

*viii. The Pilgrim.*

Fond admirers, through the years  
have gazed with groans and tears  
at Mad Messiah hanging on his tree.

Across high mountains and the raging sea  
they come to kiss the ground  
of that ancient place,  
which felt your feet and saw your face  
and where miracles abound.

A limping pilgrim with a noble heart  
is calling on his friends to start  
the journey and they gather with one mind –  
no trace of falsehood or conceit.

They overcome each barrier. They find  
their way. Their joy is deep  
with kind laughter and untroubled sleep  
and unaware of what the future brings  
of unknown worlds and influence with kings.

With journey half complete,  
they stand amid the opulent displays  
the jeering eyes, the winding waterways  
and I watch him with his brotherhood  
raising his head with sweet tranquillity  
and open mouth, as if to taste the sun.

Your flesh and blood  
feeds his longing for Jerusalem.

Along the crowded quays they walk  
in search of news and friendly talk  
but voices knowingly debate  
the turning tides of distant war.

They listen for the long expected word  
but, like the rising score  
in some losing game, the passing days  
relentlessly accumulate.

No news of peace is heard.  
No ship makes ready to depart.  
but, as with Estragon and Vladimir,  
when Godot is unable to appear,  
I am enchanted by their foolish ways  
and disconcerting art.