

## *Flash Fiction in Morocco: Pioneering Pens & Translated Samples*

### **السرد الوجيز في المغرب (رواد التجربة مع نماذج مترجمة)**

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### Abstract:

Moroccan culture in the Precolonial era dedicated a very important part of its history to theology and military action. The medieval literature taught today at schools and universities in Morocco is absolutely not Moroccan Literature. Rather, it is an Andalusian one that migrated once to Medieval Morocco with the Arabo-Islamic legacy right after Andalusia had fallen down, by the end of the fifteenth century, in the hands of the Spaniards. Ever since, Morocco's cultural complex was solved and great poets gradually emerged such as Abderrahman El Mejdoub (16<sup>th</sup> century), Sidi Bahloul Shergui (17<sup>th</sup> century), Sidi Kaddour El Alami (19<sup>th</sup> century) and many others who specialised in mystic poetry, using dialectal Arabic as a linguistic tool. Yet, during the colonial era (1912-1955), Moroccans felt a civilisational shock. They saw how far behind the times they were and that they had to work on two fronts: to liberate their country from the Franco-Spanish colonisation and to take the best of the occidental civilisation as a foundation for their Moroccan project in the postcolonial era. Accordingly, so many spheres of knowledge were imported like real sciences. Some social and human sciences were either allowed despite the earlier censorship and friction with the authorities like **philosophy**, or revived but in a newer look like **drama**, or even launched for the first time like **novel** and **short story**. Sixty years later, Morocco became the capital of short story both in North Africa and the whole Arab world. This privilege, today, is reinforced with Morocco's welcoming a new narrative text-type that is still unwelcome in other cultures: **Flash Fiction**.

**Keywords:** Short-Short Story, Very Short Story, Flash Fiction.

### المخلص:

خصّصت الثقافة المغربية في فترة ما قبل الاستعمار حيزا مهما للغاية من تاريخها للعلوم الدينية والعمل العسكري. الأدب الوسيط الذي يدرّس اليوم في المدارس والجامعات المغربية ليس بالمطلق ادبا مغربيا. إنه، بالأحرى، أدب أندلسي هاجر إلى المغرب الوسيط مع الإرث العربي-الإسلامي بُعيد سقوط الأندلس في يد الإسبان. تلك الهجرة التاريخية، البشرية والرمزية، هي التي فكّكت عقدة المغرب

الثقافية بحيث بدأ منذ ذلك التاريخ ظهور شعراء مغاربة كبار من طينة سيدي عبد الرحمان المجذوب (القرن السادس عشر الميلادي) وسيدي بهلول الشرقي (القرن السابع عشر الميلادي) وسيدي قدور العلمي (القرن التاسع عشر الميلادي) وآخرون ممن تخصصوا في الشعر الصوفي المنظوم بالعامية المغربية. لكن، خلال الفترة الاستعمارية (1912-1955)، شعر المغاربة بالصدمة الحضارية. إذ رأوا مدى التخلف الذي يرزحون تحته وأن عليهم الاشتغال على جبهتين: الجبهة الأولى، هي جبهة تحرير بلدهم من الاستعمار الفرنسي-الإسباني؛ أما الجبهة الثانية، فجبهة البناء الحضاري لبلدهم من خلال أخذ الإيجابي من الحضارة الغربية كلبنة أساس لمشروعهم المغربي في فترة ما بعد الاستعمار. وعليه، العديد من مجالات المعرفة تم استيرادها كالعلوم الحقة. بعض العلوم الاجتماعية والإنسانية تمّ إما الترخيص لها رغم الرقابات السابقة والاحتكاكات مع السلطة كالفلسفة، أو تمّ إحياؤها ولكن بمظهر جديد كالمرسح، أو حتى إطلاقها لأول مرة كالرواية والقصة القصيرة. بعد ستين عاما، أصبح المغرب عاصمة القصة القصيرة في شمال إفريقيا والعالم العربي قاطبة. هذا الامتياز، اليوم، تم تكريسه بترحيب المغرب بشكل سردي جديد لا زال غير مرحّب به في ثقافات عديدة أخرى: السرد الوجيز.

الكلمات المفتاحية: القصة القصيرة جدا، القصة الومضة، السرد الوجيز

## Introduction:

Ernest Hemingway—perhaps at Harry's Bar, perhaps at Luchow's—once bet a bunch of fellows he could make them cry with a short story six words long. If he won the bet each guy would have to fork over ten dollars. Hemingway's six-word story was the following: **"For Sale: Baby shoes, never worn."** He won the bet.<sup>1</sup> In fact, he won two bets in one: In the bar, he won the money; and, in literature, he won himself the title of pioneer of **flash fiction** and the founder of **very short story**. Hemingway's story might read as follows: After nine months' pregnancy, the mother, looking at her newborn baby who is either dead or handicapped and the shoes bought that he would never put on, has no other choice than to get rid of those shoes that remind her of the big deception. So, she offers them for sale with a board sign on which is written: **"For sale: baby shoes, never worn."**

<sup>1</sup> - David Lehman, "The Shortest Story Ever Told" (in) *The American Scholar*: Fall, 2014.

That was Ernest Hemingway's first very short story and the first short-short story ever written that remained for more than three decades a mere literary challenge kept in the archive. Only in the late fifties and the early sixties could the world see Hemingway's narrative seed blossom and flourish but in Latin America. Then, the experience will be in full bloom in some other places in the world, including the Arab world (Syria, Iraq, Egypt, Libya, Saudi Arabia and Morocco. Now, one century after its invention, where has flash fiction been up to? Does flash fiction enjoy any distinctive features the way other literary genres, text-types and forms do? Is flash fiction welcomed world-wide? Why do Moroccan writers engage in writing flash fiction? Why is Morocco regarded as capital of flash fiction in the Arab world? Does Moroccan very short story offer any added value to flash fiction world-wide?

### **1. Literary Geography of North Africa:**

Hungry readers aspiring to extend the prospects of their researches in the field of human sciences are expected to be the first ones to read such books as **Cultural Geography** by Mike Crang (1998), **Political Geography** by Peter Tyler and Colin Flint (2000) and **The Geography of Thought** by Richard E. Nisbett (2004). With the possibility of dealing with the geographies of culture, thought and politics, it will be equally possible to talk about **literary geography** and **critical geography** while there can be further sub-geographies of further sub-fields: **poetic geography**, **dramatic geography**, **narrative geography** and the remaining minor geographies. On this background, North-African literature, from Morocco in the north-west to Egypt in the north-east, has experienced a wide range of literary genres and forms all along their literary renaissance. Yet, when Egyptian literature, from the mid-eighties of the ninth century to the present time, both experienced and excelled in practically all the major literary forms known world-wide, literature in the Maghreb has opted for **specialisation**.

In the Maghreb (Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya and Mauritania), every country **specialises** in a specific literary genre, allowing some margin for the remaining literary genres to keep working but at a lower plane. Thus, Algeria **specialises** in **novel writing** giving the literary world such weighty

names as Assia djebar, Tahar Ouettar, Waciny Laredj, Ahlem Mosteghanemi and many others; Tunisia in **standard Arabic poetry** giving birth to influential poets like Abou el Kacem Chebbi; Mauritania, the Land of the One-Million Poets, in **dialectal Arabic poetry**; Morocco in **short story** with such famous writers as Mohamed Choukri and Mohamed Zefzaf and in **flash fiction**, a newly-born narrative form that has found in Morocco as well as Egypt, Syria, Iraq and Saudi Arabia a fertile soil to grow and blossom in.

## **2. Morocco as a Capital of Short Fiction and Flash Fiction in North Africa:**

Morocco remains the actual capital of both short fiction and flash fiction in North Africa, in the present times. Statistics show that the collections of short stories published in Morocco, from the fifties of the twentieth century to the first decade of the third millennium, is roughly 600 collections. Compared to the same literary form published in both Algeria and Tunisia, Morocco publishes twice as much. It is a literary honour which was lifted by the arms of men and women writers who devoted themselves to write short stories all along the sixty latest years with targets that has being changing from era to era: short story versus obsolete writing traditions, short story versus colonisation, short story versus class culture in class society and, nowadays, short story against the complications of life...

Short story blossomed in Moroccan literature for the first time in the late fortieth of the twentieth century with Abdelmajid Benjelloun, an accomplished short-story writer coming from Great Britain, where he was born, to Morocco, his homeland that was, by the time, still occupied by the French. His short stories were a contribution to the general patriotic rising tide crowned in the mid-fifties of the twentieth century by the declaration of independence. Right after **the Independence**, Moroccan short story, especially in the sixties, gradually left **Patriotism** aside and joined the progressist powers, leftwing parties and labour unions, in their fight against class society, capitalism and imperialism. The prominent writers of the era were: Mohamed Choukri, Driss El Khouri, Abderrahmane Tazi and Mohamed zefzaf... In the seventies, there arose such a newer brand of

writers as Driss Seghir and Ahmed Bouzeffour, abjuring all the former emblems and slogans and diving very deep in the unknown abyss of the Inner Self. Thus, Driss Seghir specialised in depicting the worlds of mental illnesses while Ahmed Bouzaffour specialized in the world of dreams: ***Narrating dreams and analyzing them...*** In the eighties and nineties, there came, for the first time, the first feminine voices expected to balance and democratise short fiction in Morocco. Among those feminine names: ***Zahra Ziraoui, Rabia Raihane, Zohra Ramij*** and so many others.

### ***3. Flash Fiction (or Short-Short Story or Very Short Story) in Morocco:***

With the first decade of the new millennium, a couple of strikes echoed in the skies of Moroccan short story. The first strike came from a newer generation of short-story writers (Mohamed Saïd Raïhani along with fifty other writers) advocating the importance of approaching ***“The Three Missing Keys (or themes) off Moroccan Literature: Dream, Freedom and Love”***. The second strike came from new writers who introduced themselves as ***Flash-Fiction Writers*** and declared ***Flash Fiction*** as their ***unique*** literary speciality. Some of these names are Abdallah Mouttaqi, Ezzeddine Maazi, Hamid Rakkata, Hassan Bertal, Smail El bouyahyaoui, Saadia Bahadda and so many others.

Abdallah Al-Mouttaqi, to start with, is a Moroccan flash-fiction writer, born in 1961 in Fkih Ben Saleh. He published in Arabic ***Alkoorse Al Azraq (The Blue Chair)*** in 2005. The second flash-fiction writer, Ezzeddine Maazi, was born in 1960 in Sidi Ismael, near El Jadida City. He is the author of ***'Hooboon Ala Tariqat Alkibar (Love the Way Grown-Ups Do)*** in 2006, ***Qubulatoon Fil Hawa'e (Kisses in the Air)*** in 2011. There is also Hamid Rakkata, from Khénifra City, author of ***Dumu'oo Farashah (Butterfly's Tears)*** in 2010...

Hassan Bertal, belongs to the same generation of Moroccan flash fiction writers. He was born in Casablanca, Morocco. He published in Arabic ***Abraj (Signs of the Zodiac)*** in 2006, ***Qawssu Qazah (Rainbow)*** in 2009, ***Samfoonyyat Albabbagha' (Parrot's Symphony)*** in 2012 and many other

collections of flash fiction. Smail El bouyahyaoui, is another name in Moroccan flash-fiction writing. He published in Arabic *'Ashrabu Wamidal Hibri (I drink the gleam of Ink)* in 2008, *Toofan (Deluge)* in 2009 and *Qatfu Al Ahlam (Picking Dreams Up)* in 2010. There are so many lady writers in Morocco who has chosen flash fiction as a narrative form of literary expression and Saadia Bahadda is one of them, with *Waqqa'a Mtidadahu Wa Rahal (He Signed His Extension and Left)* in 2009 and *Wayk, Mudda Al Bassar! (Oh, Have a Look!)* in 2013.

In the end, there is Mohamed Saïd Raihani, Moroccan writer, author of more than twenty works in fields of literary translation, criticism and fiction. He is a member of Moroccan Writers' Union. He is holder of *PhD. in Literary Translation* from *King Fahd Advanced School of Translation* (Tangier/Morocco) in 2021, *M.A. in Creative Writing* (English Literature) from *Lancaster University* (United Kingdom) in 2017, *M.A. in Translation, Communication & Journalism* from *King Fahd Advanced School of Translation* (Tangier/Morocco) in 2015 and *B.A. in English Literature* from *Abdelmalek Essaadi University* (Tétouan/Morocco) in 1991.

#### 4. Samples of Moroccan Flash Fiction:

##### 4.1. Four Very Short Stories by Saadia Bahadda:

###### 4.1.1: Accusation (In Arabic: *Toohmah*)

There slowly rose smoke above **Rome**.

They accused **Nero**, who was neither wise nor mad.

Ask **Tacitus** and he will tell you the truth:

"It was **Rome** that set **Nero** on fire".<sup>2</sup>

###### 4.1.2: Mill (In Arabic: *Tahoona*)

In the beginning, he used to turn the mill following his mood.

<sup>2</sup> - Saadia Bahadda, *Waqqa'a Mtidadahu Wa Rahal* [In English: *He Signed His Extension and Left*] (*Flash Fiction*). 1st Edition. Casablanca (Morocco): Assaloon Al-Adabi, 2009, p.77.



Now, the mill turns him following its mood.<sup>3</sup>

#### **4.1.3: Oblivion (In Arabic: *Nissian*)**

In the past, you used to play your favorite game, sliding above the words.

Now, words developed a similar hobby, sliding out of your head.<sup>4</sup>

#### **4.1.4: He signed his extension and left (In Arabic: *Waqqa'a Mtidadahu Wa Rahal*)**

He passed by her, looked into her eyes and had her looking into his.

She passed by him, smiled to him and had him smiling to her.

Ever since, he no longer passes by.

She felt her belly and made sure that he has signed his presence and left forever.

#### **4.2. Two Very Short Stories by Ezzeddine Maazi:**

##### **4.2.1: The Rain in the Garden (In Arabic: *Mataron Fil Hadiqa*)**

With the blue ballpoint pen, pencil, ruler, cherries and the yellow-covered blank copybook on her table, the little school-girl sharpens both her thinking and her nerves to keep listening to the school-mistress sitting on her leather chair:

“Period of plastic arts for third-grade pupils. We will learn how to draw clouds, rainfall, the formation of ponds and swamps by way of inclined hatching using colour pencils”...

The brilliant girl sharpens the pencil and leans forwards to draw line after line, closed circles, dots, curved forms, trees, fruits... alternatively colouring with the colour pencils and sharpening them one by one.

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<sup>3</sup> - *Ibid.*, p.17.

<sup>4</sup> - *Ibid.*, p.21.



High above, there lies the vast blue sea. In the rest of the painting, there stands a question mark. She was painting what was running around in her brain.

There stands the school-mistress next to the blackboard to explain the techniques to adopt in drawing before pacing again between the rows to examine her pupils' works.

On paper, it rains so hard that the little girl turns so sad. Her painting is stained with her teardrops. She feels sorry for the demolition of the houses, the collapse of the buildings and the scattering of the flowers in the garden...<sup>5</sup>

#### 4.2.2: *Ismaen's Painting* (In Arabic: *Lawhatu Isma'en*)

Little *Isma'en* sat down before the weird painting to meditate it.

It was a work by a painter who had composed a blank space with a black square in it.

He started to sing.

He turned right and left to see if anybody cares.

Suddenly, he had a prompt wish to get into the same blank space that the painter has left empty.<sup>6</sup>

#### 4.3. *Three Very Short Stories by Mohamed Saïd Raihani:*

##### 4.3.1: *Revolution* (In Arabic: *Thawrah*)

"Long live *Pougatchev*, leader of the peasants' revolution!"

"Long live *Pougatchev*, leader of the rebellious peasants!"

"Long live *Pougatchev*, long live *Pougatchev*!", screamed the thirty thousand peasants revolting against the policy of Empress *Katherine II*. They were brandishing their guns behind *Pougatchev*, a military deserter

<sup>5</sup> - Ezzeddine Maazi, 'Hoobboon 'Ala Tariqat Alkibar [In English: *Love the Way Grown-Ups Do*] (Flash Fiction). 1st Edition. Morocco: Dar Waleelee, 2006, p.38.

<sup>6</sup> - *Ibid.*, p.56.

who claimed himself the legitimate Emperor commonly believed to be slain by **Katherine II. Pougatchev's** followers were poor farmers who believed in his promises to abolish the feudal system, liberate all the serfs and give the peasants the land which they work on.

On his horse, **Pougatchev** was leading the parade, heading for the major cities, quite confident in his weight, in the faithfulness of his followers and in the benediction he was given by the monks all along the way before he jumped off his horse, terrified, running away between the rocks and weeds in the valleys, seeking shelter and pursued by his followers who came to know that their Empress, **Katherine the Great**, is offering a legendary financial reward to whomever would hand her **Emelian Ivanovitch Pougatchev**, dead or alive.<sup>7</sup>

#### 4.3.2: Job Revolution (In Arabic: **Ayyoob**)

The man pushes forth a cart in which a baby cries hysterically the milk that has run down in his bottle:

“Be patient, **Job!**”

The child keeps on crying.

The man carries on:

“Patience is the key to Salvation, **Job!**”

The child's hysteria is always on:

“Everything is to an end, **Job!**”

Another man passing by asked him:

“It seems that your words did nothing to ease the pain that your child, **Job**, is feeling!”

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<sup>7</sup> - Mohamed Saïd Raïhani, *Ha'oo Al Hoorriah* [In English: *The Key of Freedom*] (Fifty Very Short Stories). 1st Edition. Rabat (Morocco): Ministry of Culture, Silsilat Ibda'e, 2014, p. 33.

The man replied:  
“‘*Job*’ is my own name, and patience is all I need”.<sup>8</sup>

#### **4.3.3: Nietzscheist (In Arabic: *Nitshawiyah*)**

The prostitute insisted on receiving in advance the pay agreed upon before following her customer to the near-by forest. She was whispering out her words playfully and moving erotically her curves and humps when a mugger surprised them waving about a sword in his left hand, and reaching out to the prostitute’s breasts with his right hand.

Furious, the customer attacked his rival. They fell on the ground, rolling around in all directions and calling each other names while the prostitute, safe under an oak-tree, undressed herself sensuously preparing herself to celebrate victory with the winner.<sup>9</sup>

#### **4.3.4: The Man & the Dog (In Arabic: *Al Rajulu Wal Kalb*)**

The prison guards wondered a lot about the reason why a dog was involved in the same cell with a new inmate. After so much patience and curiosity, they came to know that the dog had not accepted the verdict which separated him from his friend who fainted right after his being sentenced to life imprisonment with hard labour.

When the guards pushed, by the tips of their boots, the plate of food and the loaf of bread under the cell door, they kept their eyes on the keyhole to examine closely the reaction of the two inmates on both sides of the plate.

At first, the man ate bread dipped in the sauce and left the bone to the dog.

<sup>8</sup> - Mohamed Saïd Raïhani, “Ayyoob” [In English: *Job*]. (In) *Majarrah*. Issue 13. Kénitra (Morocco): Al-Bookeelee litteba’ah, Autumn, 2008, p164-166.

<sup>9</sup> - Mohamed Saïd Raïhani, “Nitshawiyah” [In English: *Nietzscheist*]. (In) *Majarrah*. Issue 13. Kénitra (Morocco): Al-Bookeelee litteba’ah, Autumn, 2008, p164-166.

Then, when the inmates were allowed salted buffalo, the man ate the piece of meat that floated on the sauce and left the bone to the dog.

Later, when the administration gave way for the prison kitchens to prepare chicken, the man ate the lonely chicken thigh in the plate and left the bone to the dog.

Finally, when the inmates were served, for the first time, hamburgers on the occasion of an expected visit paid by a foreign delegation on behalf of an international human rights organization, the man gulped the whole ration down without leaving anything to the dog who could not believe his own eyes,

Who remained silent for a long time, staring at his friend,

Who started to moan and moan,

Who flew into a fit of raging bark,

Who attacked his friend and devoured him.<sup>10</sup>

#### **4.4. Three Very Short Stories by Hamid Rakkata:**

##### **4.4.1: Pirates (In Arabic: *Qarassinah*)**

He won all his battles high up the seas and mountains but lost his battle with the woman who sailed suddenly inside him.<sup>11</sup>

##### **4.4.2: Local Informer (In Arabic: *Mookhbiru Al Hay*)**

From behind his dark glasses, the informer, sitting in the far-away corner of the café looking straight on the boulevard and counting people's breaths, believed himself unknown and unseen by the people passing by while children in the other corner of the street were winking at one another

<sup>10</sup> - Mohamed Saïd Raïhani, *Ha'oo Al Hoorriah* [In English: *The Key of Freedom*], *op. cit.*, 2014, p. 35-36.

<sup>11</sup> - Hamid Rakkata, *Dumu'oo Farashah* [In English: *Butterfly's Tears*] (Flash Fiction). 1st Edition. Rabat (Morocco): Attannookhi, 2010, p. 42.

and sneering at the way he was seated and the unbuttoned trousers he exposed to the passers-by.<sup>12</sup>

#### **4.4.3: Apple-Girl (In Arabic: *Ba'iatu Al Toooffah*)**

In his absent-mindedness under the old apple-tree, she was courting him.

A small apple fell right down on his heart.

He jumped out of his abstraction and ran happily to take it.

She left him, seizing her young couple of apples, feeling so sorry for the stupidity of men and the futility of all-seasonal fruits.<sup>13</sup>

#### **4.5. Four Very Short Stories by Hassan Bertal:**

##### **4.5.1: Cold and the Enemy (In Arabic: *Al Bardu Wal Adoo*)**

He was taught to face the enemy in the battle-field the way he faces cold in winter-time. So, he went out to war with a hat, a coat and a pair of gloves on.<sup>14</sup>

##### **4.5.2: Walking Back (In Arabic: *Al Rujoo'u Ila Lwara'e*)**

He refused to walk back, back in time.

When he ran to take the first place in the race, he found himself in the prehistoric era.<sup>15</sup>

##### **4.5.3: Incest (In Arabic: *Zina Al Maharem*)**

All of a sudden, she found herself pregnant illegally.

She could not take the newly-born baby as a son.

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<sup>12</sup> - *Ibid.*, p. 40.

<sup>13</sup> - *Ibid.*, p. 28.

<sup>14</sup> - Hassan Bertal, *Abraj* [In English: *Signs of Zodiac*] (Flash Fiction). 1st Edition. Rabat (Morocco): Ministry of Culture, Al-Kitab Al-Awwal, 2006, p.15.

<sup>15</sup> - *Ibid.*, p.16.

She accused her father of incest and took the baby as a brother.<sup>16</sup>

#### **4.5.4: Anti-Feminism (In Arabic: *Moo'adat Al Niswiyyah*)**

He fought for liberating his people. When the goal was achieved, he refused to set his wife free.<sup>17</sup>

### **4.6. Two Very Short Stories by Abdallah Al-Mouttaqi:**

#### **4.6.1: Pay Attention, Please! (In Arabic: *Intabih, Min Fadlik!*)**

He forgot to take off his pyjamas and went slowly downstairs.

No-one took notice: neither the building keeper nor the passers-by nor even the friends in the café nor even more the waiter.

Only the mirror noticed that in the very evening when he was turning upside down the clothes in the sleeping-room wardrobe, looking for his pyjamas.<sup>18</sup>

#### **4.6.2: The Evening of Eid (In Arabic: *Massa'oo Al Eed*)**

The child came back home in such ecstasy.

He was happy with the brand-new clothes and the coins collected from his relatives.

Before his mother laid the dinner table, her voice pursued him:

“Come on, kid. Take off your clothes and spare them for the coming feast!”<sup>19</sup>

<sup>16</sup> - *Ibid.*, p.25.

<sup>17</sup> - *Ibid.*, p.27.

<sup>18</sup> - Abdallah Al-Mouttaqi, *Alkoorsi Al Azraq* [In English: *The Blue Chair*] (Flash Fiction). 1st Edition. Casablanca (Morocco): Manshoorat Majmoo'at al-Bahth fi Al-Qissah Al-Qasseerah fi Al-Maghrib, 2005, p.26.

<sup>19</sup> - *Ibid.*, p.16.

#### **4.7. Three Very Short Stories by Smail Elbouyahyaoui:**

##### **4.7.1: Exchange (In Arabic: *Muqayadah*)**

**The first** took his hand out of his pocket.

**The second** took a smile out of his stomach.

**The first** warms his pocket with a smile.

**The second** warms his stomach with a coin.<sup>20</sup>

##### **4.7.2: Divorce (In Arabic: *Talaq*)**

As he put his head on the pillow, he found out that he had two heads: the first head in terra incognita of sleep and the second one caressing a short-short story.

He damned darkness and called for the pen's help to accomplish his short-short story.

In the morning, the sleeping head refused to stick to the writing one.

He divorced the sleeping one and led his life with a "**short-short**" head.<sup>21</sup>

##### **4.7.3: Liberation (In Arabic: *Tahreer*)**

I took my bird out of his fatalistic cage and put him on my palm. He rested in preparation for the eternal farewell moment.

My bird looked at me. He cleaned my wings detained in my eternal cage. He gave me a feather for memory. He kissed my forehead, gathered his wings and set me free.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>20</sup> - Smail El bouyahyaoui, *Ashrabu Wamidal Hibri* [In English: *I drink the gleam of Ink*] (Flash Fiction). 1st Edition. Casablanca (Morocco): Manshoorat Zawiyah, 2005, p.67.

<sup>21</sup> - *Ibid.*, p.64.

<sup>22</sup> - *Ibid.*, p.11.



## 5. Conclusions:

Throughout history, Morocco has been criticised by the cultural actors in the Arab Mashreq for reproducing their culture and arts and re-exporting them back again to the Mashreq. After regaining its independence in 1956, Morocco regained other types of independence in the same time, including its independence from the historical Arab Mashreq influence. Ever since, Morocco developed newer traditions in fields of culture, thought, art and literature with visibly distinctive Moroccan fingerprints. Today, after sixty years of independence, Moroccan culture is already a heavyweight leader, on the Arab plane, at so many levels: philosophy, criticism and literature. This honorary position allowed Moroccan culture to play a leading role in growing newer literary forms such as flash fiction in the Arab soil by coordinating the efforts of the Arab literary militants in the field, organising festivals and launching awards for the sake of promoting this new-born literary form.

By the time that flash fiction is still unwelcome in so many countries around the world and so many academic places, including Western universities, literary decisions in Morocco have gone in an independent way and have taken a different direction. For sure, flash fiction is neither well-defined nor well-identified from other neighbouring forms of expression which share the same tendency towards shortness of size such as haiku, proverb, saying, joke and telegraphic message. However, things are going up by leaps and bounds at so many levels: conceptualisation, literary criticism and creative writing. At present, shining samples are published on both paper and digital format; heavyweight pens are read all over the Arab countries, from the Arab Gulf to the Atlantic Ocean, but the beautiful Moroccan literary achievement is still to come.

## 6. Recommendations:

Flash fiction in Morocco is still trying to secure its first steps in modern literature on three different levels. The first level is that of **terminology**, the second is that of **length** and the third is that related to the **spirit of narration** itself.

At the **first level**, level of **terminology**, like in most contemporary literatures around the world, there is no unanimity on the term supposed to refer to this newly born narrative text-type and distinguish it from the other neighbouring forms of expression, in the same time. Some writers introduce themselves as **flash fiction** writers (in Arabic, **Al-Qissah Al-Wamdah**). Others consider themselves as **very short story** writers (in Arabic, **Al-Qissah Al-Qassirah Jiddan**). Some others regard themselves as **short-short story** writers (in Arabic, **Qa Qa Ja**). The fourth and last category follows the first and oldest term ever coined in Morocco: **One-Minute's-Time Story**. A term that was forged by the pioneer of flash fiction in Morocco, Mohammed Ibrahim Bouallou, who adopted this text-type for all the pieces of short writing that he used to publish on the daily Moroccan newspaper speaking for his political party in the eighties of the twentieth century.

However, today more than ever, a unanimously referential term is strongly needed to distinguish this new-born narrative form. Attention is also needed. There has to be some difference between **the field approached** and **the piece of writing** belonging to that field. For **the field approached**, the appropriate term that can be suggested is “**Flash Fiction**”, which corresponds in Arabic to “**Assard Al Wajeez**”. On the other hand, the suitable term that can be proposed for **the piece of writing** belonging to the field of flash fiction is “**Very Short Story**”, which corresponds in Arabic to “**Al-Qissah Al-Qassirah Jiddan**”. There should be one lonely term to distinguish “**Flash Fiction**”, the way things go with the other narrative forms such as “**short story**” and “**novel**”. “**Short story**” is commonly used with **realistic** writings but “**Text**” is what can qualify **experimental** ones and emphasise their **rebellious nature**. “**Novel**”, on the other side, is a term used to picture **real** life and **real** people expressing themselves in a daily language and sometimes with a specific accent while “**Romance**” is used to picture **god-like** people in **exotic** places speaking in an **elevated** language...

At the **second level**, level of **length**, no common consent on the standard length of flash fiction has been declared so far. Some flash fiction writers, throughout their career, have remained faithful to the one-line (or two-line) text pattern, the way Hassan Bertal does. Some others have

chosen a freer path, alternating between the two-line text pattern and the five-line one, depending on the effect targeted, the way Saadia Bahadda and Hamid Rakkata often do. The third category of Moroccan flash fiction writers opts for the four-line text pattern. Some of those writers that may serve as examples: Abdallah Al-Mouttaqi and Smail Elbouyahyaoui. The fourth and last category of writers are the ones still faithful to the spirit of Ibrahim Boualou's "**One-minute's-time story**", a short piece of writing varying between five and twenty lines, which corresponds to the estimated time duration of one minute or so.

Accordingly, Moroccan flash fiction, like their peers in Latin America, seems not to have decided yet on the ultimate form this narrative form should be expressed through. Like Latin-American flash fiction writers (*Jorge Luis Borges, Gabriel Garcia Marquez, Julio Cortázar, Augusto Monterroso, Pablo Urbani, Raul Brasca, Eduardo Galeano, Fernando Ainsa, Julio Torri, Virgilio Piñera, Marco Denevi, Juan Sabia, Leon Garcia Marquez and Fabia Vique...*), Moroccan flash-fiction writers are still experimenting so many shorter forms of narrative writing varying between one line and one page. Only one writer on the Latin-American side and another one on the Moroccan side made up their mind on the one-line (or two-line) pattern: *Juan Jose Arreola* and *Hassan Bertal*. Accordingly, the question of length is in flash fiction needs a tough decision and *Juan Jose Arreola* and *Hassan Bertal's* one-line (or two-line) pattern are shining models to follow.

At the **third level**, level of **narratology**, Moroccan flash fiction blossoms next door to five neighbouring text-types: proverb, saying, joke, haiku and telegraphic message. It shares with these five text-types so many qualities: the shortness of the piece of writing, the minimalist style giving data without further details and the use of clear words with very few syllables but with richer connotations. Yet, Moroccan flash fiction differs from the text-types mentioned above in so many ways. The first difference is that it stifles humour by the end of the very short story in order to keep away from any confusion with jokes and anecdotes. A second difference is that flash fiction keeps a respectable distance with fable and moral preach unlike proverb, maxim and saying. A third difference is that flash fiction is, linguistically and stylistically, not so dry as the telegraphic message dealing

with naked facts denied of their outer symbolic references. Last of all, flash fiction is absolutely not a *haiku* in prose, being faithful to the spirit of linear progression of events from the initial situation to the crisis to the denouement.

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