Three Poems

by <u>Steven Sher</u> (November 2019)



Manos de Protesta, Oswaldo Guayasamin, 1968

The Palestinian

an American college campus, circa 1980

New to town, he stood each day out in the quad recruiting students with grand gestures and with charm, engaging faculty who soon embraced him, invited him into their classrooms, churches, homes to plant the seeds of solidarity. In the coffeehouse at night, he filled their heads with horrors done to those he loved. When he saw me, we would nod but never stop to talk because he knew I was a Jew. Soon the blame-filled articles began appearing in the student paper, the lies about Jews circulating on lampposts and in stairwells, behind glass notice boards beside official bulletins: stereotypic cartoons, blood libels. When speakers came to campus, they were shouted down, escorted out as the crowd became belligerent while he just sat with folded arms among the students in the back, nodding as the chants grew bolder, grinning as the fists thrust higher in the air.



The Massacre at Har Nof

November 18, 2014

One of the terrorists worked next door in a grocery store where he observed the movements of the Jews:

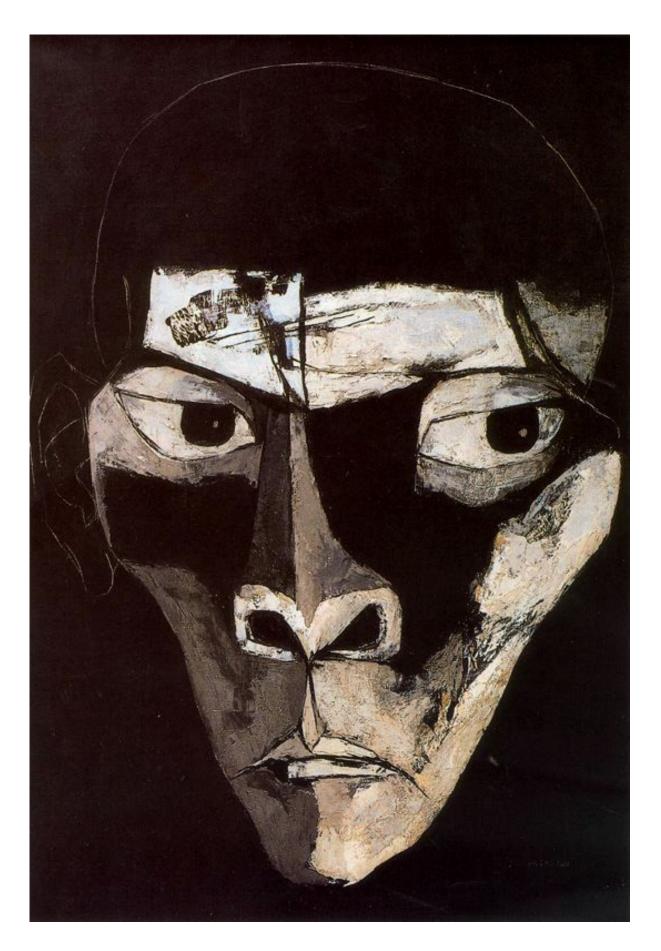
knew the moment they stood most exposed, prayer shawls over their bowed heads, trembling and beseeching G-d.

That morning they strode in with guns, a meat cleaver and axe; set upon the unsuspecting, shooting and hacking

their way through the room, butchering four and injuring more: two heads and arms cut off, eyes gouged out.

Bodies wrapped in prayer shawls and *tefillin* sprawled along the floor amid the pools of blood.

Blood hardening in horror.



El Rostro, Oswaldo Guayasamin, 1969

The Thief

Nachlaot, Shabbat, 3 a.m.

Shouts and running through the winding alleys shatter sleep. On the open deck of the empty flat across the way, someone ducks in shadow as pursuers close from several roofs, triangulate with flashlights and converge. Objects crash and loud rough voices rouse the night. Slammed to the deck, three cops on top, he screams "Enough." In cuffs the thief is led downstairs, people watching from their terraces and windows. He wears a hood though it's a warm summer night. The cops are joking now. One or two remain behind to sweep the grounds, their flashlights finding our faces in the dark. We listen for returning silence to restore the stolen calm.

«Previous Article Table of Contents Next Article»

Brooklyn-born Steven Sher has lived in Jerusalem since 2012. His latest (16th) book is *Contestable Truths, Incontestable Lies* (Dos Madres Press, 2019). His work has appeared widely since the 1970s. Recent appearances range from *Veils, Halos & Shackles: International Poetry on the Oppression and Empowerment of Women* to *Mizmor Anthology* to the forthcoming *New Voices: Contemporary Writers Confronting The Holocaust.* Last year he received the Glenna Luschei Distinguished Poet Award, headlining the 35th annual San Luis Obispo Poetry Festival. Visit him on his website.

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