

Monday 19 August 2019

**“I think I’m a better writer for not being angry” - Raja Shehadeh**

“I think I’m a better writer for not being angry,” said Raja Shehadeh, speaking yesterday at the Edinburgh International Book Festival with playwright David Greig. The lawyer and writer was speaking about his memoir *Going Home: A Walk Through Fifty Years of Occupation* and his home in the Palestinian city of Ramallah.

“Anger can be distracting,” Shehadeh said. “And since I am not distracted I can see things more.”

“If I become angry then I lose the point, I’m not convincing because I’m lost in my anger. If I’m not angry and able to be rational and explain things in a less angry way then I’m much more effective. So I think many Palestinians who try to speak about their conditions lose their audience by becoming angry and lost in their anger and I did that for a long time, of course and I was very angry. But I think being less angry is much more effective and it allows you to see more and feel more, rather than to be involved in your own anger... which leads to nothing really.”

Shehadeh also spoke of his understanding of home as a Palestinian living in the West Bank; “I often feel a stranger in my own city. But I try to not be lamenting of this and to see the positive aspects.

“It’s not imperative that you only love what you possess... I can be at home by having peace with myself and even if the physical home that I have was destroyed I would still feel at home.

“If you feel at home you have a relationship and peace in yourself not necessarily attached to a concrete place.”

A possible end to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict was discussed, with Shehadeh expressing more hope in young people.

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“[The] young generation with social media and with their powers and connection to the world - they can perhaps do much more... In old age usually people become narrower and not wiser... Age doesn't bring wisdom.”

However, the writer was cautious about the prospects of a peaceful solution; “I might not see the end of the conflict before I die.”