

The Map

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The maps of death get better every day –
Young draughtsmen use a scale of one to one
With instruments that speed across a page.
So there's no need to hang around old graves
In black jeans, looking for a shady deal:
A simple map will tell you all you want.
You'll find a dozen in your corner shop.
I've heard it takes two trees to make each map,
Upsetting the environment, they say,
But people barely wait until they're home,
Unfolding sections on their lounge-room floor.
'Now where's the legend?' Father thinks aloud,
'Until we find the legend,' he expands,
'We can't tell if it's right-side up or not.'
It spreads into the kitchen, covers beds,
Then flaps out on the mail-box and the lawn...
Its creases are as sharp as Father's shirt.
'Beats me,' says Father, taking up his pipe
And rattling silver as he walks away.
'There's Uncle Harold!' Mother points, then goes
To make some coffee while the children stare
And play at generals, sticking in small flags.
'We'd best put it away now,' Mother says,
'Before Grandfather comes to see the kids.'
But already they've forgotten how it folds;
They try this way, then that. The map is vast
And all the neighbours help, but it won't close.

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