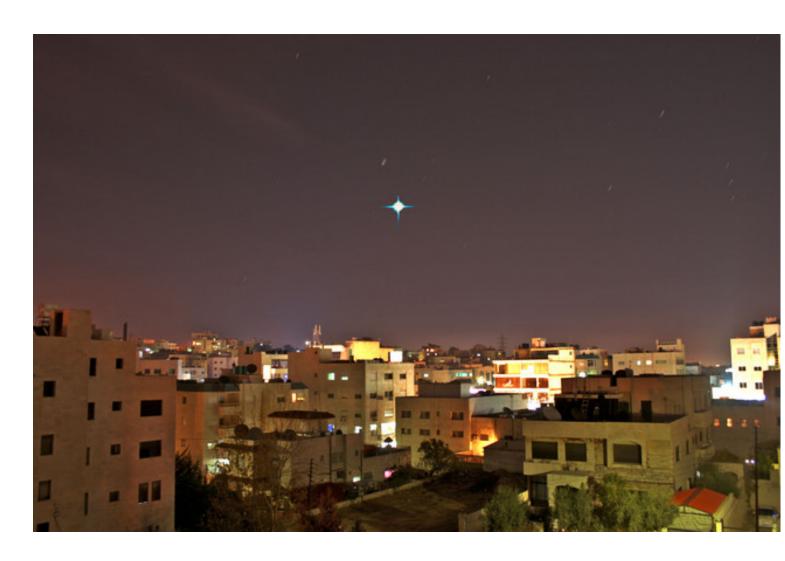
The Journey of the Magi



"A cold coming we had of it,

Just the worst time of the year

For a journey, and such a long journey:

The ways deep and the weather sharp,

The very dead of winter."

And the camels galled, sore-footed, refractory,

Lying down in the melting snow.

There were times we regretted The summer palaces on slopes, the terraces, And the silken girls bringing sherbet. Then the camel men cursing and grumbling And running away, and wanting their liquor and women, And the night-fires going out, and the lack of shelters, And the cities hostile and the towns unfriendly And the villages dirty, and charging high prices.: A hard time we had of it. At the end we preferred to travel all night, Sleeping in snatches, With the voices singing in our ears, saying That this was all folly. Then at dawn we came down to a temperate valley, Wet, below the snow line, smelling of vegetation; With a running stream and a water-mill beating the darkness, And three trees on the low sky, And an old white horse galloped away in the meadow. Then we came to a tavern with vine-leaves over the lintel, Six hands at an open door dicing for pieces of silver, And feet kicking the empty wine-skins. But there was no information, and so we continued

And arrived at evening, not a moment too soon

Finding the place; it was (you may say) satisfactory.

All this was a long time ago, I remember,

And I would do it again, but set down

This set down

This: were we lead all that way for

Birth or Death? There was a Birth, certainly,

We had evidence and no doubt. I have seen birth and death,

But had thought they were different; this Birth was

Hard and bitter agony for us, like Death, our death.

We returned to our places, these Kingdoms,

But no longer at ease here, in the old dispensation,

With an alien people clutching their gods.

I should be glad of another death.

T.S. Eliot