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Love by Adnan Sadduk

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When I was a young man
love was
my favorite pastime;
the love that sends its dreamy looks
from blue eyes
or whispers it with
tender lips
colored in coral
The love that is in fact
like beauty overflowing
and black hair
tousled by the slight breezes of the North
But now,
I no longer possess love
only a feeling
I am not moved at all
for neither do cheeks flush with the horizon's redness
arouse me,
nor does the swaying figure
of a slender girl
excite or lift me away
Now—that the distance has widened
between me and Venus,
the soul mate to the setting sun of my love—
I have returned Cupid's arrows
to his golden quiver
for I find nothing in love
but a silly game, eternally
shrouded in death,
and silence!

Adnan Sadduk (1944–) is a professor of Arabic Language and Culture at the Defense Language Institute at the Presidio of Monterey in California. A native of Tulkarm, Palestine, and educated at the University of Baghdad and Pepperdine University, Sadduk has long had a distinguished career in public service: as an educator, journalist, editor, publisher, and former Jordanian *chargé d'affaires* in North Yemen. An accomplished poet, he has published his works in Jordanian newspapers and magazines since elementary school. He continues to actively organize and participate in Arabic literary seminars in the United States.

Originally composed by Sadduk in 1973 in Amman, Jordan, the poem “Love” is taken from his retrospective collection of romantic poetry, *To Anglo-Saxon Eyes* (2011). The poem’s lyrical “I” explores how the impassioned love of one’s youth can easily go awry by the metonymic slippage of desire—and, ultimately, by the dialectical tension between *eros* and *thanatos*. In my translation, I have attempted to render the Arabic into English as closely as possible while still retaining the visual architectonics of the original text. Sadduk’s use of short lines emphasizes a number of synesthetic experiences, which are further enhanced by his use of colors (black, blue, coral, and red) and sensuous body parts (cheeks, eyes, hair, and lips). Like many of the poems in the above collection, his poetic style harnesses the direct and affective power of everyday language; they are, thus, similar to the works of another modern Arabic poet that Sadduk greatly admires, Nizar Qabbani.