

HUMANITIES INSTITUTE  
Martial Frindéthié, PhD

## Dear Son / Mon cher enfant (2018)

Mohamed Ben Attia

### OVERVIEW

*Auteur* Mohamed Ben Attia was born in 1976, in Tunis, Tunisia. After a diploma from the Institute of Higher Commercial Studies of Carthage in 1998, he attended the Université de Valenciennes a few years after graduating from the Institute of Higher Commercial Studies of Carthage in 1998. After a diploma in Audiovisual Communication from Valenciennes, Ben Attia started in short films, writing and directing several fiction projects, including *Romantisme: Deux Comprimés Matin et Soir* (2005), *Comme les Autres (Kif Lokhrin)* (2006), *Mouja* (2010), *Loi 76* (2011) and *Selma* (2013). Having finally built up an artistic conviction, he directed his first feature film, *Hedi: A Wind of Freedom* in 2016. *Dear Son* is Ben Attia's second film.

*Film* As in his first feature, *Hedi: A Wind of Freedom* (2016), Mohamed Ben Attia turns the image of a young man in *Dear Son* into an allegory, but this time for the malaise of a Tunisia haunted by the lure of Islamic fundamentalism. The film shows how the most innocent of youth can at any moment be swept up in fundamentalism, and how the most careful and protective parents can be blindsided by fundamentalism's indoctrination of their children. The film was shot in Tunisia. Mohamed Dhrif (who played the role of Riadh) Won Best Actor Award at the 2018 El Gouna Film Festival and Best Actor Award at the 2019 Critics Awards for Arab Films.

*Background* With *Dear Son*, Mohamed Ben Attia joins the list of Tunisian filmmakers who have denounced the pernicious effects of Islamic fundamentalism in the aftermath of the Arab Spring, especially its recruitment and indoctrination of Arab youth for global terrorism. If the subject of fundamentalism is so fascinating to filmmakers in the Arab world, and especially to Tunisian filmmakers, it is because it remains a constant threat in their countries. Tunisia, which saw more than 5000 of its youth join ISIS fighters in Syria, was the largest exporter of foreign fighters there. Such a youthful infatuation with violence does not go away overnight, even if the subject is no longer in the headlines, and will create a disturbing social fragility in any country. Ben Attia's film on the subject is meant to keep Tunisians aware of one of the greatest threats still facing their country.

### CHARACTERS

*Sami* The nineteen-year-old son of Riadh and Nazli, who joins ISIS in Syria  
*Nazli* Sami's mother  
*Riadh* Sami's father  
*Sameh* Riadh's female colleague and friend

### SYNOPSIS

In the twilight of his professional life, as Riadh prepares to retire from his job as a dockworker at the Port of Tunis, another worry is added to the financial difficulties he and his wife Nazli are facing. Their son Sami, in his baccalaureate year, is plagued by unexplained headaches. While the parents scramble to understand the origin of the illness and to find a cure, Sami disappears, leaving them only a note announcing that he has left for Syria to join the Islamic State fighters. Riadh decides to go to Syria to bring back his son.

## SCENES

**Sami is not feeling well** Sami woke up feeling dizzy and nauseous. He is crouched over the toilet vomiting. His father, Riadh, and his mother, Nazli, are busy helping him. He loses consciousness and his parents carry him to bed. The next day, Sami undergoes a series of tests at the hospital. The doctor reassures his parents that it is nothing more serious than a migraine due to stress from his upcoming baccalaureate exam and suggests he take it easy on his studies and see a psychiatrist. The mother insists that if the doctor endured the stress to be who she is today, Sami, too, should endure it to succeed in his exam.



**Sami wants to see a psychiatrist** Riadh explains to Sami that he has been spending his time on the internet trying to figure out the cause of his migraines, but the more he finds out the less he understands. He wants to know if Sami has any idea what is causing them. The teenager gets angry and snaps at him. Sami later apologizes to his father and tells him that he doesn't know what is causing his headaches. His father reassures him that everything will be fine when he goes to college that he will make new friends there, and that this will all be a bad memory. Sami tells his father that he wants to see a psychiatrist. The next day, Sami is seen by a psychiatrist, who prescribes a tranquilizer and advises him to exercise.

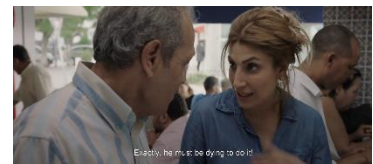


**Money is tight** Riadh and Sami go shopping at the supermarket. The father wants to buy some cereal for his son, but Sami tells him that it is too expensive and picks some less expensive cereal from the bottom shelf. At the checkout, Riadh does not have enough money to pay for all the items in his cart, and even his coupons do not help. His son puts his hand to his pocket to help him. At home, Sami's mother does her finances and realizes that she does not have enough money to pay for Sami's science tutorials. The father also wonders whether to take Sami to see a psychiatrist, as the doctor has advised. There is also the management of the building complex who threaten to bring in a bailiff because Riadh and Nazli have not paid their dues for the construction of the new basketball court in the complex.



**It will be Nazli's stew after all** Nazli is going to work in another city for a few days and prepared food for several days for Sami and his father. Riadh drops her off at the train station and goes to pick up Sami from school. Riadh suggests to Sami that they forget about his mother's stew and go to a restaurant for a good pasta with tomato sauce. Sami wants to go study, but his father insists that he take a break from his books. On their way to the restaurant, they are pulled over by the police. Riadh has no insurance and must bribe the police with 10 dinars. The idea of the meal at the restaurant is ruined, and father and son go home to eat Nazli's stew.

**Sameh's advice** Riadh is a crane operator at the Port of Tunis, who is soon to retire. During break, he explains his son's condition to his younger colleague and friend Sameh. She tells him that he is the one who panics about the baccalaureate and transmits his stress to his son. She tells him that what Sami needs to get rid of his migraine is a good sexual experience. Riadh chuckles and tells her that Sami is only nineteen. She says that this is precisely her point, that at his age his body must be dying for sex.



**Sami likes his shirt** Riadh bought his son a shirt at the flea market. It's a little loose, but Sami reassures him that he likes the shirt very much, that it's very much his style, and that he likes wearing his shirts loose. Riadh is happy that Sami likes the shirt he bought him.



**Sameh advises Riadh to be romantic with Nazli** Riadh goes to the flea market with his colleague Sameh. She finds it strange that Sami goes to a psychiatrist with a headache and comes out with a depression. She advises Riadh to stop shuffling his son from one doctor to another.



Sameh asks him to behave more naturally with Sami and to avoid showing him that he is worried. She asks him how his sex life with Nazli is going. Riadh tells her that Nazli is always tired when she comes back from work. Sameh suggests that he is the one who is tired of being romantic with his wife, and that he should give her flowers and take her out to eat occasionally.

**A rose for Nazli** Riadh picks up his wife at the train station. He tells her that he thinks Sami is doing better since he saw the psychiatrist and is taking his medication. She wonders if they should have taken him to see a psychiatrist sooner. His wife sees a rose that he bought for her as Sameh advised, but Riadh does not dare tell her that he went to buy it with the intention of giving it to her. He lies that it is the florist on the corner who forced him to buy the rose. Nazli is amused by her husband's lie.



**Riadh's last day at work** This is Riadh's last day at work. He has trained a young crane operator who will replace him. From the top of his crane, Riadh takes a last glance at the port before gathering his belongings. His colleagues have collected money to help him in his retirement, and Sameh comes to give him the envelope. She advises him to take Nazli out to dinner this weekend.



**Sami skipped school** Riadh comes to pick up Sami from school. Sami comes running from the town, in time to sneak in with the other students and pretend to be coming out of school like them. His father, who is waiting for him, does not suspect that he was not at school. During a walk in the park with his son, Riadh wants to know what course of study Sami will choose after the final exam. Sami is not in the mood to talk about it and decides to go jogging and returns home alone while the father, in a panic, has been looking for him in the park and trying to reach him by phone until dusk. The father is furious and tells Sami that he will not drive him to his meeting with his friends tonight.



**Convenient lies** Riadh changes his mind and drives Sami to his party. Sami tells him that he will manage to get back home, and that there is no need for his father to make the trip twice. The father lies that he was supposed to have coffee with a friend who lives nearby anyway. Riadh goes to a parking lot to wait in his car for Sami to call him. Sami meets his friends and seems to be having a good time. But very soon, his mood darkens, and he decides to go home. He asks his father to pick him up. Sami lies to his father that he had a good time, and Riadh lies to his son that he had a good coffee with his friend.

**Riadh is a dreamer** Riadh would like Sami to continue his studies in Canada. His wife asks him how he hopes to pay for Sami's education in Canada. He suggests selling the car. She tells him that this will not cover even one semester of study in Canada. He then suggests that they ask the bank for a loan. His wife asks him what kind of world he thinks he lives in. She tells him that they barely have enough money to survive and cannot afford to take a loan from the bank.

**Sami is gone** Sami has disappeared from home, and his parents cannot reach him on his phone. They check at the school, but Sami is not there. His father notices that Sami has left with all his belongings. Sami left a note to his parents on his father's computer: he is on his way to Syria. Riadh rushes to the airport to see if his son has taken a flight to Turkey. An airport official tells Riadh that Sami's name is not on the list of passengers to Turkey.



**Sami had been skipping school** Riadh continues his research with Sami's classmates, whom he suspects of hiding his son's whereabouts from him, and he becomes violent when they tell him they do not know where he is. He learns that Sami had been skipping school for a week. Riadh returns home, devastated, sobbing.



### **Sami had lied to his parents about depression**

      Riadh spends a lot of time on the internet doing research. He also develops an obsession with scratching his arms to the point of developing skin lesions. Riadh goes to see his son's psychiatrist and asks him why he diagnosed Sami with depression. The psychiatrist does not recognize that he diagnosed Sami with depression. The teenager lied to his parents.



### **Riadh collapses at the police station**

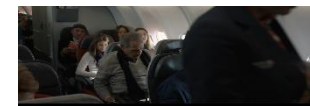
      The devastated parents go to the police station to file an official report. From inside the police station, Riadh hears clamors outside and goes to see what is going on. Tunisian families are protesting against other families who are asking the authorities to help them bring back their children who have gone to fight in Syria. The former accuse the latter of having given birth to monsters. Riadh collapses in the middle of the protesting crowd.

### **Riadh decides to go to Syria**

      Riadh informs Nazli that he has sold their car and has decided to go to Syria to bring their son back home. Nazli tells him that this is crazy. She tells him that Sami wrecked her, and that she would not let him do the same to her. She begs her husband not to leave her alone. Riadh insists that he cannot just sit back and do nothing, and that he must go get Sami.

### **Riadh arrives at the Turkish-Syrian border**

      Riadh boards a plane to Turkey, from where he hopes to reach Syria. He checks into a hotel in Turkey and asks the concierge if he knows people who can help him get into Syria. The concierge cannot help him. Riadh wanders around the Turkish-Syrian border towns looking for ways to get into Syria. The second concierge at the hotel, who was informed of Riadh's intentions by his colleague, says he knows someone who can help him for \$400.



### **They want to feel important**

      Riadh takes a bus to the Syrian border where a smuggler is waiting. He spends a sleepless night in a guesthouse chatting with the owner, whom he tries to convince that his son has nothing in common with the jihadists. The owner tells him that young people today want to feel important even if it means dying. Riadh tells the old man that his son is his whole life. The owner tells him that children have their own lives, that his four children are scattered all over the world and that they only came to see him for a week when their mother died. Riadh tells him that Sami is different.



### **Turning back**

      Riadh has a nightmare in which he chases his son and other young jihadists through the labyrinthine ruins of an ancient city. He finally grabs Sami and holds him tight to his chest. However, Sami refuses to go back with him. He tells his father that he does not want to live the life he and his mother live. The next day Riadh decides not to continue his journey to Syria. He returns to his hotel and calls Nazli. He lies to her that he has found Sami, but that the teenager refuses to return to Tunisia. Nazli insists that he go back and convince Sami to return home. Riadh tells her that Sami will not come, and that even if he wanted to, his jihadist friends would not let him return.

### **News from Sami**

      Sami sent his parents a video of himself introducing his wife and their newborn son. Riadh sees the video first and then shows it to Nazli after turning off the sound on the computer. Nazli laments that she cannot hear what Sami is saying. As for Riadh, who watches the video with disgust, he says he does not want to hear what Sami says or to know the name of the newborn. As Nazli sleeps, Riadh composes a congratulatory message to Sami accompanied by insults, in which he calls Sami an idiot and ignorant for bringing a child into the world amidst the jihadi monsters. Riadh changes his mind and deletes the insults, sending only the congratulatory message.



### **Sami is dead**

      While shopping at the supermarket with Nazli, Riadh receives a phone call. Sami has been killed in Syria. They go to the police to complete the death formalities, and Nazli wants to know when her son's body will be repatriated. The police are unable to give her a clear answer. Riadh and Nazli organize Sami's funeral without his body being repatriated. Very few people come. Riadh is sad that most of Sami's friends did not show up.



**Sameh is unhappy and stuck in a bad marriage** Riadh returns. Sameh tells Riadh that her husband cheats on her, that she cannot forgive him, but that she cannot divorce him either. Financially, she could not support herself with her salary. Emotionally, it would not be fair to her daughters who are still very young. Riadh advises her to think about what is right for her, because her daughters will grow up and leave one day.



**Nazli leaves Riadh** Nazli informs Riadh that she has decided to go and live with her aunts for good. Riadh tells Nazli that he cannot survive without her. With Nazli gone, Riadh returns to work as a foreman at another construction site and makes new friends.



## CHARACTER ANALYSIS

### **RIADH** (*Naïve, Emotional, Resentful*)

Riadh is a naïve and emotional man, who became very resentful of his child when he realized how much Sami had deceived him. Sami had crushed all of his deferred happiness.

*Naïve* Riadh often lives in his dreams rather than in reality. At the supermarket, he fills his cart with more items than he can afford. He dreams of sending his son to study in Canada but has no idea how much it will cost. He decides to go to Syria to find Sami, but he has not assessed the physical, financial and psychological effort that it will require, and he is disillusioned when he arrives at the Turkish-Syrian border.

*Emotional* The decisions Riadh makes are more emotional than rational. Riadh does not take the time to evaluate the pros and cons of his choices and acts in the moment. And the most emotional decision he makes is that of going to Syria to fetch Sami, which the owner of the family's guesthouse on the Turkish-Syrian border reveals to him is more about his emotional disposition and his own search for happiness than about his intention to save Sami from jihadism.

*Resentful* Riadh returns to Tunisia disillusioned and resentful against Sami. Sami was the investment for his future happiness. In Sami, Riadh had sown the seeds of his own joy that he hoped to reap through Sami's success. Riadh resents Sami for having plundered this emotional and financial investment.

### **SAMI** (*Secretive, Sheltered*)

Sami is a sheltered and secretive young man. He prepared his exit from Tunisia so well that his parents, convinced that he was too sheltered a child to get into trouble, had not the slightest suspicion of his plans.

*Secretive* Sami is a reserved boy, who, despite being very close to his parents, hid a lot of things about his life from them. He was in contact with jihadists without their knowledge. He gave them the impression that he was very regular in school when in fact he was not. And his departure for Syria was the biggest shock in their lives.

*Sheltered* Sami was a boy protected by his parents, who spared no sacrifice to ensure a decent life for him. His parents always worked around him as his servants. However, this sheltered life did not protect him from the grip of the jihadists.

### **NAZLI** (*Practical, Strong*)

Nazli is a practical and strong woman. She does not realize how important she is to her husband until the day she decides to leave him.

*Practical* If Riadh is the emotional and naïve side of the couple, Nazli is the rational and pragmatic one. She is the one who keeps track of the family's finances, and she knows their financial limits. She also tries to keep a firm grip on things when Riadh tends to overdo it. She also advises Riadh against his trip to Syria, warning him of the risks. It took Riadh's stubbornness and a trip to the Turkish-Syrian border to realize that Nazli had correctly assessed the dangers.

**Strong** Nazli is the force around which the family is anchored. She is the one who keeps the house and the family's finances together, and it is her food, which although a little too spicy as Riadh complains, gives the family strength. But she has ignored her own strength. She thinks she depends on Riadh until the day she decides to leave him and sees him completely unhinged, begging her not to abandon him, as she also begged him not to abandon her when he decided to go to Syria.

## THEMES

### **SOCIETY** (hardship, tradition/Modernity)

**Hardship** One of the consequences of the Arab Spring, as seen in films like Ben Attia's *Hedi* (2016) and Mohamed Zran's *The Prince* (2017), is the flight of assets from Tunisia and the consequent impoverishment of the middle and working classes. In *Dear Son*, this situation is dramatized by the difficulty of Riadh's family to make ends meet. At the end of his working life as a dockworker, a father of a nineteen-year-old in his graduating year and the husband of a wife who works part-time, Riadh can barely afford the basic necessities at the grocery store, let alone pay for his son's tutorials and therapy sessions at the psychiatrist's, or provide him with an education in Canada. When Riadh's search for his son, who has gone to join a jihadist group, leaves him penniless in a town on the border of Turkey and Syria, one wonders if it is a new awareness of what his happiness ultimately amounts to, or a lack of money, or both, that compel him to turn back. This economic dilemma is also dramatized by Sameh's difficult financial situation, which forces her to remain in an abusive marriage because she cannot afford an apartment by herself.

**Tradition/modernity** Tradition and modernity are presented in this film, less by opposition than as two aspects of Tunisian society coexisting in perfect harmony. Here, it is Riadh's conservatism that meets Sameh's sometimes brazen liberal approach, in asking him how his sex life with Nazli is going, advising him to give flowers to his wife to arouse her sexual passions, and suggesting that the solution to Sami's discomfort is good sex. Although Riadh finds Sameh's conversations a bit risqué, and perhaps even for this reason, he enjoys Sameh's company and does not hesitate to put her advice into practice. For example, Riadh takes her word for it and buys a rose for Nazli, but then lies to say he was coerced by the florist to buy it. And as if to better dramatize this coexistence of tradition and modernism, Sameh, too, finds herself caught up in a bad marriage that she hesitates to end because of financial difficulties and of possibly traumatizing her daughters. And curiously, it is Riadh who, having made his pilgrimage in search of happiness, advises Sameh to think of her own happiness rather than that of her daughters, and to separate from her abusive husband.

### **RELATIONSHIP** (co-dependence, intergenerational friendship)

**Co-dependence** The marriage in the film is tragic in that it involves a kind of co-dependence that reduces individual freedom. Riadh and Nazli have lived all these long years supporting each other, leaning on each other to the point that the weakness of the one leads to that of the other. When Riadh decides to go to Syria to look for Sami, Nazli begs him not to abandon her. She tells him that their son's departure has taken its toll on her, and that if he were to leave, as well, it would finish her off for good. However, Riadh does not care about his wife's lamentations, and he leaves to search for Sami. When the couple receives news of Sami's death, and after mourning, it is now Nazli who decides to go and live with her aunts, and Riadh who begs her not to leave him alone, saying that he would not survive without her. And this time, it is Nazli who, ignoring her husband's pleas, frees herself from her codependency. And it is outside the marriage, after finding another job as a foreman in a quarry that Riadh's face really lights up for once, as he assumes a role as an open, sociable, and happy individual, and learns to make new friends outside of the marriage.

**Friendship (intergenerational)** The friendship between Riadh and Sameh is one that not only combines conservatism with liberalism, but is also intergenerational. In terms of their age, Sameh could easily be Riadh's daughter. However, far from being a father-daughter relationship, it is a true friendship of colleagues sharing meals together, either at work or outside of work, shopping together at the flea market, and sharing conversations and views on various topics, and binding these two characters from different generations. Riadh would not have had the kind of conversations he has with Sameh with his wife Nazli. And Riadh does not seem to frown upon Sameh's sexually explicit remarks. On the contrary, he seems to

find a certain pleasure in them, an air of freedom, an opportunity to escape from the subdued conversations that fill his conservative household.

#### **PSYCHOLOGY** (self-delusion, lie, blame, shame)

**Self-delusion** Riadh has more than once shown that he lives in a world of illusions. Riadh lives in the clouds and believes that everything he wants is achievable. He foresees a career in architecture for his son and already sees him studying fine arts. Although he cannot afford it, he has decided that Sami will study in Canada. And when Nazli, who is more grounded, asks him how he intends to pay for Sami's studies in Canada, Riadh tells his wife that he will sell his car. And when she tells him that the sale of his car would not even cover the tuition for one semester, he proposes that they ask for a loan from the bank. And it is Nazli again who reminds him that they are not creditworthy enough to receive a loan from the bank. It is this same blindness that, against all of his wife's attempts to dissuade him, leads Riadh to the border between Turkey and Syria, from where he returns empty-handed and destitute, without having been able to enter Syria to look for his son, and even lying to Nazli that Sami has refused to follow him.

**Lies** In this film, lying is a kind of therapy that is used to ease the anxieties of those whom one loves and one's own anxieties, or to manipulate situations. Riadh is angry because his son, who was annoyed by his questions, abandoned him in the park. He tells Sami that he will not drive him to his party with his friends. But he comes around and decides to drive Sami, who tells him it is not worth the trouble. But the father reassures him that he does not mind at all because he was supposed to meet a friend in the same neighborhood anyway. Sami goes to his party, gets bored and calls his father to come and get him. Riadh, who has spent the whole time waiting for Sami in a parking lot, lies to his son that he had a coffee with his friend, and Sami lies to his father that he spent a nice time with his friends. Each seeks to protect the other from the reality of boredom and loneliness. Lying thus becomes a shield against an otherwise hard-to-accept reality, like when Sami pretends to love a seemingly baggy shirt his father bought him, or when Riadh lies to Nazli that he was able to talk to Sami in Syria, or when Riadh alters the sound of the computer so that Nazli never learns from Sami's video that father and son never met in Syria.

**Blame** When Riadh informs his wife of his intention to go to Syria to fetch his son, she tells him that Sami has reduced her to a wreck, and she asks Riadh not to do the same to her. The mother dislikes her son for having betrayed her, for having squandered all her financial and emotional investment in him. She sees Sami's decision to abandon them to join the jihadists as a betrayal, as she and her husband have denied themselves many things to please him and ensure him a future of conventional success. For this, she blames him. Riadh also dislikes Sami for the same reasons. And when Nazli laments that she cannot hear what Sami is saying in the video he sent them from Syria, Riadh grumbles that it doesn't matter to him what Sami says, or what name his newborn baby or his wife have. And in response to Sami's video, Riadh writes virulent insults, which he decides in the end not to send to Sami. When they are told of their son's death, however, the blame turns into inconsolable grief.

**Shame** The stigma of betrayal and failure associated with parents whose children join jihadist fighters in Syria is so desocializing that those parents, consumed by guilt and shame, find themselves in the position of justifying themselves at every possible moment. Thus, during his trip to Syria to bring back his son, Riadh feels compelled, every time he talks about Sami, to tell his interlocutors that his son has nothing to do with "these people" (jihadists), and that it is a medical condition that has, in spite of himself, driven him into the hands of the jihadists. At the police station, Riadh witnessed how the crowd booed the parents who had come to demand that the authorities repatriate their children who had gone to join the jihadist fighters. These parents were humiliated and blamed by the crowd for the terrorists' killings. Riadh and Nazli experienced this humiliation when very few of the people who knew Sami came to his funeral.

#### **QUEST** (introspection, search)

**Introspection** Riadh's journey to find his son is actually a personal journey to find himself. Having delocalized his happiness into his son, Riadh cannot be happy unless he sees Sami happy. Riadh, who is just days away from retirement and struggling to make ends meet, denies himself almost everything for his son and even dreams of paying for his son's education in Canada by selling his car and taking out a bank loan, something his more realistic wife tells him would be impossible. When Riadh gives his son a shirt bought at a flea market, which the latter says he loves, the father's joy is indescribable. And when Riadh

reads his son's message that he has gone to join a group of fundamentalist fighters in Syria, the father seems to have aged several years, as the news leaves him unhappy and disarmed. As he travels to bring Sami home, Riadh realizes that what he has gone to seek on the border between Turkey and Syria is less Sami's happiness than his own. The conversation he has about this with the owner of the family motel in Turkey is revealing. There, Riadh finally admits what his interlocutor was trying to make him understand: that what he is really looking for through Sami is his own happiness, and that Sami is only an artifice of this happiness. Having understood that, having taken some exhilarating dance steps and some sips of liquor in the company of young Turks, which made him realize that happiness can be lived without Sami, Riadh decides to return to Tunisia.

**Search** Sami is the symptom of a Tunisian youth in turmoil, looking for a meaningful way out after a social revolution (the Arab Spring) that failed to deliver on its promises. The dictator Ben Ali is gone, but so are the French investors who used to bribe him and their companies that offered a few meager job prospects to young graduates. Young people like Sami see their parents struggling to live, counting pennies, and humiliating themselves with very low-paying jobs. The life of their parents is not attractive and does not validate them. And as the owner of the shabby hotel, where he is staying in Turkey, tells Riadh, these young people want to feel important even if it means dying. Sami is one of these young people disillusioned by the revolution, who wants to feel important by doing great things, including dying as a martyr in Syria. Sami's journey to Syria is a search for the validation of his "I".

#### QUESTIONS

1. Why do you think Sami insisted on seeing a psychiatrist and lied to his parents that he was diagnosed with depression?
2. A hotel owner at the Turkish-Syrian border tells Riadh that young people want to feel important even if they must die for it. Do you agree with this assertion? Elaborate.
3. What would make you feel relevant/important in life?
4. Why did Riadh give up on his search for Sami?
5. Why did Nazli leave Riadh after begging him not to leave her alone?