



Nasr Jamil Shaath

Nasr Jamil Shaath is a Palestinian poet who was born in 1979 in Khan Yunis in the southern Gaza Strip. The poetry collections he has published include *Desire of Asphalt* (Ugarit, Ramallah, 2005), *Because the Hat of Dust is Smoke* (Mim, Algeria, 2007), *They Stripped the Night from the Tree* (Palestinian House of Poetry, Ramallah, 2011), and most recently, *Deer Ravisher Tumbled Down Its Grass* (Makhtotat, Netherlands, 2016). He has also published the critical book *My Hand's Word Is Not Mine* (Union of Palestinian Writers, Ramallah, 2009). Shaath spends his time moving between his homes in northern Norway and Marrakech.

Reviewing *Justification* for *Al-Hayat*, Rasem Al-Madhoun wrote, "Shaath's poetry is succinct and to the point. It is loaded with imagery and symbolism, inviting readers to read critically and imaginatively. The poems of Shaath present a collection of dramatic scenes that put together produce a unified tapestry of forms and shapes that tickle the mind and engage the imagination." And reviewing *Exit*, physician and poet Ashour Etwebi stated, "Shaath combines both conformity and discord between the 'I' and the 'other,' life and death, the visible and invisible. The poet insists on reminding us that we have to know ourselves and the energy that dwells in us. At one time he takes over the role of a prophet and preacher, and at another, the role of a dexterous thief. But the best situation to be is that of the unknown."

Justification

I told you repeatedly:
Shiny poetry cannot
Inject the war with a needle of reconciliation
To the world, poetry is light as a feather.
Until dawn I stayed stockpiling the opinion of poetry on papers,
But the world does not recognize a status for poetry.
When you violated the honor of my name
I realized, nevertheless,
You begrudged me my civilization.

Exit

After a few minutes, not five
I will leave my home.
The balcony girl will see me,
An old lady at the intersection plays
With naked white pebbles,
She raises the roof of wisdom for me to ascend.
Beyond the houses of my neighborhood,
Beyond the deafening horns of the cars
Beyond the annoying folks
I will emerge, like a prophet,
From white water!

Poems from the collection *Because the Hat of Dust is Smoke*.
Translated from Arabic by Samer Al-Saber.

Artwork by Khaled Hourani.

