

A French poet's tribute to the Jewish woman murdered by a Muslim

by Hugh Fitzgerald



Yann Moix is a well-known French writer and regular guest on the talk show watched by millions, “On n’est pas couché” (which means: “We’re not ready for bed, we’ve still got lots to do”). The other day, in an emotional state, he read out part of a poem he had just written about Mireille Knoll, the 85-year-old Jewish woman who was stabbed to death, and then set alight in her apartment, by one Muslim attacker, while another Muslim apparently watched. The actual killer had been the neighbor of Mireille Knoll, whom he had known, and who had befriended him, for 20 years.

What made the story of Mireille Knoll particularly touching is that as a young girl she had just barely managed to avoid

being one of the 13,000 Jews rounded up by the French police and taken to the Velodrome d'hiver (Vel d'Hiv), and from there sent on to Drancy, and then to their final destination in Auschwitz. Having been spared by fate as a nine-year-old, she did not manage to escape, as an 85-year-old, the same antisemitic hate, this time "with a different executioner."

Yann Moix does not hold back on the subject of Islamic antisemitism. He writes of "Muslim Nazis." He makes clear the link between the Nazi murders of Jews and those by Muslims today. It's the first time on a national television program, in France, where such things have been spoken about in so outspoken a fashion.

Here is the poem, in English and then in the original French. Liberties have been taken with the literal translation only where necessary to better preserve the sense.

Dear Madame,

Spared by fate at the time of the velodromes,

Snatched away by chance from German crimes,

Death would be waiting for you beyond the pogroms,

Hidden in the madness of Muslim Nazis.

You had escaped from this disgraceful roundup,

Perpetrated by France against a few French citizens,

Whose main crime, and whose striking fault,

Was to have in their blood a God who was not there.

And your people who were hated, hated for their birth,

Know deep down that the blows of those knives, used to tear your flesh,

Were nothing starting up again,
But the same steady hate, and only the executioners had
changed.
Your people who were punished, punished for their essence,
Know deep in the night that this auto-da-fé,
Where you were burned alive is the same flourish of evil,
Now endorsed by a different hand.
And your people who were despised,
Despised for their science,
Know deep in their lives that the cremation,
Of a lonely Jewish woman in her old age,
Will forever bear the name of desecration.

The French original follows:

Madame,
Epargnée par le sort au temps des vélodromes, Saved by fate at
the time of the velodromes,
Arrachée par la chance aux crimes allemands,
La mort vous attendait au-delà des pogroms,
Cachée dans la folie de nazis musulmans.
Vous fûtes rescapée de cette rafle indigne
Pratiquée par la France envers quelques Français
Dont le crime premier, et dont la faute insigne

Fut d'avoir dans le sang ce Dieu qui s'absentait.
Et votre peuple haï, haï pour sa naissance
Sait tout au fond de lui que les coups de couteau
Dont on vous lacéra, n'est rien qui recommence,
Mais une haine fixe en un changeant bourreau.
Votre peuple puni, puni pour son essence
Sait du fond de sa nuit que cet autodafé
Où l'on vous immola est une efflorescence
Du toujours même mal, autrement parafé.
Et votre peuple honni, honni pour sa science
Sait du fond de sa vie que la crémation
D'une juive isolée en pleine sénescence,
Porte à jamais le nom de profanation.

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