

AN AUTUMN DAY

*On that slope
on an autumn day,
the shells soughing about my ears
and six dead men at my shoulder,
dead and stiff— and frozen were it not for the heat—
as if they were waiting for a message.*

*When the screech came
out of the sun,
out of an invisible throbbing;
the flame leaped and the smoke climbed
and surged every way:
blinding of eyes, splitting of hearing.*

*And after it, the six men dead
the whole day:
among the shells snoring
in the morning,
and again at midday
and in the evening.*

*In the sun, which was so indifferent,
so white and painful;
on the sand which was so comfortable
easy and kindly;
and under the stars of Africa,
jewelled and beautiful.*

*One Election took them
and did not take me,
without asking us
which was better or worse:
it seemed as devilishly indifferent
as the shells.*

*Six men dead at my shoulder
on an Autumn day.*