

Soldier's Soldier

Scapegoat of the king's ambition
Hostage to the prince's crime
Sent upon a madman's errand
Soldier of another time

Sworn to do as he is bidden
Not to think of why he came
From himself his purpose hidden
Soldier by another name

Searching for a mystic evil
Ever just a war away
Always beaten, not defeated
Back to fight another day

Battles always won, but cheated
Of the promised victory
Never lost but just depleted
Army of our history

Kill the chicken; scare the monkey
Centipede is dead, not stiff
Off to far Cathay he marches
Soldier diving off a cliff

War not done but just abated
Peace the only thing to fear
Power's hunger never sated
Soldier's orders never clear

Dragon's teeth by Cadmus planted
Sprung from battle's plain full grown
Men who kill them all if doubtful
Heathen gods will know their own

Burn the village, clear the jungle
Save them from themselves at least
Make excuses for the bungle
Soldier then becomes the beast

Wounds still fresh and redly bleeding
Bound up with a filthy rag
Something shapeless once a husband
Stuffed into a plastic bag

Squatting in the dusty swelter
Widowed woman once a wife
Never more to know the shelter
Of a tranquil married life

Soldier's Soldier

Head thrown back in boundless grieving
Mouth agape with soundless woes
Tears and snot now glisten, mingling
Coursing down from eyes and nose

Anguished face a tangled curtain
Clotted, matted, raven hair
Almond eyes with sight uncertain
Weeping pools of deep despair

Do not knock this war we're having
It's the only one we've got
Better dead than red we tell them
Mouthing slogans; talking rot

Fight them over there they tell us
Rather that than fight them here
Just invent some *casus bellus*
Danger's best that's never near

Ozymandias' sneering statue
Crumbled in the desert bare:
Look upon my works, you mighty
See their ruin and take care

Told to teach and be creative
Soldier eager, bright and young
Learned instead and then went native
Speaking now an ancient tongue

Only they will now receive him
Who see not his bloodstained hand
None will hear for he can't speak it
Stranger to his own lost land

Bringing with him what he carried
Losing only what he bought
To the cause no longer married
Soldier doing what he ought

Shipped away like so much baggage
Not to choose the things he's done
Often bad and sometimes better
Soldier not the only one

Now he comes home like the others
Breathless lips and eyes shut fast
Lain to sleep beside his brothers
Soldier's soldier to the last