

# 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>