

T.S. Eliot:

I'm not proposing to read from Ash Wednesday, because I don't think there will be time and because I want to choose some of the poems to please myself as well as to please others. So I shall proceed to choose one of the Ariel poems.

This title has no significance-- Ariel poems. It merely marks a series in which many other poets contributed, but it remains as a convenient collective name for four poems which I wrote as four successive Christmas cards. And I shall read "A Song for Simeon."

Lord, the Roman hyacinths are blooming in bowls and the winter sun creeps by the snow hills; the stubborn season has made stand. My life is light, waiting for the death wind, like a feather on the back of my hand. Dust in sunlight and memory in corners. Wait for the wind that chills towards the dead land.

Grant us thy peace. I have walked many years in this city, kept faith and fast, provided for the poor, have given and taken honour and ease. There went never any rejected from my door. Who shall remember my house, where I live my children's children when the time of sorrow is come? They will take to the goat's path, and the fox's home, fleeing from the foreign faces and the foreign swords.

Before the time of cords and scourges and lamentation. Grant us thy peace. Before the stations of the mountain of desolation, before the certain hour of maternal sorrow, now at this birth season of decease, let the Infant, the still unspeaking and unspoken Word, grant Israel's consolation to one who has eighty years and no to-morrow.

According to thy word. They shall praise Thee and suffer in every generation with glory and derision, light upon light, mounting the saints' stair. Not for me the martyrdom, the ecstasy of thought and prayer, not for me the ultimate vision. Grant me thy peace. (And a sword shall thy heart, Thine also).

I am tired with my own life and the lives of those after me, I am dying in my own death and the deaths of those after me. Let thy servant depart, having seen thy salvation.