Sonnet Framing the Thoughts of a Forefather before the Pequot Battle

Naomi Wallace
SONNET FRAMING THE THOUGHTS OF A FOREFATHER BEFORE THE PEQUOT BATTLE

This morning is like no other. I halt my horse. My troops steady behind me. The breeze cracks like ice against my teeth. The sleeves of my coat of mail reflect the sky above me, and in my wrist the birds fly. The village lies before us. Quiet. The Braves are gone to battles twelve miles up river. It was my plan. Clusters of small children play by the river like flies on a wound. I count an old man. Two old women. A Brave, though hardly a man, both legs gone, drags his tail-bone in the dew. The cruelty of savages, to keep half a man alive. I am not cruel. No man, child or beast ever died by my hand without at least

a prayer. I pray for my soldiers too, sent like children to kill children for the piece of land my horse now freely salutes with excrement. Myself, it’s my fate to be a leader, to take a hand in this nasty task of clearing the land. The winds have settled now. In a few, short hours the Braves will return to this, their sacred home. For some seconds before the scrambling, begging and slaughtering begins, before the children drop their sticks and cloth boats, by surprise, into the water, this crime has no flaw. Even the silence has blessed the death of these Pequots. Raising our torches, these crosses made from straw, I give the signal to move forward. In this sun the luster of our armour spills over our breasts like water.