

## PHILOCTETES

As lepers when their features rot away  
and just their tinkle-tankling bells remind them  
that they are still alive and warn the others  
the ordinary people in the street  
to keep out of their way so are these poems:  
the rhymes have slowly withered off the lines  
the tinkle of iambics is the only  
suggestion as to where they move about  
shedding their flesh their decomposing words  
and warning Time to keep out of their way

shall I go on about Philoctetes  
about his wound that reeked to high Olympus  
and brought infection to the shores of Lemnos  
yet he the hero triumphed over Paris  
the master of the bow that conquered Troy  
the myth of reeking wounds and violence  
originated with Philoctetes  
to this day murdered gods are oozing red  
upon the Pole Star's bloody butcher's hook  
the heavens are a slaughter-house and blood  
still trickles down the arrow-wound of Time

like lepers when their features rot away  
these decomposing rhyme-denuded lines  
still ring the rusted bell of old iambics  
and cast their bags into the well of Time  
contaminating thus the living water  
and thirst-tormented hope recoils in fear  
then rears up snorts and shyly shrinks away

shall I go on about Philoctetes?  
his wound reminds us why all glory reeks  
why leprous faces grin on every bowstring  
why Paris dies and Troy is burnt to ashes  
today and every day and why the myth  
ripped from that womb-like pestilential wound  
must grab a bow while still a little baby  
and inflict a deadly wound on Time