

A TRANSLATION INTO ENGLISH OF KHALIL I. AL-FUZAI'S¹ "AFTER THE HURRICANE"²



Linguistics

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Abstract

The protagonist's land has been taken from him. His land is the symbol that connects the past to the present. And today's people have to experience the consequences of the past: "everything spread across the coast of the city reminds him of the past..." To Abdul-Haleem, the past cannot be forgotten but will be passed to the next generation. And this is what he is going to do. Psychologically, Abdul-Haleem is worried and distraught. His chief concern is how to transfer his worries to his little sons who, as he points out, "have not seen the land for which they have to struggle." Culturally, only males face difficulties and take revenge for their relatives. That is why Abdul-Haleem "feels sorry for [his wife] ... she is tortured but in vain and without any benefit," and later he tells her, "You do not understand these matters." The society enforces patriarchy and belittles women's role in public life. However, Abdul-Haleem's land is not a small personal property as much as it is a tragic and national cause, for it turns out that "it is the tragedy of a nation and the calamity of a generation ..." Here the story suggests Palestine. Many Palestinians scattered all over the Arab world after they found it difficult to live in their own territory: houses were "destroyed by the artillery of betrayal and treachery and atrocity ... The lives of many innocent people were over." The innocent people's relatives, after witnessing those atrocities, had no other option but "to bomb the enemy's camps." In other words, their enemies made them react in such a way. In brief, Khalil I. Al-Fuzai presents in this story the Middle East cause; a dilemma that has led to more than half a century of pain and chaos and is still without a solution. Every now and then, we hear of a resolution or a plan, but none has been implemented. On the other hand, the story refers to "the sojourners" who come "from the Far East." They are those people who come from East Asia. They include Filipinos, Indonesians who work — men as drivers and women as maids — in homes, Koreans and in some cases the Chinese who have recently come to work as electricians in Saudi Arabia.³

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Translation:

The Gulf sun has started to send its rays across the city that lies on the western coast of the Gulf, while its waves retreat in a confused, weak tide, and behind his window, Abdul-Haleem stands aimlessly contemplating. He remembers ...⁴ everything spread across the coast of the city reminds him of the past ... the small fishing boats ... and the old seaport with its large ships—their largeness like that of his tragedy and fright ... fright over his disaster ... it is the tragedy of a nation and the calamity of a generation ... for him, it is more than this, everything in this city reminds him of what was taken from him ... and that loss will come back to its people one day, whose sun set and will rise again ... it will rise as the sun of this Gulf is rising now ... strong in its rising ... violent in its strength ... destructive in its violence, everything comes again and history repeats itself. The sojourners to his country from the far west were like locusts, and here the sojourners to this city but from the Far East ... are like locusts as well. How tonight is similar to last night! Yesterday he had a country estate in one of the suburbs of his weeping city, and he

¹ Khalil I. Al-Fuzai (1940 -) is a literary writer from Saudi Arabia. In his writings, he introduced his culture, addressing many social, cultural, and religious issues he saw in his society.

² This story was translated from the following Arabic source: Al-Fuzai, Khalil I. Thursday Fair. (الخميس سوق). Taif: Taif Literary Club, 1979: 37-42.

³ An introduction a reader may need to connect the text to its context.

⁴ ... Every now and then there are few dots found in the source text.

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had a beautiful happy house; then the hurricane blew, and destroyed everything ... his country estate was taken from him by force after he refused to give it up, and his happy, beautiful house was destroyed by the artillery of betrayal and treachery and atrocity ... and worse, his family life was destroyed ... he had been with his colleagues planning to bomb the enemy's camps, and like inevitable fate the tragedy took place, and in such a fate, the lives of many innocent people were over.

Now he has rebuilt his life ... a country estate, and a happy beautiful house, he has married and had three children, the elder is in his ninth year; they fill his life with happiness and bliss. He is living his life again, yet within himself there is a deep wound bleeding venom in his dignity, always with blood poured treacherously, and the innocent who were gone as sudden as tracks on sands quickly disappear. Here he is able to find what he lost there. But can he forget? It is impossible, for everything here incites the deep destructive envy that he struggles to hide, yet there are deep dimensions in himself connected with dignity and with the orange bushes, and in the country estate where his tears were mixed with soil, and all the signs of greatness that he is living with now cannot come close to the limits of those dimensions which remain distant from him and from his new reality.

And he is watching some seamen busy repairing their nets, while a group of them is busy repairing ships, and another group is getting ready to leave. Do those travelers return? And do travelers usually return? Or does this lighthouse stay alone in its greatness as a symbol of eighteenth century nobility?

And drowsy words come to his ears from his wife's lips, and he feels that these words roll like limestone across the room, until they arrive at his ears where they furiously and with difficulty steal inside.

“Oh! If you tell me what worries you ...”

He does not like to respond, for he is accustomed to such talk hanging in the air without answer . . . and what is the benefit of answering? She will not understand and the wound will remain deep and uncured, and he feels sorry for her ... she is tortured but in vain and without any benefit. She approaches him and he feels her standing beside him, yet he realizes that her mind is far away, and he intends to answer her question, but before he does, she says, “You destroy me with your continuous meditation.”

And he feels the pain in her voice ... if only she would stop inciting him.

And in the far distance, he notices a fishing boat disappear, so he stares for a long time at its disappearance, and he imagines the sea opens all of a sudden and swallows the boat as the rascals swallowed his land and what it had.

He says with a dry voice that he feels shocks her, “You do not understand these matters.”

“*Bi-Allah*, what are these matters that I do not understand?”

And she becomes silent.

She knows that when he talks about this topic she has to keep silent in spite of her sympathy for him. He told her as he told his sons that he had land taken away ... and that land will undoubtedly be back ... he has planted the seeds of revolution inside his sons until the hatred of the occupied becomes blood running in their veins. She wishes to talk to him on this topic in particular, so she says, "... you believe it will be returned ... then why worry?"

What worries me, he thinks, is the self-determination of my sons. And if this is the problem, can I pass on to my children my feelings regarding this state of affairs?

The answer is hard for her, yet he spares her by continuing, "I do not think so, for one thing is stronger than feelings ... they have not seen the land for which they have to struggle."

"Don't you think that your concern regarding this matter is premature?"

And when he asks her, "What?" she realizes that she has gone too far, so she wants to correct what she has spoiled. Hence she says, "What is the solution in your opinion?"

And he hits the edge of the window with his fist and returns to sit on the bed before he utters, with a bitter taste in his throat, "What is the solution ... what is the solution ... I am almost going crazy because I do not know the solution."

And his wife turns toward him, the killing confusion controlling her, and he reads in her face a friendly reproach that makes him forget for a moment his psychological torment.

Her eyes are two turquoises.

In her eyes I appreciate the mildness of the south.

But everything in her reminds him of the sleepers there in the north, under debris, and those lost in the open and he returns back to his reality upon hearing her voice say, "You kill yourself without any benefit."

And from the neighboring room the voice of their son Adel is heard arguing with his brothers, so his wife realizes it is school time, and before she moves from her place the maid knocks at the door to tell them that breakfast is ready. Abdul-Haleem stands and walks to the table absent-mindedly with his wife behind him, and before he sits down, she notices a tear on his cheek, running down from his inner eye.

References

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