



such visits. Though they dare not speak of it, what they both anticipate is finding their son, Khaldoun, who was only five months old on April 21st, 1948, when Zionist bombardment drove the Palestinians of Haifa to the seaside, from where they were evacuated in boats.

Now Sayed and Safiya meet their son as a young man named Dov, clad in the uniform of an Israeli reserve soldier. They meet his adoptive mother, a Polish Jewess, and learn that his adoptive father died fighting in the Sinai in 1956. The tragic irony of the situation is reinforced as Kanafani flashes back to the past of all the characters.

We learn how the young wife, Safiya, left her son for a few minutes,

she thought, when the artillery began, to search for Sayed. When they finally found each other, they were caught in the throng of refugees, mercilessly driven toward the harbour with no physical possibility of returning to find their son. We learn as well how Sayed, in the first years of their exile from Haifa, tried many times to return to search for Khaldoun, but was always prevented.

The story flashes back to how Efrat and Miriam, the adoptive parents, arrived in Palestine, fleeing fascism in Europe, but with little idea of what they were coming to. Soon after their arrival, Miriam saw Zionist soldiers throwing the blood-covered body of a child on a wagon «like it was a stick of firewood.»

She knew immediately that it was an Arab child, for as she told Efrat, «If it had been Jewish they certainly wouldn't have done like that.» For Miriam this evokes memories of her younger brother being killed by the Nazis as he approached her house to tell that their father had been taken to Auschwitz, where he later died. From the time she saw the Arab child being loaded on the truck, the experience of settling in Palestine soured for Miriam. For that reason, Efrat was overjoyed that they could adopt the small child who had been «abandoned» in the house assigned to them by the Jewish agency.

Sayed and Safiya are confronted with the reality that their son is not their son. Dov has been raised as a Jew who identifies the Arabs as enemies. His loyalties are with the parents who raised him and to the Zionist state.

From this discovery stem a multitude of new thoughts. «Sayed felt that the walls within which he had lived for twenty years had collapsed, and that he was now able to see things more clearly.» He begins to question if the homeland, Palestine, is the past which he and his wife had stored up in their memories, epitomized in the lost son. Or isn't Palestine the future, and the future of their other son, Khaled, who wants to join the freedom fighters?

Ghassan's voice cannot be silenced

Though descriptive in style, «Return to Haifa» is in essence thought-provoking. To the international audience, it conveys a broader understanding of the nuances of the Palestinian dilemma and cause. To Palestinians, it is a point of departure for examining their own thinking, commitment and means of struggle.

Kanafani's political writings had the same effect on a different level: He was highly articulate in conveying the progressive essence of the Palestinian cause to people around the world. In the Palestinian and Arab arena, he was a persuasive mobilizer. For this dual ability, the Zionists sought to silence his voice once and for all. Yet though they succeeded in their physical liquidation, they failed to quell Ghassan's political and cultural expressiveness. Ghassan Kanafani, his voice, his writings and his example, remain with us as an inspiration and integral part of the ongoing liberation struggle.