

TROY

The war is wrapping up, and there's nothing left of Troy.
Broken stone; broken clay; a smoke-stain on the sky;
the Greeks even broke the skull and back of Hector's little boy.
Odysseus, packing up his bags, thinks, Soon I'll be home.

But this afternoon belongs to Ajax, son of Telamon,
standing by a flock of sheep he's butchered in a rage,
and like a man who's just shot up a shopping mall
or a school bus, or a bank, Ajax can answer all this killing
only with the killing of himself.
Soon he'll sit down and start to weep, like a naughty child
full of shame, because he is a man-killer
and a man-killer does not kill sheep.

The Greeks didn't come to halt a genocide
or to spread democracy. Behind their great encampment
are their island kingdoms, speckled against the sea.
Beyond, scavenged by turning seabirds,
are the Pillars of Hercules, said to bear the words,
"There is nothing beyond this point."