

'The Phoney War'

Thomas McColl

Our imaginations at war -
with umbrellas for rifles,
our enemy invisible –
we defended the sofa,
had it pulled out from the wall.

Inside this narrow tunnel –
with seat cushions overhead –
we hid.

With each attack,
we watched each other's backs.
You saw the Germans
in your mind I could not see,
and I saw mine;
We shot them all too easily.

With the air-strikes, though,
we met our match.
Shells – like steel fists – struck,
and the seat cushions,
punched up into the air,
fell about us.

So, we rose and came out fighting –
shot down five fighters
and three bombers
with two umbrellas,
then finished off the conflict
in close hand-to-hand combat.

By the end,
there were a thousand German casualties
and, without even a scratch between them,
two tired Tommies,
smoking pencils, feeling tough.

And now the war was finished,
and with both of us famished,
we ran from the living room
into the kitchen,

calling for Gran to serve us up our tea,
and found her quietly sobbing at the stove.