

Pilgrimage

(For my sister, Liza
homeless for a while)

1

Is Mary traveling?
And is she far from home?
And do the weary hillsides sing
Sad Monotones?

She's gone from Nazareth
Which she, a citizen,
Abandoned for a city south:
Strange Bethlehem.

Her heart and feet are sore;
'Twas nothing she could keep;
She left the house where she was born,
In straw to sleep.

And now, an alien,
She leaves her peace as well;
She bends and breaks and bears a son:
Immanuel.

2

Is Mary carrying
Her babe from Bethlehem?
And can the desert stop a king
From killing them?

Abandoned now she has
The air the angels flew,
The stable where her baby was
Called King of Jews.

Oh, haste! Oh, Mary run!
For Herod's sent an order
To Bethlehem to kill your son,
By general slaughter.

And miles and miles she goes
Into that southern sun,
Where Pharoah once her people rode
To skeletons.

3

Is Mary traveling?
How weary are her bones?
Ah yes, but now the route will bring
Her safely home!

But who will Nazareth
Receive when she returns?
Another woman, sumptuous
For all she's learned.

For now in Nazareth
This mother of her son
Has met the night, has wrestled death
Yet rose to dawn!

Forever foreign here,
She'll live in paradise!
For none but such a traveler
Could bear our Christ.

Walter Wangerin, Jr.
December 12, 2001