cities, towns, 27 nations...
small knots of blood, pooling and returning to individual acts of memory and forgetting.*

*'Lest we forget', they say, who then forget.
These were our names. This is what we remember."*
