

A Translation into English of Khalil I. Al-Fuzai's "No Rendezvous"

Una traducción al inglés de "No Rendezvous" de Khalil I. Al-Fuzai

Book: Al-Fuzai, K. (1979). *Thursday Fair: A Collection of Stories*. Taif Literary Club.

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ABSTRACT

This is one of the stories that illustrate the failure to marry the woman that a man chooses to marry. Bassim and Salwa love each other, but due to his economic status, he cannot afford the marriage requirements. Like his other stories, Khalil I. Al-fuzai, a Saudi Arabian short story writer, addressed "many social, political, and religious aspects he found in his society" (Dohal, 2013). In this story as it is the case with many other stories written by Al-fuzai, Bassim "struggles to overcome the financial difficulties he faces" (Dohal, 2020). In translating this story, Khalil I. Al-Fuzai (1940-) will be introduced to new readers as an author of a different culture who has done his utmost to discuss the social issues found in his Saudi 1970's environment.

Here, like Khalil I. Al-fuzai's other protagonists in his collection of stories, Bassim struggles with his economic reality; in his society, marriage requires wealth; without money, a male should not consider getting married. Bassim has a job, yet his job does not provide him with enough money to marry and have a family.

Keywords: Khalil al-Fuzai, Saudi, short story, "No Rendezvous"

RESUMEN

Esta es una de las historias que ilustran el fracaso de casarse con la mujer con la que un hombre elige casarse. Bassim y Salwa se aman, pero debido a su situación económica, no puede permitirse los requisitos del matrimonio. Al igual que sus otras historias, Khalil I. Al-fuzai, escritor de

cuentos de Arabia Saudita, abordó "muchos aspectos sociales, políticos y religiosos que encontró en su sociedad" (Dohal, 2013). En este relato, como en muchos otros escritos por Al-fuzai, Bassim "lucha por superar las dificultades financieras a las que se enfrenta" (Dohal, 2020). Al traducir esta historia, Khalil I. Al-Fuzai (1940-) se presentará a los nuevos lectores como un autor de una cultura diferente que ha hecho todo lo posible por debatir los problemas sociales que se encuentran en su entorno saudita de los años 70.

Aquí, al igual que los otros protagonistas de Khalil I. Al-fuzai en su colección de historias, Bassim lucha con su realidad económica; en su sociedad, el matrimonio requiere riqueza; sin dinero, un hombre no debería considerar casarse. Bassim tiene un trabajo, pero su trabajo no le da suficiente dinero para casarse y tener una familia.

Palabras clave: Khalil al-Fuzai, saudí, cuento, "No Rendezvous"

1. INTRODUCTION

In this story, Bassim knows that “his humble salary will not let him marry ever...”. In some societies, the male should pay for all married expenses, as it is the case in this story.

Besides the financial issue, the author in this story addresses another critical issue: women’s marriage rights. He manages to convey the woman’s point of view with regard to the father’s role in arranging his daughter’s future: “My father is unable to wait... he will sell me to the first one who proposes to me” (Al-Fuzai, 1979, p. 70). Such treatment is criticized by Salwa, and in some societies, women may not be given the right to decide their future, they may be treated like commodities; see how Salwa looks at the situation: “He will sell me.” (Al-Fuzai, 1979, p. 70).

Despite the fact that Salwa is the one who is going to face the consequences, she is not given a chance to choose her future husband. In the story, Salwa is not consulted, and even her mother is not asked for her opinion in case she finds a reason for her daughter to reject this marriage.

Another crucial matter raised in the story deals with physical abuse; the apprentice complains to Bassim about his treatment by Salwa’s father: “Can you imagine that he beats me if I make a mistake... He does not pay me enough...” He is tough, unjust, and mean; such a person would not hesitate to “sell” his daughter for the sake of money. We learn from the story that oppression and injustice engender negativity such as the apprentice’s dishonesty: “But I steal it.”

In brief, in this story the author presents some social problems related to economy and marriage in particular; he depicts how life is hard at the 1970s in his Arabian society. This is one of the reasons that a reader may find interesting to know about a different culture.

2. REVIEW (TRANSLATION)

His steps start to embrace the pavement of the long street that stretches out toward the west, and where, at its end, the only park in the city lies... where they meet under the shade of a blooming, leafy tree, and on his shoulders his head dances... his head, where different thoughts conflict, deepening his tragedy once, and reflecting grief on his face; hence his psychological conflict comes to the surface on another level, and in both cases, painful injuries seep through himself in old torture, which he can’t escape except through a sigh that he pulls out from his deep interior, but before long he isolates his inner self again. His hands and his feet move carelessly while he glances toward the glass facades of the commercial stores on both sides of the street.

In a few moments, his lot will be determined ... he will be born anew, or his life will be over forever... Salwa has become for him an issue of life or death ... he has not seen her for a while... he is no longer able to hear her tone of voice when she talks in a way that makes him forget even himself: “Why don’t you come and ask for my hand from my father, O Bassim?”

Why don’t you go and ask for her hand, O Bassim? ... She is life for you ... Are you going to give up your life voluntarily, O Bassim?...

And when she finishes her question, he returns to bitter reality, which prevents him from asking for her hand ... with his current status, he is unable to pay the dowry which her father will ask.

Isn’t this shameful?

And if he borrows money, after that, how can he balance his debt with a happy life for both of them... even if austerity is going to be the main aspect of his life, he is sure that his humble salary will not let him marry ever.

Isn’t this disgusting?...

When, with no chance for her, she slaps him with this question; he injects into the pain, and always answers her, saying, “Don’t you think, O Salwa, that the time is too early?...”

Elusive excuses ... he resorts to whenever he hears that question from her ... nonsense he uses to escape reality ... he himself is not convinced by this excuse ... Is she convinced? Does she think he is cowardly? ... yet he has no option but to continue talking: “We have waited for a long time, why not wait until the beginning of the new year... I will be promoted to a higher rank ... and my salary

1 Every now and then there are few dots found in the source text, and I kept as close as possible to the original text.

will increase”.

“My heart tells me that we are not going to marry, O Bassim ... My father is unable to wait ... he will sell me to the first one who proposes to me.”

With this she responds to him, and a cloud of sorrow and grief casts a shadow over her round face, and he tries to search for new meanings in her eyes, but two lakes of compassion meet him with mazes of vagueness that lead him to nothing ... he does not doubt her love at all, yet fatal confusion penetrates deeply into his inner self to the bones ... inside himself, different thoughts struggle ... their sky is fogged with heavy clouds of fatal confusion and failure to take any positive action or even negative action that will end this torture that he is living ... if he wants to marry her, he is not able, and if he does not marry her, he will not be able to forget her; what is the solution?

The sun looks like a bloody disc, gasping its way toward the west. He intends to face her father before the latter closes his shop so as to approach him with this subject ... he has to hurry in order not to waste time ... people have started fleeing to their houses because of the nightfall, leaving the day alone to commit suicide in the souq ... and the shops become empty of customers, and Bassim hears a shop door slam so violently and noisily that he becomes nervous, and he stops before crossing the street when he sees a car passing at high speed, and catches sight of passengers in that car. He hopes it will crash when the thought comes into his mind—among them is one who is going to ask for Salwa’s hand before I do. Is it possible that someone will propose to her before he does ... he has not been able to see her for a while and this absence worries him, and at last, he determines to propose to her despite all obstacles ... who knows, her refusal to meet him maybe her new way to urge him to ask for her hand ... Is it really a novel approach I have never seen from you, O Salwa... or does your open sky become overclouded...? I have not seen this shunning from you, O Salwa ... why don’t you call our lovely place in the garden ... I have been there many times, yet the singing of birds changes into the hooting of owls whooping all over the garden ... alas! What a fall! O Salwa ... he talks to himself, trying to get rid of hesitation ... she will be his wife sooner or later, so why not undertake his daring step right now; with this logic, he convinces himself, then gathers his scattered thoughts and determines to take his new way.

Alas! ... her father is not in his shop ... only the apprentice is at the shop ... it is not her father’s habit to leave the shop early; on the contrary, he always stays for quite a while after the Isha prayer, and that is what gives Salwa a chance to meet him without her father’s knowledge ... With regards to her mother ... Salwa has told him more than once that her mother knows about their meetings, but that she is afraid of the outcome, and she has warned Salwa more than once to avoid him. But she was not so strict with her, once she saw Salwa’s determination to continue meeting him ... she loves Salwa for she is her only daughter, yet Salwa’s father would never, ever condone the meetings if he knew about them.

Bassim wants to engage in a conversation with the apprentice, but he changes his mind when he sees the man is busy arranging scattered tools ... he has to kill time until her father, who may be busy with some matters, returns to the shop.

Not far away from her father’s shop, he stops in front of a clock-and-watch shop ... a watch attracts his attention; he imagines it in Salwa’s hand, attaining more beauty and glamour ... why not buy it for Salwa, who will soon be his fiancé? And her father will not prevent his daughter from accepting a gift from her suitor, and when he asks about its price, he finds it expensive, yet he has no choice but to pay for it.

After a while he comes back to her father’s shop and finds the apprentice still busy arranging some scattered tools, so he asks him ... and without stopping what he is doing, the man responds, “He is not here.”

“I know he is not here, but I am asking, ‘Is he going to come back tonight?’”

“No ...”

He suppresses his agony of trying to induce the apprentice to engage in a conversation with him; despite his discouraging response, Bassim continues, “Work is exhausting here ... May Allah help you.”

“You are right ...”

Words then flow out of the apprentice’s mouth without measure.

“There is no work more exhausting than this. And I have asked for increasing my pay, but he has refused. The exhausting work continues from morning until the shop is closed; I can’t rest, like the hands of a watch, I don’t ever stop, and if I stop, a disaster befalls me... can you imagine that he beats me if I make a mistake; he accustomed me to that treatment from an early age. He does not pay me enough, but I ...”

And he stops talking and turns toward Bassim and scrutinizes his face before adding, “But I take other payment without his knowledge.”

And Bassim curiously asks, “How is that? Do you have other work?”

He laughs before he responds, “Other work? Don’t you understand? I told you that I work here all the time, and I don’t leave this shop except to go to bed, and from bed to here ... but I steal it.”

He says the last words in a low voice and laughs. So Bassim becomes angry. He wishes he could slap him on his cheeks, and wants to spit in his face, but he only says, “Don’t you know that this is a crime that requires punishment?”

“It doesn’t matter ... he steals from me, so why is he not punished?”

And Bassim determines to tell his future father-in-law when he marries Salwa and persuades him to kick this thief out from his shop, and he remembers the matter he came for, so he changes the subject until he has a chance to ask, “Is there any possibility of his coming now?”

“I don’t think so because he is busy with his daughter’s wedding.”

And Bassim feels a dagger plunged into his waist before he asks in panic, “Who? Salwa?”

“Yes, Salwa ... do you know her? ... A week ago, she got engaged, and tonight it was specified to be her wedding ceremony.”

His words are like hammers, falling hard on Bassim’s head, and he tries to talk, but he can’t, and his worldly existence becomes bleak, and he presses the watch in his hand until its box is smashed, and everything slips from his memory except Salwa.

And the sky appears gloomy, and the sad moon runs to disappear behind a miserable cloud, while the stars crazily dance and pain destroys him, and loss rolls him into a vortex of despair.

4. CRITICAL COMMENTARY

In “No Rendezvous”, Khalil I. Al-Fuzai manages to introduce to his readers how people in his Arabian community deal and look at marriage. He connects the idea of marriage with economy. In such away, one can explore how women are treated.

Al-Fuzai’s style is direct and symbol, probably he looks for a wide range of audience; this style has something to do with his main profession--he is a journalist (Dohal, 2015). Hence, he writes for the public in general and this is applicable to what he has done and the story.

5. CONCLUSION

As seen in this story, a youth struggles for the sake of his future; he looks forward to having a family. Economy is important here; one should have his own financial support. The writer presents the hero of his story facing all the circumstances that may hinder him from achieving what he dreams of. At the same time, the writer introduces another important issue; i.e. women’s rights in the rural societies. A guardian whether a father, a brother, or any other relative may decide for a women without her consent.

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Gassim H. Dohal is a teacher of English from Gizan, Saudi Arabia. He holds a Ph. D. in English literature. He has contributed research papers and articles in different academic journals.

Conflict of interest

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