

Jerusalem Verses

by P. David Hornik (April 2016)

1

But there are those who fade

when still rather young.

For a while their articles in the paper

are the talk of the town.

Then something happens—

an editor gets fired,

or some more intimate event

imposes a silence on them.

Their regular readers

keep checking for their name,

then shrug, forget.

Yet they continue to exist

in a covert quietude,

walking to the post office in the morning,

smiling at a cat on a wall.

Maroon leaves

wave at them;

they note the October sky
somberly compelling
after the naïve cheer of September,
bright clouds beaming from genial blue.

2

Summer mornings,
already too hot,
he'd quit work,
head to the pool.

Stop at the corner store
for his *begele* and Coke;
get wished abundant,
endless life
by the guy there.

Passing his ex-wife's building,
he didn't look up at her window;
passing his ex-girlfriend's building,
ditto, though he was more tempted to.

The pool was drenched in

the bright apathy of summer. . . .

But that was too high-flown,

he couldn't get away with words like those.

The dozing palm fronds

had already wilted in the morning glare. . . .

What was it he had to say?

Was there anything?

He got settled in a chair;

but the paper before his eyes

didn't hide the hips of girls,

the hot monotony

of stranded time,

a summer where his voice,

even if he'd had one,

would have wandered off past the fence

and burned away in haze.

It wasn't playing "The Nearness of You"

on his piano while night came on.

It wasn't watching the first star form
over the obscure, far-flung city.
It wasn't—though this was closer to it—
lying on his bed
while it got too cold in the room
and fall fell on the land.
“Exile [he could have said]
opens an emptiness
larger than fullness was,
a silence with more to say than speech.”
Still he couldn't reach
the core of what it was.
It was not far
from the ancient muteness of the city.

P. David Hornik is a freelance writer and translator in Beersheva, Israel. In recent years his work appears especially on the *PJ Media* and *Frontpage Magazine* sites, and his book [here](#).

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