Poems by Matthew Bellwood

**Recruitment Poems (diamante)**

Soldier

Glorious, Noble

Fighting, Winning, Cheering

Hero, Champion, Coward, Traitor,

Cringing, Sponging, Snivelling,

Idle, Honourless,

Stay-at-home

Soldier

Glorious, Noble

Fighting, Winning, Cheering

Hero, Champion, Victim, Killer

Destroying, Wounding, Dying

Broken, Wasted,

Soldier

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**At Colsterdale (sensory)**

1. A ghost owl hoots outside the tent.

The cold wind rustles the canvas.

In the bed next to mine, a belly rumbles.

1. The breeze is fresh and clean outside,

But inside, the familiar scent of sweat

Hangs hotly round the bodies of my friends.

1. The army tastes of hot black coffee in the first light of dawn;

Bully beef and rum at three o’clock;

The hot, dry tang of shared tab-ends.

1. The night air raises the hairs upon my skin

My feet ache from marching all day long

My mind is filled with soldiers’ grumbles

1. The rough texture of the itchy blanket

The cold, shared water of the shaving pot

The dull throbbing of the blister on my heel

1. But these are happy days, my body growing strong

Marching to the mouth organ

Playing football in the frozen fields

1. Even so, I miss the scents and sounds and tastes of home

My mother’s perfume, my father’s pipe,

My brother and sister squabbling in the yard

1. My grandma’s gravy on roast potatoes

Her pickled cabbage at Sunday lunch

The Yorkshire puddings, always slightly charred.

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**On the Boat to Egypt (rhythmic)**

Boiled mutton for lunch again

*And all the time the smell of sick*

We cannot sleep for belly pain

*And all the time the smell of sick*

The boat it rocks and then it rolls

*And all the time the smell of sick*

The air is thick with burning coal

*And all the time the smell of sick*

The donkeys holler down below

*And all the time, the smell of sick*

The hours seem to go so slow

*And all the time the smell of sick*

We’re packed together like sardines

*And all the time the smell of sick*

And terrified of submarines

*And all the time the smell of sick*

There may be missiles in the deep

*And all the time the smell of sick*

It’s enough to make a fellow weep

*And all the time the smell of sick …*

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**Battlefield Poems (acrostic)**

**Somme**

**S**o many dead

**O**ur brothers and our friends

**M**en whom we have known for our whole lives

**M**en this war has brought and bound together

**E**ach is bound to each forever now, by this soft mud

**Whizz-bang**

**W**hite Star shell cases burst and fill the air with poison gas

**H**ot air comes billowing into the trench as the ground explodes

**I** keep my head down,

**Z**oning out as German Guns trace

**Z**any lines of machine-gun fire across the sky

**B**ig Bertha sings in the trench beyond

**A**ck Ack bullets strafe the air

**N**o sleep for us tonight

**G**od knows.

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