

New Poetry by Michal Rubin: “I Speak Not Your Language” and “Omar Abdalmajeed As’ad of Jijlya”



MAN AND LAND / image by
Amalie Flynn

I speak not your language

I, born from the womb of
my mother's remembrances
wrapped in the cocoon
of her story

you, amongst the trees, the earth
below littered with unpicked

olives

the story of Hagar and Yishmael
is your womb

my skin a scroll,
an epic of what was
my skin like tombstones
etched with numbers

the remains of the broken down
home in the arid field pasture
your diary
carved in the stone

You laugh in pleasure
your small act of defiance
your urine naturally marks your
territory which
I have marred

I feel its warmth running down
my sweaty shirt
my tongue tied in shame

you are telling your story

I speak not your language

and it's 2pm
the radio announcer
reads out names of
lost relatives,
maybe they have survived

yours, they live in a tent
somewhere
without radio announcements
you guard the stones
that have survived

Omar Abdalmajeed As'ad of Jiljilya

Haaretz newspaper reports

3am

Omar Abdalmajeed As'ad is stopped by Israeli soldiers on his drive home, after spending time with friends.

the moon is smiling, oblivious to the rattled
heart thumping against the white shirt
buttoned tightly over a late-night dinner
of rice and maybe thick lamb stew

3:05am

The soldiers demand that As'ad step out of his vehicle. They argue with him for 15 minutes.

Hebrew and Arabic mingle in a snake-like dance
or a sword fight with only one sword
and one victor

always

the same one wins

3:20 am

The soldiers walk As'ad to an abandoned yard, where they handcuff him, lay him on the ground, gag him and blindfold him.

the rancid aroma of cumin and cinnamon, the
leftover flavor of friends, permeates the thick
gag with a terrifying intimacy of living in a dream
of dying on the cold dusty ground

3:35am

Soldiers lead two more detainees to the yard. One of them notices As'ad is lying still on his stomach.

his full stomach is pressed against the small pebbles

as 78-year-old skin surrenders to the indentations
branding As'ad
declaring the kinship of man and land
as the almost full moon still is in oblivion

3:45am

Two more detainees are brought to the yard. No one is handcuffed apart from As'ad.

his hands bound to each other clutch fleetingly
moments stored in his wilting veins
toddlers joyfully
squealing love making
lamb stew sweetness of pistachio-
filled baklawa

4am

The soldiers free one of As'ad's hands and leave the yard.

not bound together the hands no longer harbor
As'ad's stored moments
they "rest" upon the spillage of his life
leaving handprints
branding the earth
the kinship of land and man

4:09am

One of the detainees calls a doctor after noticing As'ad is unresponsive and his face has turned blue.

no flickering of the moonlight to mark
the moment As'ad's blindfolded eyes dimmed
the absence of air bluing
the wrinkled face

stillness

4:10am

A doctor arrives at the yard from a nearby clinic and tries to

resuscitate As'ad.

the white shirt ripped dusted
with the land no longer white
and new hands part the sea
of stillness in a futile effort
to infuse life into
this body an empty vessel

zip tie on its wrist

4:20am

As'ad is brought to the clinic and medics continue to treat him.

neon flares no more moonlight
frenetic world life-sustaining measures violent
clanking desperation against As'ad's bare chest

desecrate the holy stillness
of dying at dawn

4:40am

The doctor pronounces As'ad's death

One commander will be
rebuked

two subordinate company and platoon commanders will be
dismissed

As'ad is buried in his village Jiljilya

*<https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/.premium-death-of-80-year-old-palestinian-was-moral-lapse-israeli-military-report-says-1.10581018>