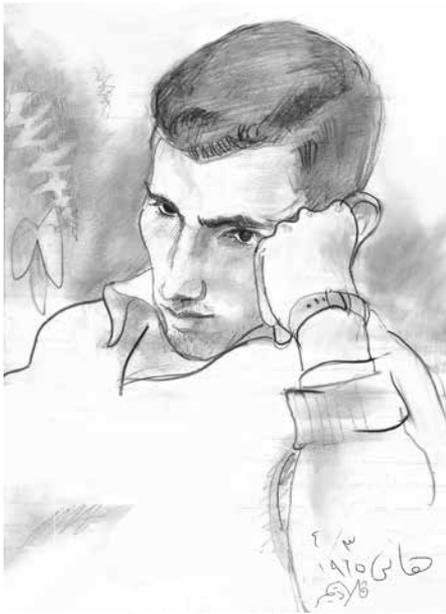


Remembering My Friend, Hani Jawhariyyeh

Vladimir Tamari

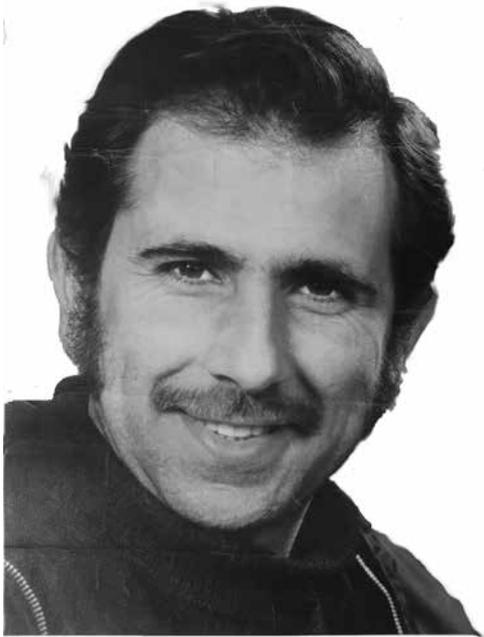


Vladimir Tamari, drawing of Hani, 3 April 1965, Ramallah or Jerusalem, pencil and colors on paper.

Forty years have now passed since his death and before that about twenty years of friendship between us, a friendship that began in the days of our childhood in the 1950s, there in Arab Jerusalem as we breathed its air, little knowing we would lose it in a few short years. Here are a few short word-pictures about Hani, which I present unapologetically. I say that for they may seem, to some, to contradict the myth of the mantle of heroism and idealism that his colleagues in the revolution have bestowed on him – and deservedly so – after his martyrdom. Yes, Hani did eventually become a real hero, but I knew him before all that; I knew him as a wonderful ordinary human being – extraordinarily ordinary, so to speak – and I do not want to lose that Hani, the friend and the dear brother.

I first got to know Hani through our joint friendship with Samir Farah, my school friend. Samir became an amazing theater director and filmmaker and I acted in some of his early comic films that Hani had filmed using an 8 mm camera at Samir's home in Jerusalem. They were slapstick movies – one I remember was about a surgeon performing operations using carpentry tools. This friendship expanded to include, in our own words, the “four musketeers” of art in Arab Jerusalem of the late fifties and the years that followed: Hani (photography and cinema) Kamal Boullata and myself (art and painting), and Ibrahim Sous (piano and music composition). Later, Samir traveled to complete his studies in New York and after his return we met again at the American University in Beirut, before his tragic death in the early sixties.

During the walks that we took in those days in the streets of Jerusalem's Old City and during family visits, a warm fraternal camaraderie grew between the four of us young men. We joked and laughed as though we were trying to erase the atmosphere of



الشهيد هاني جوهريّة - شهيد السينما النضاليّة

“The Martyr Hani Jawhariyyeh – Martyr of the Cinema of the Struggle,” poster issued by the Palestine Liberation Organization in 1976.

laughing, compassionate look. He was not reckless in anything and perhaps one of his most endearing qualities was shown in his humility and in the pains he took in mastering the details of any work he undertook – in setting up his camera, for example, or during photo printing. He dealt with people humanely and honestly, free of any selfishness or malice to a degree I rarely experienced in anyone. Following his death, I wrote a text that is now lost, but I remember that in it I described Hani’s hand holding an egg which he had taken from the chicken coop behind his home in Shu‘fat, north of Jerusalem, near the “kazuza” soft drinks factory. I wrote how the egg appeared, brilliantly white, nestled in his hand, as if he was guarding it. Everybody loved him and still does.

Hani worked for a long time, perhaps for several years, as an assistant to the optician Elia Adranly in his shop in the Old City of Jerusalem, located at the top corner of the steps starting right from Khan al-Zayt suq and meeting the alley that led to the Christian Quarter and the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. The shop had a glass window boasting a white plaster bust of Mahatma Gandhi, wearing the famous glasses of course. Mr. Adranly was an interesting, intelligent man with a sweet smile and had a theory on the effect of the Earth’s rotation on winds, which we discussed. In later years, Hani and I would fondly remember this wonderful man.

Following Samir Farah’s departure to study film in New York, Hani continued his keen interest in cinematography. I was hit by the same virus, too, and we spent a good deal of

defeat and disappointment around us: here was al-Quds our Holy City, partly occupied and divided by barbed wire and a no-man’s land planted with landmines. Beyond that was our looted Palestine, now inaccessible to us yet alive in our imagination, full of stories heard from our fathers of Palestine before the Nakba catastrophe of 1948. There were also the personal memories of what we experienced in our childhoods in Jaffa and Jerusalem and I do not know which other cities for the others. We exchanged visits, and my parents and my sisters really liked Hani. At his home, I met his younger brother, the artist and calligrapher Riad, his father, his aunt, and his uncle, the wonderful musician and diarist Wasif Jawhariyyeh. I recall that they were related to the famous Palestinian musician Salvador Armita, whose classes I attended at the American University of Beirut. May God rest their souls.

What remains with me and what I remember most of Hani is his penetrating,



Vladimir Tamari, "Palestinian Still Life," 29 April 1977. The image of the cover of *Filastin al-Thawra* magazine surrounded by handicrafts from Palestine was made using a three-dimensional drawing instrument: the lines appear floating in space when the two images are merged using a stereoscope.

time discussing the films that we saw in the cinemas of Jerusalem. I do not know how we got hold of the theories of the Soviet filmmaker Eisenstein, but we would discuss his theory of composing the image along a 45-degree diagonal. However busy we were in these serious pursuits, we did not stop joking and laughing, repeating what the Egyptian actor Yusuf Wahbi said in one of his films: "a maiden's honor is like a matchstick..." By a funny coincidence I watched an old U.S. movie a few days ago in which the same thing was said!

One of our activities was filming a short comic film reflecting the state of repression that pervaded our conservative, and to some extent hypocritical, society, which restricted the opportunities we had for free expression and creativity. I think it was I who wrote the synopsis for this film it went like this: Hani is reading the newspaper when a photograph on its page changes to a photograph of a nude woman moving between the printed lines of news. The reader is surprised and panics! In the early sixties, when the attention of the American media centered on sending a man to the moon, we in the Arab world were listening to the speeches of 'Abd al-Nasir and were living a completely different reality that reflected our own concerns and national hopes. In this atmosphere, Hani and I made a voice recording parodying the interviews we heard from the Voice of America radio. Using a weird Arab-American accent, our interview sarcastically discussed the subject of sending garbage to the moon!

Such buffoonery and the normal problems of adolescence existed side by side with our deep consciousness and delicate awareness of the beauty around us in Palestine, particularly Jerusalem: its history, its churches and mosques, the splendor of the Dome of the Rock, and the piety of the pilgrims who visited it. At that time Hani and I dreamt



Kamal Boullata, drawing of Hani in Jerusalem, mid-1960s.



Vladimir Tamari, drawing of Hani, mid-1960s.

of producing a film about Jerusalem. Unfortunately, the only thing that survived from that project was my drawing of a porter carrying planks of wood; the rope securing the wood on his back slips and, as one of the planks swivels and forms a cross, the porter is transformed for a fleeting moment into the figure of Christ carrying the sorrows of humanity. That was before the 1967 war and before Ismail Shammout's painting "Palestine on the Cross," and before the words of Mahmoud Darwish in his poem "Kitaba bi-l-fahm al-muhtaraq" (Writing with Charred Coal) – "But I emerge from the nails of this cross, to look for another source of lightning" – and before the marvelous painting by my colleague Sliman Mansour, "The Camel of Burdens." As if all of us in different times were aware that Jesus, the son of Mary, Palestinian-born, crucified and resurrected in Jerusalem, was a symbol of human suffering and victory over injustice, realized in Christ's resurrection from the dead, as we Christians believe.

Hani helped me in the filming of a short experimental film realizing my idea for what I called "visual music": the colors and forms move on the screen to keep up with the rhythm of the music to one of Bach's Brandenburg Concertos. I took the project seriously and got sheets of the musical score, but our tools to coordinate and synchronize the music with the panels of different colors – each note corresponding to a certain color – were, unfortunately, insufficient to complete the project as

envisioned.

One day, I showed Hani a small folding model of cardboard, plastic, and yarn and painted lines to explain the idea of my invention of three-dimensional drawing (stereoscopic drawing). Hani smiled and looked at me reproachfully and scolded me, saying, "it is a pity for you to remain in this country." I remember that later, the Japanese companies to whom I presented this project told me almost the same thing: "Take this

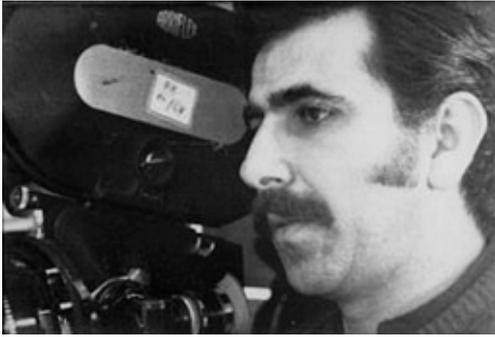


Sulafa Jadallah and Hani Jawhariyyeh sharing food with the Jordanian National Guard in the village of Karameh, 1968.

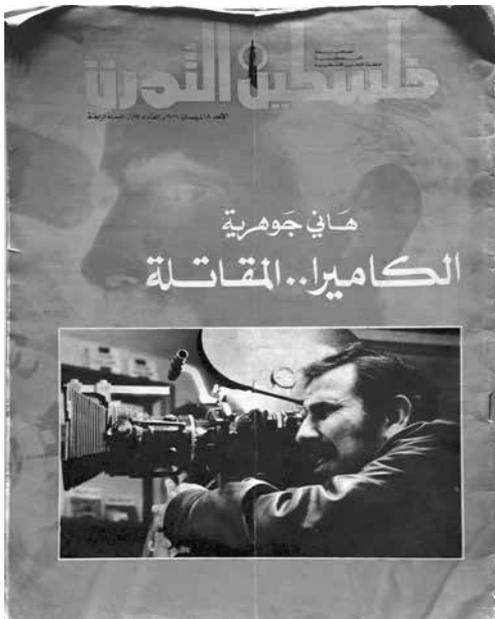
invention to America,” suggesting that if the invention succeeds there, then bring it back to Japan! But I missed my chance, because the advent of home computers made digital 3D graphics easy for everyone, though not as I had imagined and planned.

When my wife Kyoko heard that Riad had asked me to write these memories, she told me: “I remember Hani was against your marriage with a foreign non-Arab woman, but when he met us and saw our harmony and love together, he changed his mind!” The years pass and Hani traveled to Egypt and Britain to specialize in cinematography. When the Arab-Israeli War of 5 June 1967 occurred, I was in Beirut, where I was working as an assistant cinema technician at the Audiovisual Department of UNRWA (United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East). The war and the occupation of Jerusalem was a great shock. At the end of that year, I married Kyoko, whose wonderful character was shown when she came from Tokyo to Beirut despite the atmosphere of war and uncertainty. I traveled to Jordan with the UNRWA film crew to record the aftermath of the war and its impact on the hundreds of thousands of displaced people from Palestine to camps in the Jordanian desert, such as al-Baqa’a camp and a place called Wadi Dalil, “The Valley of the Lost.” Soon I felt the contradictions between the department, which produced films depicting the refugees merely as poor, needy people and neglected to tell the political and national background of the war, and the revolutionary acts of resistance that had begun at that time. So I resigned from my job in a decisive and sudden act of personal protest.

At that time, I helped the sculptor and activist Mona Saudi to produce a book of drawings and narratives made by the children of al-Baqa’a camp that told of their escape from Palestine under Israeli bombs and their impressions of the beginning of the



Hani Jawhariyyeh with his Arriflex 16 mm film camera at the PLO photography and film division, circa 1971.



Filastin al-Thawra, issue of 18 April 1976, containing Hani's obituary and many sincere and moving articles by his wife and comrades in the Palestinian resistance.

that presents our cause to the world. I copied everything in the UNRWA film archives concerning Jerusalem and, despite my lack of experience, completed a documentary film called *al-Quds (Arab Jerusalem)*, which was narrated in English and distributed globally. In spite of its shortcomings, it was one of the earliest committed Palestinian films completed after the 1967 defeat, and won the admiration of the great Palestinian writers Ghassan Kanafani and Jabra Ibrahim Jabra. I took this film to Amman, showed it to the staff of the film section of the Jordanian Ministry of Information under the supervision of 'Ali Siyam, where Hani worked on the production of newsreels. *Al-Quds* was screened three consecutive times. With the escalation of the Palestinian Revolution, Hani, Mustafa

heroic Palestinian commando resistance movement. I traveled a second time to visit the camp, accompanied by Hani, to film a documentary about children. The season was winter and bitterly cold and everyone was saying, *qatlatna al-saq'a fi-l-Baqa'a!* – the cold is killing us in al-Baqa'a. I remember that while I was walking in the camp with Hani, I lost my shoes in the deep mud surrounding the tents! On another occasion, I enjoyed visiting Hani's warm and welcoming home in Amman. Unfortunately we were unable to complete the film about the children at the time, but I supervised the printing and publication of a book, *In Time of War, Children Testify* (Beirut: Mawaqif and Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, 1970), which contained some photographs taken by Hani. I later learned that Hani did complete a film, entitled *Palestinian Rights: In Time of War, Children Testify*, in 1972. But most likely that film was lost during the Israeli invasion of Beirut in 1982. Later, Hani's daughter Hiba made a concerted effort to find the film and photo archive of the Palestine Liberation Organization that her father helped establish and diligently maintained until his death. Unfortunately, no trace of it was to be found.

Following my resignation from UNRWA in 1968, I wrote a detailed text in English about my ideas and hopes for the establishment of a Palestinian cinema

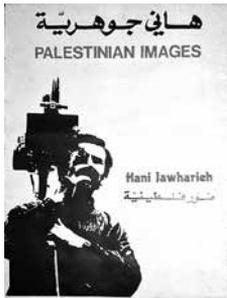


Filastin al-Thawra, issue of 18 April 1976, containing Hani's obituary.

Abu 'Ali, and their colleague the cinematographer Sulafa Jadallah established the photography and film division of the Fatah guerrilla group, which became the largest group within the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO). I watched *al-Quds* recently on YouTube and, despite its sincerity, was rather ashamed of its primitive technical standard!

The unfortunate civil war in Jordan began in 1970, but I had to visit Amman to say goodbye to my family ahead of what later turned out to be my emigration to Japan. We visited Hani and his wife in their home in Amman and suddenly, while there, a fierce battle erupted between the resistance and the Jordanian army with a violent exchange of fire. We could not leave, so we spent the night listening and watching the bullets tracing lines of light in the space between the adjacent mountain and somewhere behind Hani's home. Hani calmed us, saying, "It's nothing really – no problem!" But the next morning Hani acknowledged that the bullets came dangerously close!

I bade my family and friends goodbye and traveled with Kyoko to another world. We carried the refugee children's drawings, holding exhibitions and giving interviews on radio and television to explain our just Palestinian cause in Japan. Years passed. We lived in a tiny house in Tokyo, packed with the necessities of my family, my wife and two young daughters, in addition to painting tools and the devices I invented and built to draw in three dimensions. One day, I received by post a parcel sent by Mona Saudi



Following Hani’s martyrdom, the photography and film division of the PLO issued a portfolio of eighteen posters, featuring a selection of Hani’s photographs. He photographed the fighters, men and women, in the training campus and during the guerrilla operations across the Jordan River, which he accompanied in order to record the heroic Palestinian resistance against the Israeli occupation. These posters are reproduced courtesy of the Palestine Poster Project, online at palestineposterproject.org.

without a cover letter or message. It was *Filastin al-Thawra* (Palestine of the Revolution), the official magazine of the PLO, dated 18 April 1976, and on its cover a photo of Hani with the title, “The Combative Camera.” Fabulous! But after browsing the magazine and reading the articles one by one, each talking about Hani in a hushed tone of awe and appreciation, the story slowly emerged to become clear to me: Hani joined the guerrillas and the revolution, leaving his job and photographic studio in Amman, leaving his home where his beloved wife and two children, Hiba and Fakhri, lived, to go to Beirut. There he helped establish and maintain the photography and film division of the PLO, and on 11 April 1976 he died a martyr . . . I remember when I absorbed what happened: a grim, silent moment I remember to this day. I became very angry. I do not know why that anger turned toward those toys with which I amused myself in exile, while Hani lived and died in the homeland. I took the three wooden three-dimensional drawing instruments that I had built with love and meticulous care in Japan, smashed them, and threw them in the trash! In the coming days and months, I calmed down and drew a three-dimensional drawing entitled “Palestinian Still Life,” featuring the PLO magazine with Hani on its cover surrounded by the treasures of Palestine to be found around our home: camels carved from olive wood, a round decorative plaited straw mat, and a traditional Palestinian embroidered dress.

A few months before or after that – I do not recall – I traveled with Kyoko and our young girls to Jordan, planning to visit Ramallah according to a permit obtained by my father from the Israeli occupation authorities. On the Allenby Bridge, however, I was arrested and taken with my family to Jerusalem, handcuffed and blindfolded in an Israeli military vehicle. In prison, I climbed to peer from a narrow window near the cell’s ceiling to see our beloved Jerusalem, in which, with Hani and our friends, I used to wander so freely, now seen for the first time after so many years in exile. The city was so beautiful, its domes, minarets, and churches glowing pink in the light of dawn. They interrogated me about the children’s drawings project and so forth, and after three days I was released and went to Ramallah. I stayed in my childhood home for three months, which could not be extended. We went back to Tokyo. I remember that Hani’s wife Hind and his daughter Hiba, who was suffering from a toothache, visited us that summer in Ramallah. I forgot what we said about Hani . . . but I remembered what he had told me at one time that looking at his baby daughter was the most beautiful thing he ever experience in his life. I remembered his words when I looked at my own daughter Mariam when she was born in Japan.

The years and decades, the century and the millennium, pass . . . there was little contact with Hani’s family. Palestine in its entirety groans under a despicable occupation. Its heroic people struggle to exist and resist, bearing one calamity after another . . . but the motherland that Hani knew, and where I enjoyed his friendship, is still alive in our consciousness. A Palestinian child, who may be born to parents who never set foot in the homeland, dreams of liberation and return. After Hani’s death, streets and cinema halls were named after him. Lovely. But what a farce, for I imagine how Hani, humble as he always was, would laugh long and hard at how life and history had turned out to be, how the entire nation was disinherited and insulted, yet we are proud about a street and cinema house. God bless your soul, Hani, you were the best of your generation. Palestine will not forget you as long as new generations of Palestinian filmmakers are born. All of them know the story of your great achievements and sacrifice.

In Arabic, the Palestinian guerrillas are known as the *fidai’iyyin*, those who redeem. I cannot help but recall what Christ said concerning sacrifice – the words apply to all those who sacrificed their lives for their country, our homeland Palestine: “Love one another. No one has greater love than this: to lay down one’s life for his friends” (John 15: 12–13).

Vladimir Tamari is a Palestinian artist, inventor, and physicist. Born in Jerusalem, he studied physics and art at the American University of Beirut, and currently resides in Japan.