



## Flash Fiction in Saudi Arabian Literature: An Overview of Structure, Characteristics and Implications

*Amal Saad Almenee*

*Lecturer in the Dept. of English Language and Literature*

*Shaqra University, KSA*

[aalmenee@su.edu.sa](mailto:aalmenee@su.edu.sa)

### Abstract

This paper addresses the *Flash Fiction* craft in Saudi Arabia in terms of form, content structure, and technical characteristics through analysis of some typical flashes by five Saudi flash writers: Al-Mulaihan; Al-Aboudi; Al-Shammari; Al-Batran and Al-Omaim. The paper then concludes by elucidating the most prominent connotations and implications of the Saudi flash fiction. The SPN—Scholarly Personal Narrative method was used, under the semiotic methodology as a scientific procedure for research and analysis. The study revealed that the most prominent types of discourse used in the flash fiction in Saudi Arabia are the narrative (dialogue-based) discourse, the expressive, and the expository discourse. It also showed that there are five basic structural elements of the flash fiction in Saudi Arabia: (character, action (narrative perspective), setting (time and place), style and brevity. The characteristics of the Saudi flash fiction were also listed as intensification, symbolism, suggestion, and paradox. The study also revealed that the Saudi flash fiction revolves around three principal implications and themes: the social, religious, and symbolic connotation.

**Keywords:** Flash fiction (FF) - Intensification – Suggestion – Symbolism – Paradox

### المخلص :

تناقش هذه الورقة موضوع القصة القصيرة جداً في المملكة العربية السعودية من حيث البنية الشكلية والدلالية فيها، بالإضافة إلى أبرز خصائصها الفنية، وذلك من خلال فحص نماذج لأعمال خمسة قاصين هم: المليحان، والعبودي، والشمرى والبطران والعميم، وتختتم الورقة بعد ذلك بإيضاح لأبرز مضامينها ودلالاتها. وقد تم استخدام طريقة السرد الإنشائي اعتماداً على الأسلوب السيميائي كمنهجية علمية للبحث والتحليل. وكشف البحث على أن أبرز أنماط الخطاب المستخدم في القصة القصيرة جداً في السعودية هي: الخطاب القصصي (الحواري) والتعبيري والعرضي (الوصفي). كما أظهر أن أهم العناصر الشكلية التي تتألف منها القصة القصيرة جداً في السعودية هي الشخصية، والحدث، والبنية الزمنية والمكانية والأسلوب، والإيجاز. كما تتميز القصة القصيرة جداً بأربعة خصائص هي التكتيف والرمزية والإيحاء والمفارقة. هذا، وتتمحور القصة القصيرة جداً حول ثلاثة مضامين رئيسية هي: المضامين الاجتماعية، والعقائدية، والرمزية.

**الكلمات المفتاحية :** القصة القصيرة جداً – التكتيف – الرمزية – الإيحاء – المفارقة

## 1- Introduction

Flash fiction - or *short-short story* - is one of the relatively new literary genres developed in the present era. Flash fiction has been claimed to be introduced for the first time in Latin America, USA and Europe since the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (William, 2014: 316), although its roots extend into the ancient Arab narration (Al-Mutairi, 2013: 2). The term "*Flash Fiction*" was introduced for the first time in Saudi Arabia in the 1970s due to the need for brevity and intensification.

The Arabic flash fiction can be defined, according to (Hamdawi, 2010) as

".. A modern literary genre usually characterized by short size, intense suggestion, brief anecdotal tendency, direct and indirect symbolic intent. It also may involve other sub-characteristic as well, like hinting and succinctness, which are marked by quickness, tension, and impasse of attitudes and acts, in addition to the aesthetic narrative discourse, which comprises some rhetorical features such as omission and reduction, etc. This new type of discourse is also characterized by rhetorical image that goes beyond direct narration to the metaphorical one". (p.13)

More briefly, (Al-Mutairi: 33) defines it as: "any literary text, including an act that is described or introduced in a very ironic, striking and brief narrative style".

Other scholars like (Al-Nakhilani, 2015: 4) defines the Arabic flash fiction as "A special narrative genre that is remarkably labelled by boldness, unity, intensification, irony, surprise, use of verb sentence(s), use of personification, symbolism, gesture, allusion and delusion".

Originally, the goal behind that was purely educational, aiming to put this particular form of a very short story in front of students, who needed short, but technically perfect, texts, in order to address them to their students in the classroom. In addition, the new *flash* fiction was motivated by the urgency of requirements of the neo-technical and tele-communicational lifestyle, which can no longer offer enough chance of time for reading long details. (Hamdawi: 22)

Historically speaking, the flash fiction (FF from now on) first emerged in the Arab world during the 1970s, especially in Iraq and Syria, and later in Moroccan states in the 1990s (Hamdawi: 64). Locally, in the mid-seventies, according to (Hamdawi: 67) the mass media and literary institutions in the Kingdom played the greatest role in introducing, encouraging and promoting the FF across the country. Many competitions for best narrative output were organized, for which, many material and moral awards were granted. All that led to the emergence of a large number of prominent writers who adopted this new fictional genre in much enthusiasm, so the first appearance of the FF art in Saudi Arabia in the mid-seventies was made by (Jubir Al-Mulaihan) entitled: "*The child wants it white*". Hence, definitely, Al-Mulaihan paved the way for abundance and multiplicity in writing this new form of fiction. (Al-Mutairi: 9)

Even though this newly introduced form of literature was theoretically studied, criticized, documented and archived, however, FF still raises important issues, faces many problems and obstacles, and excretes critical questions of naturalization, writing, recognition and criticism.

Later, since the beginning of the third millennium up to present, FF has revived, especially in newspapers, magazines, and on top of all, websites. This new literary art has also been revived in the media, through organized forums, seminars, national and International Arabian festivals. The FF then had more appearance in the Arab world in general, and Saudi Arabia in particular; hence, it became a worthy phenomenon, at the level of both form and content (Al-Mutairi: 11).

In this paper, I will attempt investigating some issues regarding the FF in Saudi Arabia covering the period from the early 1990s up to present, which, so far, has proven to be the golden period of the Saudi FF, because of educational and cultural progress, as well as economic prosperity. More accurately, FF will be dealt with on the level of form, discourse elements and characteristics, which distinguish it from other literary forms. Well understanding of the aesthetics of the FF first requires knowing the structures of the text, and the connotations to which it leads.

## **2- Aim of the Study**

The aim of this study is to answer the following three questions:

- 1- What are the major elements of the formal (technical) structure of the flash fiction in Saudi Arabia?
- 2- What is the flash fiction in Saudi Arabia featured by? And,
- 3- What are the most prominent implications of the Saudi flash fiction?

## **3- Methodology**

The Structural Approach, (also technically called the SPN—Scholarly Personal Narrative approach) was mainly used in the current work to search for the construction of the FF at the levels of form and content. Therefore, the procedural mechanisms of the semiotic approach were adopted in order to explore some of what is hidden behind the major symbols and metaphors in the Saudi flash fiction.

The Scholarly Personal Narrative is essentially a constructivist approach that allows the researcher to immerse himself in the text and utilize his own personal experiences to draw meaning from the FF works and vitalize them within the greater Saudi context. As Nash (2004) observes, the SPN approach is a way to “liberate” scholarly writing: “Good teaching, good helping, and good leadership are, in one sense, all about storytelling and story-evoking. As reported by (Nash, 2004: 2), "It is in the mutual exchange of stories that professionals and scholars are able to meet clients and students where they actually

live their lives". By applying the SPN research approach onto FF in Saudi Literature, the researcher can "fill the gaps" in the narrative sequences purposely left unfilled by the FF literature.

Heidelberger and Uecker (2009) state that "the scholarly personal narrative "is a constructivist research methodology that recognizes the researcher's personal experience as a valid object of study" (2). Burdell and Swadener (1999) note that in understanding literature "we seek texts that allow us to enter the world of others in ways that have us more present in their experience, while better understanding our own". (p. 21)

Worth mention, all of the FF texts used in this paper, including their bibliographic reference titles list, were carefully and professionally translated from Arabic into English by the author herself, since no such translations were ever found available by the time of writing this paper. A mixture of two interpretation methods (styles) was employed: the literary and the functional style.

#### **4- Structure of flash fiction in Saudi Arabia**

Fiction in general is a form of narrative, traditionally composed of essential elements on the level of form. These may include characters, setting (time and place), action, conflict, plot, logic and style (Galef, 2016: 18). However, as noted by (Al-Mutairi, 2013), the flash fiction seems to share some of these components, in addition to other different components that distinguish FF from other types of narrative or fiction forms. These components are discussed below.

##### **4.1 Characters**

The *character* is the backbone of the whole flash structure. (Elias, 2010: 104) reported, "FF hardly involves multiple main or secondary characters, as in the novel or the short story. It also does not contain much details related to the character(s) due to the limited act and the small *intensified* size of the flash". The flash character is created in terms of its targeted setting, moral, symbol (or theme) and plot.

In this regard, according to (Al-Mutairi, 2013: 208), two types of characterization in the Saudi FF can be distinguished:

1- *Plot-based Characterization*: where the character's illusive image is brought up rather than its actual one. An example is shown in the following flash by (Jubair Al-Mulaihan, 1999: 51):

*"Our boss called us that day... snarled on us ... "All MUST show up early!" ... forced us to sign on a written warning ... threatened to forward it to the senior management (was angrily pointing at the top) .. the next day we lined up in a long queue to sign early .. yet, our dear boss did not show up **that day!** "*

Here, the smart intensified plot in this example is apparent in the highlighted phrase: (*that day*).

2- *Mono-characterization*: in which the flash structure is wholly based on connecting plot to the main and only character. Consider the following flash by Al-Shammari titled "Pique":

*"That shy kid.. in that worn dress..*

*That kid, who was staring from afar at the candies, in wish for a taste ...*

*That little boy, who was shaking from cold ...*

*That child, who long resisted the flames of the burning sun, and the summer heat of the streets ...*

*That child then is this young boy today, who stabbed his rich fellow friend, who refused to let him sit next to him!"*

Note the link created between the only character (*the child*) and the act-based developed plot.

#### 4.2 Action (Narrative Perspective)

*Action* in fictional literature is generally defined as "anything that happens in a story. It can be an event, it can be dialogue, it can be reaction to an event or dialogue or even to another character's reaction".(Hill, 2015: 145). (Jessica Morrel, 2006) lists six different modes of narrative action: action, exposition, description, dialogue, summary and transition.

As stated by (Elias: 100), "The FF must be limited to only one single image or act. In fact, the act, itself, is not to dramatically develop into another and more complicated act(s). If that happened, then the short short-story would no longer be classified as flash". As opposed to Elias, other scholars like (Al-Mutairi: 233) believe the Saudi FF can bare a single action, yet *may* develop into three different categories:

- (1) Actual act; which is frequently glanced in flashes that are stuffed with more actions, and more functions, and which is usually marked by many past or present tense verb sentences.
- (2) Psychological act: which draws attention to the description of the character's behavior or belief; and
- (3) Ideological act: in which the action is not *actually* and directly mentioned in the flash, but rather it is believed to happen or occur depending on the reader's own ideological values and standards.

#### 4.3 Setting (Place and Time)

Place and time are essential and vital elements in the groundwork of FF art. The place works as the incubator of action(s)' space\_\_ the general framework in which the character(s) move and interact. Any text, whatever its literary genre is, must have this element as long as narrative is the basis, from which it is launched, presented and returned throughout its mechanisms and rubrics. (Al-Sharqi, 2015: 54)

The place involves within a deep and conscious psycho-rhythm in the way FF is created, so that the narrative language seems to be fully saturated with a high psychosomatic poetic state, making the place become the narrative axis in the formation of the flash (Al-Manassra, 2009: 59). This is evident in the flash entitled: "The Rug" by Al-Mulihan, where the place depicts a diagnostic metaphorical structure for a real person who suffers from many pains, especially when this place describes the real suffering as an abandoned house or as a rug that everyone slips over (Al-Mulihan: 36). In this case, the place becomes capable of revealing the emotional state of the character, and therefore the place helps understand the character within the FF:

*"Told my friend: "How great and stretched out my joy became like a spring time as I had stepped inside that old forgotten house and heard that poor old antique rug moaning! To me, his wondering eyes looked like a victory sign! I told him: "Surely, it sounded more like crying than moaning" ... I then stuck my ears over it and could hear its faint deserted whining ... like someone desperately exhausted and defeated in the game of life . "It is just a rug taking all feet!" said the friend. Oh, more was the pity when he so apathy said: "This rug never raises a head!" I called out in his face: Alas! How, then, could it possibly moan?"*

Further, place, by itself, may turn into a character, as in the case with the flash entitled: "Chairs" by (Sheima Al-Shammari, 2001: 12):

*"The chair breathed a sigh of relief after that heavy figure had been kicked out from over it ...*

*Only few days later, another one came on ...*

*He was not only heavy, but had a stinking smell too!"*

The structure of *Time* is also a fundamental element, on which the whole framework of the FF is based on. According to (Al-Manassra, 2009: 31) the time paradoxical narrative in the flash fictional text are among the most important techniques, by which the writer can give the reader an absolute unsuspecting delusion of the truth. As a matter of fact, *Time* operates as the hub, on which all the elements of suspense, rhythm and continuity count. The time paradoxes (anticipation, retrieval, etc.) arise when the reader de-codes the meaning and becomes able to figure out the untold details in the flash. At that point, the reader recognizes that the author, either anticipates some events, or retrieves social data, through the realistic events. So, while the FF relies mainly on accelerating the narrative in that it is in itself a "condensation" of acts or events, the paradoxes, however, are professionally created according to the recipient's wide imagination abilities in the first place.

Time (the horizontal dimension) and place (the vertical dimension) may both work in parallel, like, for instance, the case in the FF entitled "The Cell" by Al-Omair:

*"So peaceful, so obedient he was in his cell ...*

*Despite those long years that passed ...*

*One day, the prison warden decided to listen to his wailing in the middle of the night ...*

*Nevertheless, no one had ever shown up!"*

#### 4.4 Style

Not all Saudi flash writers write in the same linguistic potential and with excellent literary skills. However, one might conclude that the Saudi FF in recent years varied from high to average level of literary narration. Furthermore, many Saudi flash writers employ some local dialect terminology in their works in seek of more attraction and more emphasis on cultural idiosyncrasy. Generally, the Saudi FF heavily adopts an author-reader interrelationship, in which a subtle dialogue is deliberately hidden behind the intensified targeted senses and implications.

#### 4.5 Brevity

The brevity (i.e. small size) of the FF is the first genuine visual feature to catch that distinguishes it from other genres of fiction art. Because of the very small size of FF, a talented writer must be proficient enough in composing the structural intensification by use of quick and successive sentences. The best way to achieve this is through *brevity*.

In Saudi Arabia, two types of brevity methods are widely used. The first is the abbreviation or deletion when the author dispenses many terms included in the connotative context. The second is the restrictive brevity, which is based on the degree of intensification of sentences while expanding their meanings without any deletion. The following flash titled "Falling" by (Al-Shammari: 22) illustrates:

*"Decides to fly away ..*

*Up high she flew ..*

*Spread away her soul ..*

*Stretched out her arms ...*

*Yet, dropped down! ... forgotten she was wingless!"*

### **5- Discourse Analysis of Saudi FF**

Discourse is considered one of the basic technical tools that compose any literary aesthetic structure (Nash, 2009). While fiction discourse traditionally consists of four rhetorical modes: the narrative discourse; the descriptive discourse; the argumentative

discourse; and the expositive discourse (Torco, 1999: 87), the Saudi FF discourse may similarly be classified into four major types in terms of the angle from which it is seen. Here, the Saudi FF discourse is classified in terms of the communicative purpose. Consistent with (Taha, 2000: 72), they are as follows:

### 5.1 Narrative (dialogue-based) Discourse

This type of discourse recounts an integrated event or group of events, occurring by/to one or several characters within a spatial framework. The techniques of narration (i.e. storytelling) and their functions are important in the narrative work (Bell, 2014). In fact, narrative discourse is considered the criterion, on which the whole work by the author relies. The choice of the narrative discourse reveals the narrator's level of awareness of the described world (Al-Kurdi, 2005: 28). This could appear through employing the best for the flash act, characters, time and place.

As indicated by Al-Mutairi (2013), the character appears in its scientific and professional titles in the form of symbols or numbers, as it is deliberately concealed either in an aesthetic, artistic and inspirational manner, or simply in brief references. The description technique is primarily used in creating descriptive actions and exploring the character(s) dimensions and drawing the spatial and temporal environment, with all the intellectual, psychological and social connotations it reflects, which abounds in the world of the narrative text. As a typical example, let us consider again the previously mentioned flash entitled: "Chairs" by (Al-Shammar, 2001: 12):

*"The chair breathed a sigh of relief after that heavy figure had been kicked out from over it ...*

*Only few days later, another one came on ...*

*He was not only heavy, but had a stinking smell too ..! "*

Here, the author personifies the chair by turning it into a persecuted figure that everyone dislikes due to the injustice imposed on her by society. The chair represents power and recalls two characters: the first one is heavy, while the second is stinking, where the flash carries an ideological dimension as well.

### 5.2 Expressive (Subjective) Discourse

This type of discourse aims to present an image of the external or internal world through suggestive language represented by: words, phrases, similarities and metaphors that contribute to the process of realizing that particular image with all reader's sense and imagination. Here is an example flash titled "Fish" by (Al-Batran: 79):

*"Enjoying the smell of fish ..*

*Dropped himself in the water to catch one ..*

*The cat drowned .. the fish ran .. both lost!"*

### 5.3 Expositive (Descriptive) Discourse

The discourse here aims to introduce characters, facts or ideas by providing information about them in an impartial manner and in a specific language free of bias. Here is an example flash by (Al-Mulaihan: 38) titled "Two":

*"Found him hopeless in the open .. fed him .. looked after him ..*

*He was doing his job every day just fine ..*

*And when I approach ... he would happily shake his long ears of joy.*

*My little fellow, however, brays loud as he and I pass by that neighbor who is sitting on his doorstep .. whom I haven't spoken to for years!"*

## **6- Characteristics of Flash Fiction in Saudi Arabia**

There seem to be an urgent need for a theoretical framework to identify the features of the FF in Saudi Arabia, since this is considered the latest narrative form, which began to take its place in the Arab literary and cultural scene now a days. Besides, the future of this type of art witnesses great interest by Saudi writers. This section briefly discusses four major characteristics of the FF in Saudi Arabia: intensification, symbol, suggestion, and paradox.

### **6.1 Intensification**

Hamdawi (2009) stated that: "Intensification is regarded as the essential and indispensable feature in creating the flash story. It is simply the one feature, which makes the story take that very small size, based, of course, on the depth of the idea and the eloquence of language" (57). Many fictionists or novelists may fail to write this literary genre because of their inability to focus\_\_ make the idea more *intensified* by using the minimum amount of words. Intensification determines the skill of the storyteller. This is evident in the work entitled: "Biography" by Siham Al-Aboudi (Al-Aboudi , 2009: 29). The following is an example:

*"The Arabic letter "ﺀ" was originally born as "ﺀ" (i.e. with a dot)*

*But when her bullet was fired... only then she sat herself free!"*

which stands for a metaphoric sign of Saudi women's sacrifice for an eventual release from long-lasting social and cultural burdens, giving some time for the reader to understand, and leaving the door wide open for further possible interpretations and analysis.

Another example of intensification is found in the story entitled: "forgery" by Siham Al-Aboudi (Al-Aboudi: 19). Again, she describes a man who recoils a virtuous character, yet, hides another evil one inside:

*"The more he denounces his oppression ...*

*And the more he intensifies his sins,*

*The more he orders his secretary to reprint a new, revised edition of his CV, with some additional ridiculous hunches ...!"*

## 6.2 Symbolism

Symbolism, in the broad sense, as reported by (Hamdawi, 2009: 66) is considered an essential creative activity of the human mind, because it represents the human ability to practice an experience that is difficult to express openly and directly (Hittini, 2004: 113). The flash writer in particular uses symbolism when facing some kind of oppression, especially when speaking about politics, religion, and sex. because the life of the flash writer is full of various and rich human implications that are rich in symbols and connotations, where the readers participate in the process of creating their logic actions and endings, so that their impact is greater on his/her psyche, leaving a steady influence (Al-Mutairi: 70). This is evident in the flash entitled "Corruption" by (Al-Shammari, 2001: 15):

*"A total ruin has spread in the city ...*

*Searched why, they did ... and at last, found a group of small mice ...*

*Executed them, yes, they did ... yet, destruction continues!.. and the search still continues too!! "*

Apparently, the flash here symbolizes the great role that the small mice play in spreading corruption and ruin. It also symbolizes carelessness, pointlessness and effortlessness caused by corruption.

Another example of symbolism lies in the flash entitled: "Invasion" by (Al-Batran, 2001: 13) that describes a certain cave that was invaded by and controlled strangers, where they forcefully stood in it under the excuse of building it:

*"Invaded a cave in the middle of an arid mountain ...*

*Browsed deeply into it, delighted to haunt, he became ...*

*Gave much to liberate it, he claimed..*

*Insisted on occupying it upon the claim of building it ...*

*Finally, the fellows agreed that he must stay until his false claim of reconstructing it appears to be true!"*

## 6.3 Suggestion

Suggestion technique works by imposing an idea into the reader's mind, using brief and consciously thoughtful and well-organized expressions, which makes the recipient dive into the text with his thoughts, experiences and culture (Shapard, 2012: 48). This appears in many Saudi flashes, like that entitled: "The Arabic Letter (س)" meaning

(you), which stands for the inflectional suffix usually attached to verbs as a pronoun for addressing the female, by (Al-Batran, 2001: 9) again, in which he wanted to express his sincere love for (her):

*"Love her, truly he did ...*

*Gave her a golden neckless ...*

*Angrily, she took it off and threw it away in the sewer mouth; leaving it for its unknown fate ...*

*Then he wrote only two words and added a special third one:*

*(I- love-(you))*

*It was the one and only word whose letters were so hardly put together.*

*She cried hard after reading that word: (you)!"*

The golden neckless here represents a positive suggestive sign, through which the flash writer wanted her to feel his mute true love, \_\_ such a great honest love that he, himself, was unable to express frankly, perhaps for social, cultural or religious ties.

Suggestion could also be witnessed in the flash by (Al-Shammari, 2001: 37) entitled: "The Rope Got Long":

*"My grandma says: "That is a short rope!!"*

*Maybe it was, indeed ...*

*Those little strings were rolled ... joined together ... and formed a strong rope!*

*That thick thing finally was wrapped around the neck of the truth and cause for its death!!".*

The suggestion technique here implies to the fact that the tiniest mistakes committed and tolerated by humans in cold blood may develop into bigger and bigger ones until they become difficult to eliminate.

#### 6.4 Paradox

Paradox is seen as an indispensable element in the Saudi FF, as it draws the reader's attention by breaching typical or common expectations. The paradox technique, actually, may give the flash a mist of wit, or it may help deepening the sense of characters and acts (Elias, 2010: 81). An example is the paradox used in the flash entitled: "sleep" by Al-Omair:

*"On the opposite street, the women were wailing hard inside that house.*

*Approached ...*

*Went into the house ...*

*Laid beside the dead body ... and fell asleep".*

In this flash, the reader is suddenly shocked by an unexpected ending of the story, about which many question marks arise in the reader's mind.

Another example of the use of paradox appears in the story of the "The Ideal Employee" by (Al-Batran, 2001):

*"Sitting long behind his desk ...*

*Mountains of chaotic dusted papers are carelessly stacked before him...*

*At the end of the year he is awarded a medal of the ideal employee!"*

The paradox here, in addition to the ironic surprising ending, involves many critiques against unfairness, carelessness, neglect and corruption that some work environments may suffer from, which leads to widespread the feelings of oppression and frustration.

## **7- Implications and Significances of Flash Fiction in Saudi Arabia**

The FF in Saudi Arabia, as discussed by (Al-Mutairi, 2013) generally connotes the following:

### **7.1 The Social Connotation**

The flash fiction, somehow, has the ability to penetrates gently within the human soul, and monitor the repressed details inside it, and the details of the materialistic world around it. Today, the Arab citizen faces many pressures, crises and strong winds of change. Consequently, the Arab human suffers from many contradicting feelings of stress, anxiety and fear.

In recent years, new cultural and moral values appeared in Saudi Arabia as a result of social transformations, the cultural and technical developments that the country witnessed. The Saudi flash fictionists then spontaneously reflected on such changes and sufferings. However, according to (Ayoub, 2012: 37), "the Saudi FF did not directly and literarily express the reality of the heart of society, rather it seek to find the way out of those sufferings, not just by use of ironic or naive style, but also through a sophisticated literary symbolic and attractive language".

The Saudi flash writer conveys his issues and social burdens out of his own surrounding environment, describing all tiny details as much as possible. This way, the Saudi FF was able to portrait and discuss numerous social and national fateful issues such as divorce, spinsterhood, men-women relationship, parental ingratitude, children disobedience, domestic violence, status of the marginalized and the poor, openness to Western culture, ignorance, oppression, injustice, environmental issues, preference of having baby boys over girls, and so on.

## 7.2 The Religious Connotation

The Saudi society has for long been regarded as "a strong Islamic conservative, which has been very difficult to steer or change its cultural convictions except through the texts of Sharia and scholars reference consultations (fatwas) ... in fact, by-religion change could be a powerful factor in social change, cultural development, administrative and political reform. Nonetheless, any change or renewal of religion is absolutely rejected by the majority of Saudi people, who are strongly tied to an ideology linked to a divine doctrine". (Al-Salloumi, 2002: 66)

In the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, religion was split from literature in Europe. However, in a society like Saudi Arabia, intellectual and literary activity can never be isolated from religion. Indeed, there were several attempts to westernize cultural and intellectual globalization to impose itself on Islamic peoples; yet, all attempts have failed because Islam genuinely has a special and strong nature that has the ability to address any intellectual or ideological conquest. Thus, religious identity remains a factor affecting the literary product, because it is intertwined with it, nay, it may produce it.

The Saudi FF involves many religious themes. These may include faith, relation with God, prayer, justice in distribution of charity, looking after the poor, child discipline, family care, polygamy, lady's work outside home, preference of having baby boys over girls, hypocrisy, social or racial segregation, showing off, following imposters and charlatans, rejection of any anti-Islam term or philosophy, deepening the sense of Islam in the souls as a compatible religion with the nature of human being; protecting Muslim society from all mental diseases, fighting heresies, and themes alike.

## 7.3 The Symbolic Connotation

FF totally relies on connotative suggestion, intensification of carefully selected terms, avoidance of directness, abbreviation of words, intensifying significance while expanding the reader's cognitive and suggestive horizon, so that the reader is purposely aroused to reveal intents and appreciate the aesthetics of the literary work. Symbol is of an evasive nature, which requires a special conscious power to reveal all possible meanings and intents between lines.

Careful amount of ambiguity and suggestion are needed techniques to emphasize the FF symbolic implication. Symbol, by nature, is more saturated, more convincing and more informative than the direct fact. It serves many pragmatic or social purposes and human desires. People around the world have already got used to interact and communicate via symbolism.

The majority of Saudi FF used the symbolic implication to a variety of themes such as the current Arab world status, the Israeli massive conquest and terrorism, liberation, despair and hope, essence and appearance, fight against poverty and disease, globalization, colors, social/political/financial/administrative and moral corruption, etc.

## 8- Conclusion

The aim of this study was to answer the following three questions: (1) What are the major elements of the formal (technical) structure of the flash fiction in Saudi Arabia? (2) What is the flash fiction in Saudi Arabia featured by? And (3) What are the most prominent implications of the Saudi flash fiction? To do that, the study attempted to examine some typical flashes primarily by five Saudi flash writers: Al-Mulaihan, Al-Aboudi, Al-Shammari, Al-Batran and Al-Omair. By the use of The Scholarly Personal Narrative methodology of research, the data analysis revealed that the five major elements that form the structure of the Saudi FF are: character, action, setting, style and brevity. The analysis also showed that the Saudi FF is characterized by four criteria: Intensification, suggestion, symbolism and paradox. The study concluded by discussing three principal implications that the Saudi FF customarily deal with: the social, the religious and the symbolic implication.

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