

## Translating Al-Fuzai's 'A Turning Point'

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### ABSTRACT

In 'A Turning Point'<sup>1</sup>, due to the fact that he is the family's oldest male, the nameless protagonist is responsible for his mother and brother. Traditionally speaking, an eldest son should assume his father's financial duties following his father's death, as in this narrative. Khalil I. Al-Fuzai, as a writer, examines this topic through the eyes of this character: "all his life is a waste... and all his days are uninteresting." All he is doing is for others. Such a life influences the protagonist's belief and understanding of life and its meaning. For him, it is the society which can assign and decide your role and action in life and as an individual one has no option or even choice but to carry out his/her social role. Hence, the main character of this story finds that such a life is "a waste". In an attempt to save a child, the protagonist dives into the ocean before the boy drowns in the sea. He regains faith in the significance of his existence as a result of this activity. The seawater he swims in provides him a new perspective on and knowledge of his existence. Accordingly, to do anything out of one's choice may help the person in question to overcome some social obstacles and understand the meaning of life as it is the case in this story. The protagonist emerges from the ocean with a new identity; he turns out to be a person of confidence, courage, personality, and knowledge. Finally, reading a narrative like this one will allow the reader a chance to discover more about the author and may lead to a search for similar stories written about the same culture. Educationally speaking, this story demonstrates how a single act may transform a person and bestow glory upon him. It does restore some of confidence, which one requires in order to continue his/her steady progress through society.

### INTRODUCTION

Translation is an important strategy for assisting people in being acquainted with and close to one another. The process of translating this narrative will introduce readers to a piece of the Arabian culture, as well as Al-Fuzai (1940-), the author of 'A Turning Point.' The nameless individual of this story, like other protagonists in Khalil I. al-Fuzai's other works, tries to play the part of his family's man (Dohal, 2018 & 2019). The protagonist believes he has accomplished something great after saving a youngster from drowning. Thus, his life has significance. As a result, self-distrust and self-depreciation should not rule in the lives of people who are confronted with discouraging, irritating, and unpleasant experiences. Gassim Dohal, by the way, has translated some of Al-Fuzai's works.

Anyhow, the protagonist of 'A Turning Point' lives "a boring life" and his days become "uninteresting" because what he is doing is no more than the role prescribed for him by the society; he is a family's man. After having a chance to do something out of his own will, he realizes the importance of helping others and becoming an active member in his community. It is a lesson people can learn from and consider in their daily life.

### Al-Fuzai as a Writer

Khalil I. Al-Fuzai (1940-) used to write for a number of publications in a variety of areas, including the Al-Youm Newspaper. He addressed various ideological, social, literary, and critical issues. He participated in preparing and presenting some TV and radio programs.

He is a short story writer who shares his culture with others. He does "address many social, political, and religious" issues that exist in his society (Dohal, 2013). Indeed, Al-Fuzai tackles many social and cultural issues similar to the one addressed here in this story and found in his Arabian society. His stories are short and simple, but inventive and informative. His profession as a journalist influences his style.

What sets Al-Fuzai apart is that he is a journalist who understands how to communicate with his audience. As a result, his vocabulary is straightforward and simple; this story is a good example. He also focuses, in the majority of his work, on rural society and its issues (Dohal, 2021). He depicts his society and the life he knows and understands; hence he is successful. Al-Fuzai has written a few collections of stories such as: *Women and Love* (1978), *Thursday Fair* (1979), *A Moment of Collapse* (2000), and *Torture That Never Dies* (1998).

**TRANSLATION: 'A TURNING POINT'**

Today is like any other day: mundane and monotonous...<sup>2</sup> nothing distinguishes it save a letter received from an old friend... which he read and hid in his pocket for security until he came home, where he stowed it with other letters he keeps and does not guard...nothing new ever, he'll soon have supper with his mother and younger brother, then go to a friend's house... they'll stay up late, and then he'll sleep and get up early the next morning to go to work, and he'll go about his business as usual the next day... sleep... work... and obnoxious gossip with one of his buddies... nothing worth mentioning... it's just like everything else... a gear in time's wheel circles and revolves, but it can't move from its center; even the space that separates it from the center does not have the right to approach or retreat from it... all his life is a waste... and all his days are uninteresting... he does not protest, but he wonders what good it does as long as he lives on the periphery of life. Even when his life is over, the wheel of time will continue to turn...the world will lose nothing...his mother and small brother may mourn, but time will ensure that he will be rolled up in the land of oblivion, so where is he from what people used to say about the purported pleasures of life...as for the sun, she<sup>3</sup> commits suicide in her far horizon, ...and the sea stretches eternally as its mournful waves subside humbly on the dark shore, leaving behind him a grief that envelops his entire essence and rolls him up in a circular of agony and complaint... so as to return with a ferocious unending struggle, and melt away like the cigarette smoke between his fingers melts away in the vastness of space. And as he stands there, he is struck by an item, one of those that fan out over the shore at sunset... although the threads of darkness begin to weave the garment of night, the man is engrossed in his newspaper, and no one pays attention to anybody else until they collide.

"Do not stand there like a statue," advises the one holding the newspaper.

He doesn't respond... attempting to return to the feelings he was experiencing before the one with the newspaper disrupted the strands of his thought... but the other insists, "Are you dumb?"

So he murmurs inaudible words, prompting the other to approach after moving a few steps away in order to contemplate his deformed body and his wide face, at the top of which his unkempt black hair settles, his hands dangle down carelessly, and his dirty gray shoes, then the man says, after putting the newspaper under his armpit, "Wonderful . . . is this you?"

Despite the fact that he has no idea what the man's remarks imply, he finds himself returning to his calm, content to gaze into the distance...

"Wretched," says the one with the newspaper as he walks away.

What exactly does this moron mean? Is he truly despicable? The story of his life is... rather, to be more precise, the tragedy of his life is not like other tragedies, possibly because he does not live another sorrow, and carrying it is undoubtedly heavy on him; he spent the first years of his life in prosperity... everything at his disposal... he did not

believe that the day would come when he would no longer be able to live his happy, beautiful life. Events have thrown him into life and its diversity, leaving him alone in his terrible battle for the purpose of this life; if he were alone, he would not care as much, and perhaps he would laugh like other laughers, but the family's burden is beyond his abilities... he became a modest employee in a government circle after his father died, so that he could earn his small pay at the end of each month... and spend it all on his small family. If Satan hadn't lured him, if he hadn't squandered his father's inheritance... if he hadn't abandoned his studies...none of this would have happened if his father hadn't died... and his status now doesn't go as far as it did... but "if" has no benefit now... he has to endure... he doesn't have to be the Prometheus of his era in terms of endurance and willpower... just meet the challenge of life for the sake of his mother and his little brother...for whom he must provide a joyful, pleasant existence at all costs... even his old sadness... which his brother should not know... and he takes a heavy drag from his cigarette.

A little ball rolls in front of him and settles not far from him while several children are playing. When one of the kids says, "Kick it," he pays heed.

He pauses for a moment before sluggishly approaching the ball to kick it, unsure why he answers to the child's repeated appeal, "Do you know how to play soccer?"

And without thinking, he says the first word he's said since he's been here... seeing the day come to a close so that the night has a chance to appear, "Yes."

When he realizes that his deception has worked with the child, he feels happy, but this feeling quickly fades when the child replies, "Darkness is setting in now, you will be able to play with us tomorrow."

After tossing the cigarette butt and indignantly crushing it underfoot, he laughs from within.

As he prepares to leave his current location, he hears a voice fill the entire space around him...the hue of a tragedy taints a sorrowful woman's shouts with panic...at the moment, there were lights along the shoreline, all individuals immediately come into view, and he finds himself following others toward the source of the shouting... it's a woman... her hands spread in the air, pleading for aid, while she leans her entire body weight against the fence that separates passers-by from the deep sea. The scene is difficult... unpleasant... he finds himself a participant... it is harsh for him to see waves throwing a nine-year-old youngster... while his hands strive to hold anything, he forgets himself for a moment... then he feels the warmth of the sea water, and a violent wave pushes him backwards... despite his attempts to reach the kid whom the ghost of death is drawing closer to, as the body surrenders to the waves; however, it may turn out that he discovers a strength within himself that he was previously unaware of, causing him to struggle against the waves... and every time he tries to accomplish his goal, the violent waves toss him far away from the child... until, exhausted by the frantic effort, he becomes resolute to reach the child before it is late. He dives into the depths of the waves, and when he believes he's found the proper spot... he starts to rise

from the sea... an object hits his head, he attempts to hold it till he manages, then he turns toward the peaceful, safe, and life-giving shore... Death is unbearable... he has to save himself while attempting to save the child... it appears that losing life is a simple matter... those who face death... have no choice but to despise death; life is delicious, especially when we feel we are about to lose it... We should never give up something that we are compelled to give up.

He holds the child to his chest, one hand encircling the boy's waist, while the other and feet fight the rough waves in a frantic dense struggle until he reaches an escape ladder that hangs above him, and more than one hand grasps him... he climbs with difficulty, his feet touching the ground, and he feels nothing anymore. More than one person surrounds him when he opens his eyes in the hospital... thanks in their eyes... gratitude on their glad features... hands move to pleasantly shake his. "You saved my son's life... thank you so much," the father was the one who spoke first.

He attempts to respond, but no one hears him because voices thank him and praise his bravery, and he spends the night in the hospital feeling as if he has been reborn... his heart opens to life, and he becomes ready to love everyone.

"Do you love life?" he questions the nurse.

His question comes as a shock. And she asks, "What do you mean?"

"I don't mean... well... just a simple question: Do you like life?" he says hastily.

"It is not despised by the sane."

"Despite all of its problems?"

"Life does not have any problems; it only has annoyances that man makes for himself."

He murmurs almost to himself, "You are right... they are made by man himself... if only I had discovered this earlier..."

"Did you say something?"

"Nothing."

"All right, you have to go to bed now since you're exhausted."

The next day, he returns to the spot where he stood before bravely embarking on the point of change in his life, and a small ball that some children are playing with rolls in front of him and rests not far from him, causing him to pay attention to a youngster who innocently shouts, "Kick it..."

He thinks he recognizes the child who shouts... it's the same child who requested him to return the day before, and when he turns to look, he sees the boy's face is smiling, "Did you come back? Thanks, you keep your promises... wait, I'll call all the kids to play together," and when he kicks the ball hard enough, his shoe goes into the air with it, and he starts laughing with the kids... and some passers-by join in.

## CONCLUSION

Translations are required for individuals of various cultures to establish an atmosphere of knowledge and understanding of other cultures and people. In 'A Turning Point,' Readers will get a unique experience on "how literature all over the world shares a lot of interests and ideas" (Dohal, 2018). Part of the interest all people share is the tendency to learn and know about other cultures; translating this story will open a

window for those individuals who have no access to the original Arabian text, and want to know about this culture. Indeed, literature could help people understand and experience difficulties and challenges others face. Moreover, "readers will experience a theme all cultures share; i.e. a struggle for survival" (Dohal, 2019) as in this scenario, an individual must keep confidence in what he or she is doing in order to continue living. Individuals should learn from stories like this one that always there is a chance to acquire and/or retrieve confidence and understand the importance of life. So, to do anything out of one's own choice and free will may help that person understand the meaning of life as it happens in the translated story.

The protagonist emerges from the ocean with a new, fresh identity; he becomes a person of confidence, courage, and knowledge of the core of the life he and other individuals live. In other words, one has to know and realize the importance of his/her existence on his/her own way.

Following the publication of Al-Fuzai's 'A Turning Point,' readers will be able to search for more related items to read and learn more about this culture (Dohal, 2019). Translation can help in communicating among nations and cultures.

## TRANSLATOR'S NOTES

Translator's Notes:

- 1 This story was translated from Al-Fuzai's collection: Al-Fuzai, K. I. (1979). *Thursday Fair*. (سوق الخميس). Taif Literary Club (pp. 51-57).
- 2 The source text occasionally contains a few dots.
- 3 Sun is female in Arabic, so I will keep the gender as it is in Arabic.

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