

RIAD SALEH HUSSEIN

*translated by Saleh Razzouk*

**SMOKE**

Depressed and open like the sea,  
I stand, angry, coherent and continuous,  
to tell you about the sea,  
when the window has two eyes to see my despair  
the walls fingers to touch my ribs  
the doors tongues to talk about me.

And when the water becomes the taste of water  
the air the taste of air  
and this black ink the smell of ink  
and when print houses produce poems instead of sleeping pills  
and the fields grow wheat instead of opium  
and the factories make shirts instead of bombs  
I'll stand. I'll stand to talk to you about myself,  
to talk about love that assassinates elegies,  
about elegies that open its royal book of record  
to list your names among the dead,  
about the dead and the first aid worker  
who did not arrive with the Mercurochrome to save them.

I'll stand  
to talk about myself  
in the same way the dictator stands to talk about his prisons,  
the millionaires about his millions,  
the lover about the breast of his beloved  
the child about his mother  
the thief about his keys  
the world about its rulers.

I'll talk to you with love, with love, with mad love, but only after I light a cigarette.