

The magi tell of their journey

It was an immense desolation we travelled -
through derelict and stale spaces,
along streets of abandoned settlements
where lost souls jeered at us
among the bombed and burned tenements,
below caves and crevices
where bitter devisers of vengeance hid out,
across poisoned deserts
and land-mined landscapes of death,
place after destitute place.

How much further have we to go?

We did what the star did,
knowing nothing else.
It was small light to go by.
Sometimes others shared our way -
fugitives and forgotten ones,
traumatized children clutching our hearts,
wild camels and hunted creatures,
strange pilgrims shouting abuse at heaven,
and one sleepwalker wandering blindly in the world's night.
We could only go where the star went,
and some called us fools,
but it was the only wisdom we had.

How much further have we to go?

There was another shack in a dirt lane.
Accustomed courtiers
we knew well enough the hyperboles of power,
the calculated benefactions of the great,
the starry destinies of empire.
But our paeans of proud deference failed.
We could make no account
of this new constellation.
As for our tribute
it was less gift than surrender.

How much further have we to go?