

## Out

### I

#### The Dream Time

My father sat in his chair recovering  
From the four-year mastication by gunfire and mud,  
Boyd buffeted wordless, estranged by long soaking  
In the colours of mutilation.

His outer perforations  
Were valiantly healed, but he and the hearth-fire, its blood-  
Flicker  
On biscuit-bowl and piano and table-leg,  
Moved into strong and stronger possession  
Of minute after minute, as the clock's tiny cog  
Laboured and on the threat of his listening  
Dragged him bodily from under  
The mortised four-year strata of dead Englishmen  
He belonged with. He felt his limbs clearing  
With every slight, gingerish movement. While I, small and  
four,  
Lay on the carpet as his luckless double,  
His memory's buried, immovable anchor,  
Among jawbones and blown-off boots, tree-stumps, shell-  
cases and craters,  
Under rain that goes on drumming its rod and thickening  
Its kingdom, which the sun had abandoned, and where nobody  
Can ever again move from shelter.

### II

The dead man in his cave beginning to sweat;  
The melting bronze visor of flesh  
Of the mother in the baby furnace-----

Nobody believes, it  
Could be nothing, all  
Undergo smiling at  
The lulling of blood in  
Their ears, their ears, their ears, their ears  
Are only drops of water and even the dead man suddenly  
Sits up and sneezes—Atishoo!  
Then the nurse wraps him up, smiling,  
And, though faintly, the mother is smiling,  
And it's just another baby.

By Ted Hughes, trans. from *Wodwo* (London: Faber and Faber, 1967)

As after being blasted to bits  
The reassembled infantryman  
Tentatively totters out, gazing around with the eyes  
Of an exhausted clerk.

III

Remembrance Day

The poppy is a wound, the poppy is the mouth  
Of the grave, maybe of the womb searching--

A canvas-beauty puppet on a wire  
Today whoring everywhere. It is years since I wore one.

It is more years  
The shrapnel that shattered my father's playbook

Gripped on me, and all his dead  
Gripped him to a time

He no more than they could outgrow, but, cast into one  
like iron,  
Hung deeper than refreshing ploughs

In the woe-dark under my mother's eye--  
One anchor

Holding my juvenile neck bowed to the dunkings of the  
Atlantic.  
So goodbye to that bloody-minded flower.

You dead bury your dead  
Goodbye to the cenotaphs on my mother's breasts.

Goodbye to all the remaindered charms of my father's  
Survival.  
Let England close. Let the green sea-anemone close.