

Jihad excuses everything that's done.
 No end in sight, and here I fight again
 Sans tanks, a stranger battle, secret foes.
 Beneath a belt, a burkha, wagon seat,
 A bag of rice, or maybe just a fist
 Lie instruments of death awaiting victims.
 A corpsman's corpse, a legless female sergeant
 In the dirt await evacuation.

Morals vanish in a martyr's zeal.
 Another Jeep dismembered, human limbs
 Strewn on the road. The desert is unchanged
 As are the questions killing never solves
 And never stills. But we are changed--by nothing
 Learned or gained. Yet we are here again
 Supposed to end destruction and dissension,
 Ancient hates and fears with origins
 In Ishmael and Isaac, both from seed
 Of Abraham. Will new millennium loins
 Produce new leaders and new genetic pools
 Endowed with wisdom? Has God ordained that men
 Create more chaos every generation?

Last May the harpist wrote he'd reenlisted.
 He was heading for the Gulf that day.
 We planned to get together but before
 We could, he wound up in a body bag.
 Baghdad Mosul Basra Kirkuk Sunni,
 Shia Bathist places peoples isms,
 Incompatible beliefs, ambitions,
 Needs. And none about to change a word
 Of text or texture of this shredded land.

I find myself a sudden duplication
 Of one of Homer's scenes, evaded twice,
 Now overwhelming uncontrollable:

"Before the end my heart was broken down.
 I slumped on trampled sand and cried aloud,
 Caring no more for life or light of day,
 And rolled there weeping, till my tears were spent."

Quote: Homer's ODYSSEY, Book IV,
translated by Robert Fitzgerald