

Magi

They set out in a bright approving summer:
flags, gold, imagination attending
down charted roads, the star like a sun of night,
and at earth's end, the unique King awaiting.

Autumn too was lovely and novel: weather temperate
and the star mellowing slowly as a moon.
Then winter on them: the light snuffed out:
hearsay, frontiers, men inimical to dreamers –
and what direction in iron snow? – a hind's track
diminished in ivory, a white birch stricken to
ground
and the sky tolling its grey dispassionate bell
upon age, upon infinite heart's weariness.

So the great came, great only in need,
to the roof of thatch, the child at knee awaiting.

By the Rev. Daniel Berrigan
from *Garlands for Christmas* selected by Chad Walsh
Macmillan Company, January 1, 1965