

I give the order to destroy the targets.  
 Incredible the way our rounds locate  
 Their marks, make tracks and turrets flash and soar.  
 Grey-eyed Athena gasps, her aegis high  
 Above the rubble, sending us a hawk,  
 A grey-backed raptor screeching victory.  
 Her cloud expands more slowly than our eyes.  
 My crew exults in scores like arcade games.

In thirty minutes, wounded men arrive.  
 Elation dwindles in a grinding pall;  
 We watch as one man fumbles on his way  
 As if to hide a pistol in his sleeve.  
 On closer look, he holds his severed arm  
 And dies beside my tank as others groan.  
 Two more make wine-dark seas with their own blood.  
 Iraqi armored troops, surrendering.

Back on patrol at dawn, the goddess glows;  
 Homeric rosy fingers earn their poems.  
 The crews are sobered from the bite of combat.  
 Now, animated sights demand decisions.  
 The shapes we read are not precise enough  
 To leave no doubt. But if we wait too long  
 Then we'll be in their range. Commanders all  
 Have grappled this chimera in their craws.

"Sweet Jesus, Cap'n, time we oughta shoot!"  
 My gunner cries, a blond Telémakhos,  
 His tongue undone, his trigger in control.  
 The radio confirms no other tanks  
 Of ours are in this sector. No more choice,  
 Our time runs out, I order the attack.  
 How many gods and men have we provoked?  
 Please my dear God, don't let us torch our own!

As images explode we hear the news.  
 An error: Static. Curses. "Hold your fire!"  
 We hit two U.S. tanks, off course for hours.  
 No one survived our deadly friendly blasts.  
 I must not break, must keep my men from breaking.  
 Penelopes must learn they wait in vain.  
 And who explains such useless costs to them?  
 And in this world, who can explain to me?