

# “DAMASCUS, WHAT ARE YOU DOING TO ME”

By Nizar Qabbani

*Translated by Shareah Taleghani  
With thanks to Words Without Borders*

My voice rings out, this time, from Damascus  
It rings out from the house of my mother and father  
In Sham. The geography of my body changes.

Returning to you  
Stained by the rains of my longing  
Returning to fill my pockets  
With nuts, green plums, and green almonds  
Returning to my oyster shell  
Returning to my birth bed  
For the fountains of Versailles  
Are no compensation for the Fountain Café  
And Les Halles in Paris  
Is no compensation for the Friday market  
And Buckingham Palace in London  
Is no compensation for Azem Palace...

...So People of Sham  
He among you who finds me . . .  
let him return me to Umm Mu'ataz  
And God's reward will be his  
I am your green sparrow . . . People of Sham  
So he among you who finds me . . .  
let him feed me a grain of wheat . . .  
I am your Damascene rose . . . People of Sham  
So he among you who finds me . . .  
let him place me in the first vase . . .  
I am your mad poet . . . People of Sham  
So he among you who sees me . . .  
let him take a souvenir photograph of me  
Before I recover from my enchanting insanity . . .  
I am your fugitive moon . . . People of Sham  
So he among you who sees me . . .  
Let him donate to me a bed . . . and a wool blanket . . .  
Because I haven't slept for centuries

