

## THE SHORT STORIES OF ZAKARIA TAMER

sary? Wouldn't it be better if that word were exchanged for another?"

I even think at length about commas and full stops, and when I publish a story and the press makes a mistake and puts a comma in place of a full stop I feel embarrassed towards the readers as if I have committed an unforgivable crime. And when I decide to make a change in the plot of the story or to change some of the words, those changes are made quickly and easily.

*Is this because you have a huge linguistic inventory at your disposal? And perhaps because you are an avid reader?*

No, it is not because of stored linguistic information, it is due to the richness of my stored life experiences.

### • Habits and motivations

*Do you write every day? What are your writing habits?*

For me, writing is greatly linked to the mobility of the body. Whenever I can move, my ability to think and write is energized. It is also related to my feeling of being surrounded by people.

In Damascus, I used to write when I walked along the street or sat in a restaurant or café, so when I am surrounded by the noises of crowds my concentration becomes better and I can write quickly and easily – the surrounding noise becomes like the soundtrack of a movie. But in England I became used to writing on the bus or the train, and I wrote most of the stories of the books *We Shall Laugh*, *Sour Grapes*, and *Breaking Knees* on the train between Oxford and London. If I am forced to write at home because of bad weather, I write with difficulty and very slowly. I usually write the first draft of a story by hand in about an hour, then I copy it onto the computer, and spend days, weeks or months reviewing, editing and making the final adjustments. I have been used not to think in advance about what I will write, or about the story, until the moment I hold the pen and am ready to write.

*Who reads the story before it is published?*