

France 1916

I.

Closing in, we are the lions, prey
before us. Looking left, looking right,
German brothers, faces exhausted and hungry,
waiting, waiting to light up the darkness,
we close in like shadows to our enemy.
Their artillery fires, silence broken by lightning,
we are a tidal wave, unrelenting, crashing
upon foe. Lightning threatens us
no more,

the ocean now silent and still.

*Hand gripping rifle, color fading from knuckles,
heavy breathing hurls puffs of cold air,
temporary ghosts from mouths open,
faint sound its result, low distant drums,
hundreds of drums beating,*

we are hounds
to be released. Our chancellor holds us at bay.
Collar choking, scratches necks. Time stubborn,
refusing to relent. Waiting release from the
leash, the whistle begins our hunt.

II.

Germany closes in, forces are infinite
to tired eyes. Looking left, looking right,
French brothers exist as light in fading day,
hundreds of feet separate, yet enemy breathes
down our neck. Artillery fires, giant fist punches
holes in earth, our trench, their trench, chess
pieces sit idly by, battle begins soon,
enormous waves building, ready to
consume men.

*Shelling stops, no sound heard
except breathing, like distant thunder booms
in ears. Holding my rifle, my friend, my lifeline,
a rope to pull me out of hell, vital part of body,
limb cannot be lost. This trench hated,
full of sickness, full of death, yet comfort still
resides here.*

Yet again, artillery assails against
foe from Germany. Attack eminent, sand
in hourglass mirrors patience, waiting
for the whistle, release our enemy to slaughter.