

Elegy for the Dead at Sharpeville

Martin Robertson

This woman, this child, this man;
and there; and here; these many in this dust
dead. All these dead, and each, one,
dead in pain. Think of these first.

So, in pain they fell. But also as fall
sparks. The wind blows against the fire
beating it down, and only blows it higher.
Sparks, wind-scattered wide, dropped on what's thin
and dry, blaze against the wind again.
Mind shakes to see
how fighting wind and fire can absolutely
destroy themselves and all.

Sparks? A martyr's blood falls as seed,
and these, if not in will, are that in deed.

... Fire... martyrdom... Fine words. Bend your mind back
to these whom white men shot for being black.
Life's all one colour, spilled
beside whatever carcass in the dust.
As first, think of these last:
this man, this woman, this child.