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The Afterlife of Ghassan Kanafani

BY **MLYNXQUALEY** on **AUGUST 24, 2016**

Palestinian author Ghassan Kanafani (1936 – 1972) would have turned eighty this year, had he not been killed at the age of thirty-six:

Although it's been more than 40 years since the author was killed by a car bomb, Kanafani's body of work remains vividly relevant: *Men in the Sun* is about refugees trying to smuggle themselves into a place where they might find work; *Return to Haifa* is about family and loss, and was a touchstone for Susan Abulhawa's popular 2010 novel *Mornings in Jenin*.

Much of Kanafani's work remains in print; it circulates online; it's watched in film adaptation, as with *The Dupes*; and it continues to be adapted to the stage. There have been several stagings this year; next month,



Palestine's Freedom Theatre brings "Images from the life of Ghassan Kanafani" **to a month of shows in Portugal.**

Kanafani also apparently remains a threat, as **a Canadian teacher was suspended last week, apparently for giving a speech** in which she called the assassinated Palestinian writer a martyr. Although there is a large gap in how the word "martyr" is understood across languages and cultures, and no one was ever brought to trial for Kanafani's assassination, it's widely believed that Kanafani was killed for his beliefs.

The school board apparently confirmed that it had launched an investigation into the teacher — Nadia Shoufani's — speech Toronto. But the board did not confirm that Shoufani was suspended for her speech.

In any case, it would probably be helpful for the Dufferin-Peel Catholic District School Board to board a flight to Portugal and watch *Images from the Life of Ghassan Kanafani*. According to Freedom Theatre:

Images from the life of Ghassan Kanafani has been devised with the third-year students of The Freedom Theatre School. The play is built around some of the central characters in Kanafani's writings, that represent different generations of Palestinian society. Thereby the play becomes an introduction to Kanafani's literature as well as to the history of Palestine.

Or, in lieu of that, a book would do.

"Letter from Gaza" by Ghassan Kanafani. And a reaction to the piece: **"When words fail, read literature."**

"Jaffa: Land of oranges," by Ghassan Kanafani, translated by Mona Anis and Hala Halim

The estate's official website; you can find a bit more of his translated work here.

Books in English translation include **Men in the Sun and Other Palestinian Stories,** translated by Kilpatrick; **Palestine's Children: Returning to Haifa & Other Stories,** translated by Barbara Harlow and Karen E. Riley; and **All That's Left to You,** translated by May Jayyusi and Jeremy Reed.