

SPANNER Examines Jerusalem

The Old City: A Travelogue - Collage

by Ayn Davar

"In the valley of the blind the one-eyed man is King." — Moshe Dayan

I.

1.

Freshscrubbed youth, dawnrises, marchstep thru Jaffa Gate: mens sana in sano corpore.
Khaki troopers, Zion's firstborn sabrafruit.
Kadima cry rings air resounding.
All Palestine gushes, pours forth youth.
Front flies flapping banner, blueonwhite mogen david:
Awave on pole shot up from leader's loins.
Brass ball sunradiant gleams; breath of ruah, heavens hover.
Feetsound all inside; Herod's penetrated Square.
"Shalom Eliechem" throats gusty gusty vibrate.
Youth cresting circumcised rising swell.
(Old men line walls, look on, jaundiced eyes gleaming;
spittle arches, falls, congeals dirt. Allah's will.)
Column oblique march down alley street;
crowd parts, flows round. Easy access.
Lightyears of crustacean traffic.
Flag high flaunt-taunts.
Corner rounded, troop disappearing echoes.
Vacuum closes, sucks.

2.

Morning sun catches creamgleam — mosque towers thrust upward.
Towers of Babel.
Minaret rusthinged doors no longer open; automated muzzelin.
Greymetal speakers bloomspout from pointed peaks.
Needle erect finds record groove.
Voice lifts lilting Arab call: raga rock.
"There is no God, and Muhammed is his prophet."
Volume blast splits air, crackling dirt dust groove protests.
(Strange mystery — Abbasids breathe.)
Five times daily prayercall goes unanswered;
Saud's Meccan East no longer sought;
Islam, dried of nomen, surrenders, too.
Other gods — a noise in the street; Nobodaddy.
Needle scratches, skips, repeats, runs its course, rejects.
Again silent, again the shadow.

3.

Soldier polishboots rest.
Angular body yawning stretches skyward.
Firm kosherflesh muscles ripple tanhair skin;
browneye glances dart keen, hawknose nostrils flare.
Rabin's skilltrained legionnaire.
Black straps lung barrel pointing aims at sun;
clean greaseshine glint of (not Damascus) steel.
Fidus Achates, hairtrigger clipready for seminal volley.
Whiteflag shops lay tempting rape, fleshspots of Egypt.
Peaceful coexistence soldier teases veiled native girls —
White man's burden.

4.

Morning streetcrowd grows, swells.
(Flyeyed babies weep behind walls — trachoma future.)
Beggars chorus mother word of Arabic — baksheesh.
Sleek young arab streetrats flash quickly dodge dart thru crowd.
Whirlwind dervishes, batblind sonar explains.
Young Dale Carnegie untouched salesmen in ragged castoff UNRWA clothes,
flies open, proclaim their wares:
bubblegum, cigarettes, worrybeads, sunglasses, bagels, sabras, Pepsi,
switchblades —
and pens — Shaeffer, Cross, Parker, Waterman, Bic all carry Arab agents.
Mightier than the sword, this tattered band.
Husseins' hungry hundreds.
Schoolied in streets, watch destiny close before them:
airy dreams crushed on cobblestones.

5.

Shop gates yawn open.
Shining iron eyelids, new from Eshkol, bulletholes gone, rise.
Christian Quarter, Greek Patriarch Street shrugstretches greeting day.
Signs bid welcome, Greekarmenianancyrillichebrewlatinarab hello;
owners set whitegold smiles.
Seekers filter in, circulate, explore labyrinth with balls of string,
lragorot freshjingling.
(Egged Tours, LTD., flock firmly shepherded,
... avoids the welcome: made in Israel uber alles.)
Araby products gleam;
brassglass hubblybubbly, mother-of-pearl Omar, Damascus plate, filigree,
Mao's urns.
(Stock dwindling: Polo's traderoute closed.)
Hagglers hang air heavy with many tongues.
"In barter cunning Semites meet:
together they could rule Wall Street."
Extended lines of relation meet; booty hauled away.

II.

1.

Black-on-black Abyssinian priest sweeps down Via Dolorosa,
Christ's black agonizing path.
Introibo ad altare Del.
Highboned jungle whiteyes flash; Watts echoes glimmer.
Ebony robe cinctured tight, dustsandles, patience beads, Crusader's
cross.
Jungle drums and papal bull. Holy rollercoaster.
("And taking his organ in his hand, he caressed it, stroked it, and
waved it to his disciples, saying: 'Take and eat!'. Staff
of life.)
Priest meeting smilegreet Orthodox priest — Kyrle elelson.
Together file past Roman numerals;
Veronica's cloth, Simon of Cyrene, Magdelene the whore, first fall.
Pieces of Helen's true cross hawked, simony cris echo.
Ecce Homo Arch looms — Pilate's question systematic ambiguity now.
Black and white together lapped in Church's womb —
virgin birth. They shall never come.

2.

Bulldozeryellow D-9 cats prowl over earth.
Rubble treaded, ruminated, excreted.
Nonstop trucks, Hashemite gifts, deliver stone unto Gehenna's fires.
Aeonold abodes fall prey to snarling jaws:
dominos in wartime.
800 Arab households, doors bluepainted superstition, tumble.
(Camps rising in Amman swell.)
Unite the city! — Kolleck's decree and battle cry.
Old temple remnant wall must breathe;
house foundations overgrown with park of green.
Dust now the sceptre rules, triumphs in blinding whirlwind.
Dust thou art, to dust return —
thus spake Zarathustra.
Now only dust stands home and park apart.

3.

Ancient Holy of Holies, ark and tablets,
gold Dome swells up: omphalos.
Martellolike it stands — round belly, taut vellum —
fit now in sunlight as a naval base.
Arab marble finewrought facade glows —
Koran's eternal beauty, unmarred by graven images.
Bathe dusty feet in Omar's basin, doff shoes at entrance.
Cool hazy translucent light pours thru windows.

Mats magic carpet cool soothe roughworn feet.
Dome covers Rock (Rock breaks sword, sword cuts Dome),
great slab of mother earth — Gea-Tellus.
White ball of frozen come, Muhammad's ascension throne.
But fiery feet, too torrid for this world, branded rocky remnant.
Footprint in the sands of time.

4.

Jewry flowing swallowed up by Dung Gate's jaws.
Souls diverse in seeking stream toward lone relic of
Judah's ancient greatness. The Wailing Wall,
second temple remnant, stands reminder.
But weeping and gnashing of teeth no more —
now rejoicing home of YHWH, tribal tetragrammaton.
Romans no stone on stone proved liar — false oracle.
A landless nation nevermore shall be.
All stand awed alike, forces strangely gripping.

The Hundred Gates pours forth its creatures;
Hider's ghetto remnant Hasidim, drawn by magnets.
Sidecurl-redbeard-beaverhat-blackwoolenrock strides alien land.
A corner to stake out.
Wailing Wall Willie.
Rockthrower in prayershawl shroud embraced,
he touches, kisses stone.
KASS
Dust flows all around.

5.

Waterpipes filled, charcoal lighted.
Sweet hash, Ottoman pride, borne tenderly.
(From Anatolia thru Syria, Amman, Ramallah it pierces Sulleman's Wall.)
Coals ablaze, sticks smoulder, smoke bubbles up, lungs fill.
Sweetsick smoky smell engulfs the room.
Brain loosegrip timeandspace melted mildly swimming flow.
No hippies these; flowers withered long ago and died.
The sun outside, the crowd, the soldiers, wives, children, lovers all
fall away.
Hadji Baba rules crosslegged.
Foggy ruins of time mind in smokering disappearing.
A gentle calm, soul's torment long forgotten.
The incense offering ascends, seeks night thru windowcracks.
Into the street the messenger of Lotus.

III.

1.

The Oriental Restaurant beckons; hungry traveller.
Ascend the stairs, large prop stirs sultry air.
Walls thickkung plush saffron tapestry,
divans, Damascus trays, garden lanterns from Japan —
psychedelic guru's meditation room.
Salle d'attente.
Blackbowtie Arab waiter hovers buzzing.
Menu culls exotic dishes forth:
manshaf, hoomoos, shashlik, musakhan.
(But Goldstar wash, the neshet Hebrew mead.)
Lapped in eastern luxury, lulled by music playing:
Arab wails, Beatles, vintage Johnny Cash all juxtaposed —
Oriental teeniepop.
Cool nightbreeze freshens appetite and spirit.
But turgid waters murk the mystic cavern.

2.

St. Stephen's Gate machinegun bullets echo.
Night lives with memories bouyant, but not displaced.
St. Anne's carcass, lonely ghost, walls crumbling, looms:
mortartorn wounds gape wide in stony flesh.
Rock crumbling plasterfallen; tabernacle host wormeaten.
Cool mausoleumdamp floor duscovered paste.
Brownyellow sulphurous spirits pour forth from fissures.
(Byzantine inscription glares: ΓΑΣ)

flatulent epithet.)
Beside old church carrion older still lies bared in cistern holes.
Moonlight's honor fouled in stagnant pools.
Path downward slipperysmooth Vaseline channel.
Passage echoes Crusader's heels.
A single Davidpebble ejaculated describes perfect parabolic path
(Descartes? Pascal? Newton? Euclid?) plummets swiftly
(32 ft/sec²) out of sight, down the walled abyss, then detonates
concentric circled pool:
Plop.

3.

Another tomb, still living, beckons lonely:
Queen Helen's church, sepulchre and the cross.
Inside timber arches vault in support —
walls flabby by innumerable penetrations to be refurbished.
Arab stonemasons' tinmetal shack outside deserted;
no masterbuilder now, but silent nomen.
Five sects — a pope, some patriarchs, Egyptian Copts —
seek custody of holy ground, Christ's death and burial.
Eternal warriors; temple veil rented daily.
A good war hallows and cause.
Descend the sacred tomb, both bed and springboard.
Flaming angel still awaits with news,
metamorphosed to blackwaxcandle-robbed Orthodox monk.
Dankdamp ceiling lamphung, walls ikoned, but no tears flowing.
(In a corner near the alter an Israeli soldier and his girl entwine,
writhe, climax, sunder, sigh.
Iconoclastic rite when god is dead.)

4.

The street again; choked with homeward exodus flow.
Boys vanish, ghosts of night, to sleep on rags and scratch at lice.
Veils vanish, only harlots left — weaker vessels.
Old men sit cafestyle with pipes and coffee.
Eyes grow wary — street perils after dark.
At Damascus Gate the sanitation crew begins its eternal recurrence task —
Sisyphus, the old man counting peas.
Snakehose uncoils and slithers;
furpie broom, worn stubble, trundles out.
the tap turns (from Roundwood reservoir in County Wicklow)
a sickly flow of water seeks its level.
Stones brushed dampsmooth slimyshine in streetlight.
The mucky deposit of pimps, priests, and pilgrims
floats thru cracks to feet unsated sewerats, gasbellies bloated.
Lavabo, and walk round thy altar.
The body graveflesh white embalmed, awaiting shroud.

5.

Now Xmaslit German Luther's tower proclaims the witching hour —
Walpurgisnacht.
Streets are wrapped in curfew proclamation.
A lonely flatfoot strides bold the conquered lanes unchallenged.
All shopfront eyelids closed.
Tombrock rolls in place —
Thud.
(To rise again at morning?)
The City, history's chronic insomniac, lies silent.
Rest it seeks, the sweet salve of unlicked wounds.
Images swirl the day's nightmarish inventory.
Then dormir, but no shantih.
Jerusalem—Bethlehem—Ein Gedi—Sodom—Beersheba—Gaza—
Ashkelon—Tel Aviv—Netanya—Kfar Vitkin—Caesarea—Ein Hod—
Haifa—Acre—Sasa—Safed—Tiberias—Nazareth—Jina—Nablus—Ramallah—
Jerusalem, 1967.

by Jim Jannetta

Last spring I was asked by this year's Weekly editor to write a series of articles on my summer abroad. I was a SPANNER to Israel, that quiet little country in the Middle East. Little did we both know what that would turn into (me—a war correspondent!). Anyway, I spent the summer in Jerusalem, met many Arabs, and explored the Old City, formerly Jerusalem, Jordan.

These experiences suggested something other than a journalistic approach, and the result is the accompanying work. All incidents are based on observation and/or participation, but do not purport to be factual. Many strands are interwoven—catholicism, hasidism, current events, etc., and it is the purpose of the acknowledgements to help unravel them. Special indebtedness is owed to James Joyce and T.S. Eliot, insofar as the product may be classified as literature.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

(in order of appearance)

H. G. Wells, Time, Fidel Shanak, Jean Genet, Martin Buber, Ronald Youngblood, The Boy Scout Manual, The Fugs, Aristotle, JED&P, Sydney Nettleton Fisher, The Byrds, Koran, Rudolf Otto, James Joyce, William Blake, T. S. Eliot, The American Rifleman, Vergil, Alfred Lord Tennyson, Moses, Nikita Khrushchev, Rudyard Kipling, Dr. Benjamin Spock, The Dodge Rebellion, Mark Twain, Gamal Abdel Nasser, Dale Carnegie, Count Folke Bernadotte, Mad, Scientific American, Constantine Loizou, Adolph Hitler, Sophocles, Mao Tse-Tung, Marco Polo, Ogden Nash, Thomas Aquinas, Stokely Carmichael, Alan Watts, St. Joseph's Missal, Mamlujo, Ignatius of Loyola, Friedrich Waismann, Edgar Arlington Robinson, John Foster Dulles, The Jerusalem Post, Deuterocsaiah, Augustine, Friedrich Nietzsche, Sheherezade, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, Flavius Josephus, Anthony Azzo (S. J.), Eleph Milim, Theodor Herzl, The Baal Shem Tov, Marcus Aurelius, Issac Bashevis Singer, The Seer of Dublin, Donovan, Dr. Timothy Leary, Rumi, Homer, Plato, Bob Dylan (born Zimmerman), John Fowles, The Goldstar Brewing Co., Sonny & Cher, Archimedes, Franz Kafka, Section 7, Carl Backlund, Jean Paul Sartre, Henrik Ibsen, Don Peretz, The Baltimore Catechism, Ovid, Altizer & Cox, Leon Uris, Albert Camus, Candy, Edward Albee, Arthur Koestler, Bodhidharma, and the Great Auk.

SWAP

Continued from Page Two

It wasn't a challenge to live; it was a delicious invitation. My flatmate and I were fond of repeating a Samuel Johnson quote we had come across, "When a man is tired of London he is tired of life; for there is in London all that life can afford." And now I am back at Mac, trying to get into the familiar rut of classes and studies. But my heart isn't in it, for I left my heart with London.

In looking back over it all, I realize that there are flaws in the SWAP program that should be corrected. The orientation sessions were too repetitive, and not enough emphasis was placed on individual countries. Several sessions were more or less useless and could be eliminated. We were treated just a bit too much like children, instead of the responsible students we supposedly were, in order to be accepted for the program in the first place.