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## A translation into English of Khalil I. Al-Fuzai's<sup>1</sup> "A point of change"<sup>2</sup>

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### ABSTRACT

Like other main characters in this collection, the nameless protagonist of this story has to take care of his mother and brother for no other reason than that he is the elder male in the family. Culturally an elder son should carry his father's economic responsibilities after the father's death, as is the case in this story. Yet, at the same time that the society requires the elder son to take care of his family, it does not take into consideration his physical and mental condition. Khalil I. Al-Fuzai explores this issue with the son's vision that: "all his life is a waste . . . and all his days are boring." A chance takes place towards the middle of the story and leads to the recovery of the protagonist's identity. Children playing soccer and successive incidents help him to reconcile his identity with a tradition that requires him to live a tragic life for no reason except he is the elder son in the family. Trying to rescue a child, the main character throws himself into the water before the boy drowns in the sea. Through this action, he regains his confidence in the meaning of his life. The seawater that he dives into gives birth to a new feeling about and understanding of his life. This story shows how one action may change a person and give him honor. It does regain him some confidence he needs in order to pursue his steady steps in his society.<sup>4</sup> Finally, reading a story like this one will give the reader of this journal a chance to learn something about this writer and may lead to searching for something related and/or written by the writer.

**Keywords:** Khalil Al-Fuzai, Saudi, short story, "A Point of Change".

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### 1. Introduction

Translation is a strategic method that helps people get familiar with and close to each other. In this translation, I hope I can introduce part of the Saudi culture as presented in the story, and let people become aware of Khalil I. Al-Fuzai (1940- ); the writer of "A Point of Change." He is a Saudi Arabian

<sup>1</sup> This story was translated from the following Arabic source: Al-Fuzai, Khalil I. (1979). Thursday Fair. (سوق الخميس). Taif: Taif Literary Club, pp. 51-57.

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<sup>4</sup> An introduction a reader may need to connect the text to its context

short story writer who has managed to introduce the Saudi culture to others and "tried his utmost to address many social, political, and religious aspects he found in his society" (see Dohal 2013). In this story, like some protagonists in Khalil I. al-Fuzai's stories (Dohal, 2018 & 2019), this nameless hero struggles to play the role of his family's man (see Dohal 2018 & 2019). After rescuing a child from drowning, the protagonist feels he has done something significant. Hence his life has meaning. Thus, self-distrust, disappointment, and self-depreciation should not prevail in the lives of individuals who face discouraging, frustrating, and disappointing troubles. By the way, some of Al-Fuzai's stories have been translated by Gassim Dohal.

After publishing Al-Fuzai's "A Point of Change," readers of this distinguished journal will have an opportunity to read for this Saudi writer, and may search for other related materials to read and become aware of this culture (Dohal 2019).

## 2. Translation

Today passes like other days: routine and boring . . . <sup>5</sup> nothing distinguishes it, except a letter received from an old friend . . . which arrived and he read it and hid it in his pocket for safekeeping until he returned home and stored it with other letters that he keeps, and does not guard . . . nothing new ever, soon he will have his dinner with his mom and his little brother, then he will go to a friend's house . . . they will stay up late, and after that he will sleep and wake early in the morning to go to work, and like this he will pass his next day like other days . . . sleep . . . and work . . . and loathsome gossip with one of his friends . . . nothing worthy of mention . . . it does not differ much from other things . . . a gear in time's wheel revolves and revolves, but it cannot move from its center; even the space that separates it from the center does not own the right to proceed to or to retreat from it . . . all his life is a waste . . . and all his days are boring . . . he does not protest, but he wonders what good it does as long as he lives on the margin of life. Even the wheel of time will not stop its course when his life is over . . . the world will lose nothing . . . maybe his mother and his little brother will cry, but time guarantees that he will be rolled up in the world of oblivion, so where is he from what people used to say about the supposed pleasure of life . . . as for the sun, she commits suicide in her far horizon, leaving behind her a grief that envelops his entire being, and rolls him up in a roundabout of distress and complaint . . . and the sea stretches endlessly while its sad waves subside humbly on the gloomy shore, so as to come back again with a violent eternal struggle, and melt away like the smoke of the cigarette between his fingers melts away in the air of vast space. And while standing there he feels an object hit him; it is one of those who fan out over the shore at sunset . . . the man is busy reading a newspaper though the threads of darkness start weaving the garment of night, and no one pays attention to anyone else until they run into each other.

The one with the newspaper says, "Do not stand there like a statue."

He does not reply . . . trying to bring himself back to the feelings that he was living with before the one with the newspaper interrupted the threads of his thinking . . . but the other insists again, "Are you dumb?"

So he murmurs inaudible words; this prompts the other to come closer after he had moved a few steps away, in order to contemplate his cretinous body and his wide face at whose top untidy black hair settles, and his hands hanging-down carelessly, and his neglectfully-tied gray shoes, then the man says, after putting the newspaper under his armpit and waving his hands in an exciting motion, "Wonderful . . . is this you?"

Though he does not know what the man's words mean, he finds himself returning to his quietness, satisfied with looking at the far distance . . .

The one with the newspaper leaves him, saying, "Wretched."

What does this idiot mean? Is he really wretched? The story of his life is . . . or the tragedy of his life, to be accurate, is not like other tragedies, probably because he does not live another tragedy, and probably carrying it is heavy on him; he spent the beginning of his life in prosperity . . . everything at his disposal . . . and he did not believe that the day would come when he would lose that happy delightful life that he lived. Events threw him into life and its multitude, and have left him alone in his desperate struggle for the sake of this life; if he were alone, he would not care much, and perhaps he would laugh

<sup>5</sup> Every now and then there are few dots found in the source text

like other laughers, but it is the family's responsibility that is beyond his ability . . . since the death of his father, he became a little employee in a government circle, so as to receive at the end of each month his small salary . . . and spends the whole of it on his small family. If Satan had not seduced him, if he had not wasted what he inherited from his father . . . if he had not abandoned his studies . . . if his father had not died, none of this would have occurred . . . and his status now does not go as far as it did, but "if" has no benefit now . . . he has to endure . . . he does not have to be the Prometheus of his era in endurance and willpower . . . just meet the challenge of life for the sake of his mother and his little brother, for whom he has to secure a happy, pleasant life, whatever it costs him . . . even his old sadness . . . which his brother should not know, and he takes a deep puff at his cigarette.

As some children are playing, a small ball rolls in front of him, and settles down not far from him. Then he pays attention when one of the children innocently says, "Kick it."

He hesitates for a moment before proceeding sluggishly toward the ball to kick it, without knowing why he responds to the request of the child who comes again so as to ask him, "Do you know how to play soccer?"

And without thinking, he pronounces the first word since he has stood in this spot . . . witnessing the day coming to its end so as to give the night a chance to appear, "Yes."

He feels happiness tickle his heart when he knows that his lie has worked with the child, yet this feeling soon changes when the child says, "Darkness is setting in now, tomorrow you will be able to play with us."

He laughs from within after throwing the cigarette butt and indignantly crushing it underfoot.

As he decides to leave his spot . . . he hears a voice fill all the space surrounding him . . . panic taints a sad woman's shouts with the color of a tragedy . . . lights along the seashore, at that time, have brought into view all people suddenly and he finds himself going with others toward the source of the shouting . . . it is a woman . . . her hands stretched in the air asking for help, while she leans all her body weight on the fence that separates passers-by from the deep sea.

The scene is hard . . . rough . . . he finds himself a participant, without intention, it is harsh for him to see waves tossing a child of about nine years . . . while his hands try to grasp anything, he forgets himself for awhile . . . then he feels the warmth of the sea water, and a violent wave takes him backwards . . . despite his attempts to reach the child whom the ghost of death comes closer to, as the body gives up to the waves; however, it may turn out, he finds inside himself a strength he was not aware of before, pushing him to struggle against the waves . . . and whenever he tries to reach his goal, the wild waves throw him far away from the child . . . until finally tired of the desperate struggle, he becomes determined to reach the child before it is too late. He dives into the depth of the waves, and when he thinks he must have reached the right area . . . he begins to emerge from the water . . . an object hits his head, he tries to hold it until he manages, then turns toward the shore of peace, safety and life . . . death is something unbearable . . . he has to save himself while trying to rescue the child . . . it seems that losing life is an easy matter; those who face death . . . have no choice but to hate death; life is delicious, particularly while feeling we are beginning to lose it . . . we should never give up that which we find ourselves being forced to give up.

He holds the child to his chest, his hand encircling the boy's waist, while his other hand and feet are in a frenzied dense struggle with the rough waves, until he reaches an escape ladder that is hanging above, and more than one hand grasps him, then he climbs with difficulty, his feet step on the ground, and he feels nothing more. When he opens his eyes in the hospital, more than one person surrounds him . . . thanks in their eyes . . . gratitude on their happy faces, and hands move to shake his cordially.

One of them says, "Thank you very much . . . you have saved my son's life." The father was the first to speak.

He tries to reply, but no one hears his words, for voices arise thanking him and praising his courage, and he spends his night in the hospital feeling that he is born again . . . his heart opens to life, and he becomes ready to love all people.

He asks the nurse, "Do you love life?"

His question is unexpected. And when she says, "What do you mean?"

Promptly he says, "I do not mean anything . . . just a question: Do you love life?"

"The sane do not hate it."

“Despite all the troubles it has?”

“In life there are no troubles . . . it has no more than annoyances . . . which man makes for himself.”

As if he were talking to himself, he says, “You are right . . . they are made by man himself . . . if only I had discovered this before now.”

“What did you say?”

“Nothing.”

“Okay . . . you have to sleep now for you are exhausted.”

The next day, he goes there . . . where he stood before he embarked boldly upon the point of change in his life, and the small ball some children are playing with rolls in front of him, and settles not far from him, so that he pays attention to the shout of a child who innocently says, “Kick it . . .”

He thinks that he knows the child who shouts . . . it is the child from yesterday who asked him to come back, and when he turns to look, he sees the boy’s face is happy, “Did you come back? Thanks, you keep your promises . . . wait, I will call all the children to play together,” and when he kicks the ball vigorously, his shoe flies with it into the air, then he starts laughing with the children . . . some passers-by laugh with them.

### 3. Conclusion

As stated earlier in my introduction, readers of this journal will have a chance to read for this Saudi writer. People of different cultures need translations in order to develop an atmosphere of knowledge and understanding of other cultures and people. In “A Point of Change,” readers will experience “how literature all over the world share a lot of interests and ideas” (Dohal 2018). In addition, “readers will experience a theme all cultures share; i.e. a struggle for survival” (Dohal 2019) as it is the case in this story where an individual should maintain confidence in what s/he is doing to continue his/her life.

However, “A Point of Change” is authored by Al-Fuzai who is one of the Saudi Arabian writers who have tried to write about their society and its inconveniences. What makes Al-Fuzai different is that he is a journalist who knows how to address his audience accordingly. Hence, his language is simple and direct. He also devotes most of his efforts to focus on the rural society. Al-Fuzai has written few collections of short stories such as: *Palm Tree and the Watch* (1977), *Women and Love* (1978), and *Thursday Fair* (1979) (see Dohal 2013).

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