

## The Seagull

El Oualid Mimoun

Translated by Mohamed Daoudi

“**Ryawi’yeth:**” From the short story collection: *Thifa’djas (The Swallows)*  
Utrecht, the Netherlands: Stichting Apuleius, 1996 (pp. 26-29, Arabic script)

The waves are rolling and lapping, before finally crashing on the rocks. The stormy sea is churning up white foam like a chewing camel. A seagull is gliding about in the sky above, and then, like a white stone that has suddenly been hurled, swoops down towards the water to snatch a fish.

At the foot of the cliff, Amarouch lay back stretching his feet on the sand.

“Fill the pipe for me, Ahmed, will you?” he said.

He leaned back and swallowed the smoke, stretching his gaze far into the distant sea. Images of what he had endured were running through his mind.

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The boat is crammed with young people from the village. The waves rock and shake the small craft, agitating and swinging the youth onboard back and forth like butter being churned out of a cream pot.

Amarouch was sitting next to Haddou, both of them clinging to a wooden plank, obstinately, determined not to let go.

“How did you manage to get the money, Haddou?” Amarouch inquired.

Haddou extended his hands showing the blisters and injuries.

“I have spent many years, brother, working my fingers to the bone making concrete, so that I could earn some savings to pay for this journey across.”

The sea is getting stormier. The water hits their faces so hard they feel like a big, strong hand is slapping them across their cheeks.

Ahmed tied a rope to his waist and then to a wooden plank. He then passed a rope to Amarouch so he could do the same thing. They passed plastic canisters to each other, and started bailing water out from the bottom of the boat.

Suddenly, they found themselves in the middle of the big sea, facing mountains of raging waves. Clinging to their wooden planks, they do not know how many days have passed. A Spanish boat draws closer.

“I think they are two dead Moors,” says the Spanish naval officer.

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The seagull is still gliding in the sky above, while Amarouch is watching.

“May God have mercy on them. But I’ll try to cross to Spain again.”

“What the hell are you talking about, Amarouch? Are you daydreaming?”

“Fill the pipe for me, Ahmed. Let me have a puff or two.”

“Illusions have never spared anyone from death, my brother. Get on your feet and let us find something useful to do and change this bitter life of ours.”

**El Oualid Mimoun** is considered today a key figure in the history of Riffian music and poetry. He was born in Ait Sidel in the region of Nador (1959). He studied philosophy at the University of Fes. His albums are today among the most popular in the Rif. His first album, *"Thunder"* (Ajjaj) came out in 1980, but was banned afterwards because of its powerful political message. He has two other albums: *"The Vagabond"* (Amtluε) in 1986, and *"The Fog"* (Thayyuth) in 1997. In 1991, he moved to the Netherlands where he published his poetry collection *"From the Innermost Depths of the Earth to the Heights of the Sky"* (zi radjaγ n tmurt γa ruεra n-ujenna) which includes some of the poems he sang in earlier albums. In 1996, he published his short story collection *"The Swallows"* (Thifadjas). El Oualid Mimoun currently lives in the Netherlands.