IF I FORGET YOU JERUSALEM

then let the gold one sun sets

on all old stone be stripped. If

I let the memory of your hills

erode, how would I raise Granada?

Your minarets, Al-Quds, fly me

to storks' nests on blue tile, high

above Bukhara. Friend of an old city,

if I miss the babble at your gates

how will I name the accents of New

York? Dear city, were I to lose sight

of you in snow, would I know Nara,

all towns lightly dusted by snow?

And, if I forget the candelabrum

on Titus' Arch, if I let fade

the jostle of graves down the Mount

of Olives, Yerushalaim, then let

me forget Mycenae, and Nagasaki,

and Warszawa in forty-three and four.

But if I remember? Oh, I do remember!

Then, with the good news of the earth,

the water of spring Gihon, I slip

twelve-hundred cubits down Hezekiah's

curving tunnel, into the pool of Siloam.

Cypress roots reach for this sweet

instruction issuing from Zion. But I,

I grow cold, for I remember more:

The terraced escarpment of David's

city, like the prow of a beached ark

of God, blocks the pool from seeing

(but it also remembers, it was there)

the ruined temple. What ruin? Not

a stone, not a stone upon stone . . .

Elsewhere, archaeologists sift layers

of ash, shards, chips of wall under

wall, razed earthworks, the bottomless

rubble of wars Jerusalem can't forget.