

Three Poems

by [Steven Sher](#) (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.



El Grito, Oswaldo Guayasamin, 1976

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.

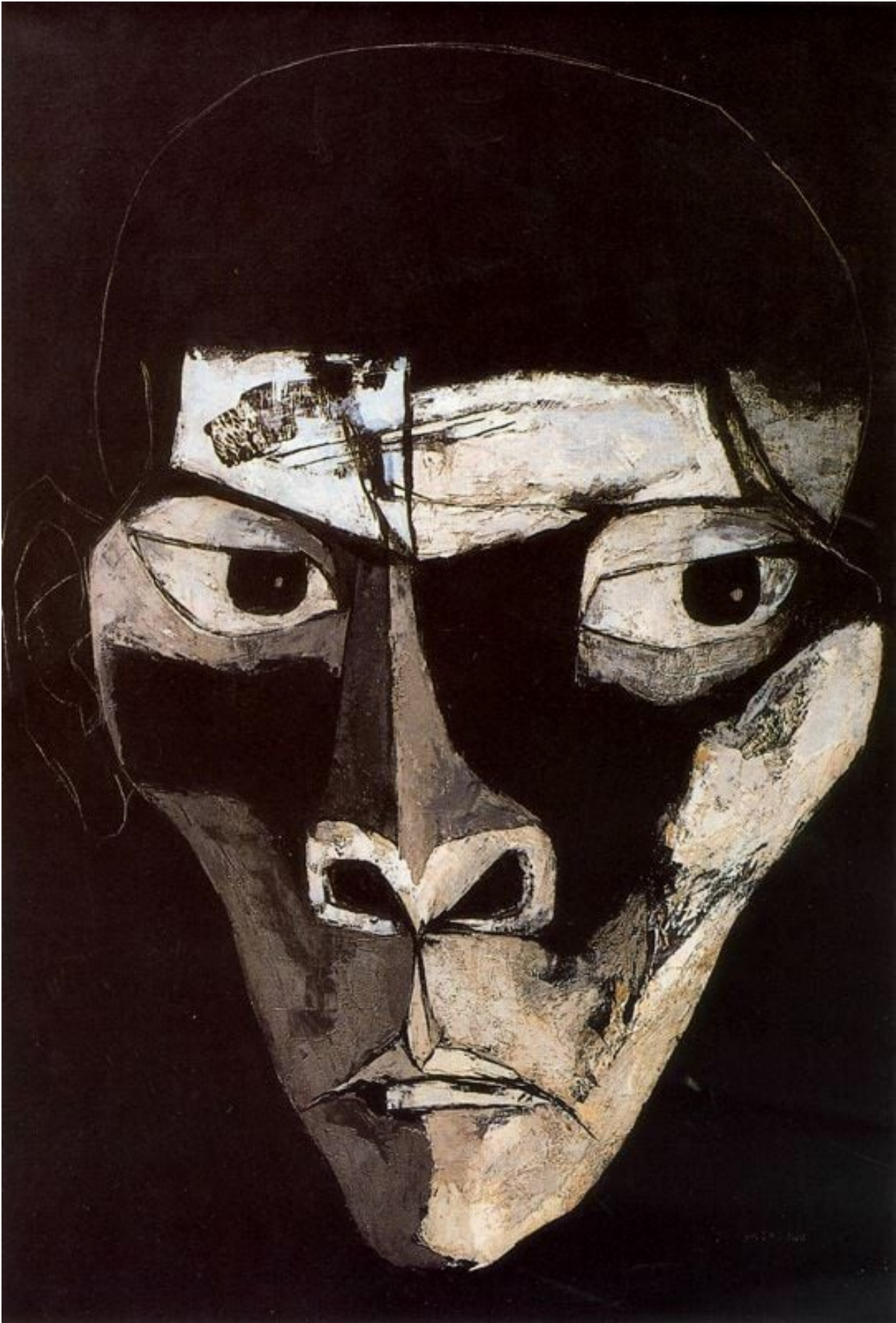
That morning they strode in with guns,
a meat cleaver and axe; set upon
the unsuspecting, shooting and hacking

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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