**Chapter 1: Introduction: The Features of Children’s Literature and Their Significance**

*“Childhood” as a Term and a Concept*

The term “children’s literature” emerged in relation to the study of childhood conception (Jenkins 1–48, Galbraith 87–205, Townsend 17). It is appropriate, then to begin this study by defining the term “childhood.” The meaning and global significance of this term is the basis for understanding the emergence of children’s literature. Shavit’s definition of childhood relies on historian Philippe Aries’s hypothesis that the term childhood emerged as a cultural phenomenon in the early seventeenth century (Shavit *Act of Childhood* 15–65, Ariès *Centuries of Childhood* 73–83). Before that, children were viewed as “miniature humans” no different from adults except for their social status (Ariès *Centuries of Childhood* 179, Baruch 35, Karabe-Jarasi 33, Mashiach 35, Shavit *Act of Childhood* 26 and 27–29, Schichmanter 9). Shavit adds that several factors contributed to the concept of childhood not appearing until that point, including the integration of children into the labor force at an early age to help support the family economically, especially among the middle class. In this pre-seventeenth-century reality, there was scant interest in writing for children (Karabe-Jarasi 33–34, Shavit *Act of Childhood* 27–29). According to Shavit, it was only later in the seventeenth century, as the nannies and housekeepers of the middle and upper classes began telling stories to entertain their young charges, that the conception of childhood emerged. These were the first stories for which children, clearly the least powerful group in society, were the intended audience. Nonetheless, these stories did not address children’s psychological needs nor were they sensitive to the nature or perspectives of children, which are completely different from those of adults. In fact, there was no distinction made between children and adults as an audience (Gabian 78, Shavit *Act of Childhood* 9).

Historian Eric Hopkins has written that it was not until the social and economic changes of the industrial age unfolded that the term or concept of childhood emerged, reflecting the improvement in living conditions and the development of schools resulting from these changes (314). Shavit confirms that the term “childhood” was formulated very gradually and first among the aristocracy before slowly being disseminated among all classes (*Act of Childhood* 24–25). Shavit affirms that works written specifically for children that first appeared in the eighteenth century were effective in fulfilling the goals of educating and child-rearing. As the attitude toward children shifted from perceiving them as those who needed to be entertained to recognizing them as a group whose education and upbringing warranted attention, the texts written for children changed as well. The style of writing also changed to better suit their needs and cognitive abilities, as identified by the burgeoning education system (Shavit *Act of Childhood* 11). This was part of a process of distinguishing between the conception of children and the conception of adults and the emergence of a new entity: the child with its particular needs. All of this, in turn, eventually led to the emergence of a literature specifically for children.

*Definition of Children’s Literature*

The study of children’s literature (for more on this term, see Bourdieu 24) is based on the view that it is a unique genre distinct from and independent of literature in general. It is therefore shaped both by the parameters and limitations imposed by children’s culture and by social expectations that this literature should play a vital role in society’s education and child-rearing systems. Children’s literature has a system and fields of activity of its own; it also has its own forms of publishing, marketing, and criticism as well as its own libraries, all quite distinct from those of adult literature (Goldberg 45, Hastings 345, Shavit *Act of Childhood* 85). Within this system, children’s literature is defined not only by its textual register, but also according to the writer and the publisher as the agents in its production. In practice, adults are the ones who choose the texts addressed to children, thereby inevitably transmitting their own values, role models, and ideals to them (Shavit *Act of Childhood* 9–11).

The approach to children’s literature in this book is inextricably related to both the nature and the dynamics of the subject matter, thus requiring an intertextuality approach. The terms of communication between the writer and the child-reader are not based on equality of language abilities, experiences, and social position. This asymmetrical communication is a central issue in the theory of children’s literature, as it clearly reflects the realities existing outside of the text (O’Sullivan 14). This asymmetry also shapes the development of the child’s reading abilities. Based on this, children’s literature must align with the requirements and capabilities of its child-readers and bridge the communicative distance between the stakeholders by adapting the language, themes, and ideas of the narrative to the age group (O’Sullivan 14). The German children’s writer Kirsten Boie formulated the questions children’s writers ask before they write for children as follows:

What can I expect of children, whose conception of language has not developed as an adult’s has, without asking a great deal of them? What must I expect from children without compromising moral, educational, and psychological demands? Perhaps the most important question for every children’s writer is: What does the “market” allow me to do? And what does it want from me? Or what does it prevent me from doing in a rapidly developing media-driven society? (O’Sullivan 14)

This asymmetry that characterizes children’s literature has an impact not only on its place in the literary polysystem (Even-Zohar 286), but also on all communicative aspects of children’s literature, beyond the linguistic boundaries. Boie poses her questions as a “real writer” of children’s texts.

Simon Chatman’s narrative theory (Chatman 21) has convincingly shown that the author does not communicate directly with the reader; rather, this communication takes place within the text itself (O’Sullivan 15, Shavit *Act of Childhood* 16) and this communicative process necessarily encompasses:

The real writer → the tacit writer → the narrator → the narratee → the tacit reader → the real reader.

While real writers “die” when writing their texts, the role of the tacit reader – the child – is to define the tacit writer (Shen 80, Harel 34, Mashiach 177, Nasi 26). This refers to the image of the real writer presented to the reader in the text, with a predominantly ideological framing of that image. Likewise, narrators, as mainstays of the narration, assist in this process, even if their presence is “masked.” The real writer must develop the narration while envisaging a particular reader with specific perceptions, imaginations, and thoughts. Hence, the real writer in this process must incorporate all aspects of the child’s reading needs into their considerations (Lucas 14–15, Rudman 12–23). Here, we are contemplating what the writer ultimately writes for children, and the most effective way for the writer to communicate their ideas to children.

Wilkie has developed a theory of intertextuality in children’s literature by focusing on the writer/reader axes. She contends that the relationship between the writer and the reader in children’s literature is an imbalanced one in power terms. Adults write for one other, but it is unusual for children to do so. In a sense, children become helpless recipients because adults choose what to write for them. Thus, children’s literature becomes an intertextual subgenre of adult literature. However, we now know, through experimental studies involving children in “intertextual games,” that, through intertextual processes, children acquire a particular text of their own beyond the text’s and its writer’s control. Thus, according to the theory of intertextuality, there is a barrier to the hegemony of one culture or worldview in children’s books written by adults, who work and are consciously or unconsciously influenced by the literature they read as children: the intertextual space. Despite children’s evident ability to “own” the text, the writer/reader relationship in children’s literature remains asymmetrical because children’s multisubject knowledge cannot be assured. The theory of intertextuality in children’s literature thus raises several questions, including: What is it required to be? What importance must be ascribed to it? For these reasons, the relationship between the components of intertextuality — writer/text/text reader/reader/context — is unique in the context of the theory of intertextuality in children’s literature.

Wilkie explains that the theory of intertextuality (179–230; see also Rose 54, Jones 287–315) is both dynamic and dialectical. The theory is also a linguistic one because the two subjects of reading and text are not only inherent in language but are also composed of it. Thus, the issue is not confined to having ideas in relation to every intertextual text. It also includes the notion that these texts have become as they are because they are dialectically interrelated, themselves products of literary, cultural, and linguistic symbols (Wilkie 179–230).

Wilkie describes the process of crossing the barrier between writer and child as one of narrating reality through merging one text with another or several texts. This process serves as the basis of the theory of intertextuality. The child-receptors, through this process of narrating reality, acquire knowledge of the literary criteria and salient features of the literary work, through which they can determine its genre. In this way they learn, albeit unconsciously, that texts that refer to others have become embodied in the original (Wilkie 179–230).

Lesnik-Oberstein identifies two types of intertextual texts in children’s literature: texts adapted from literary works and imitative texts that seek to replicate, counterpose, paraphrase, or replace the original work, often acting as the pre-text (56). Based on this approach, texts that adults address to children largely reflect the world of adults. These texts convey adults’ inner conflicts and their suitability depends on how they align with the cultural norms and mechanisms associated with children. Consequently, children’s cultural mechanisms are an integral part of the general system of culture.

Syrian children’s writer Dalal Hatim (1931–2008) expressed a similar idea in her collection of short stories *Hikāyāt min Ṭufūlat Zaynab* (Tales from Zainab’s Childhood) published in 1966. She wrote in her brief introduction to the collection:

Did you, my friends, imagine how your fathers and mothers lived when they were your young age, days when there were few luxuries and civilized resources? I will not mention anything to you in this introduction about this so as not to spoil the joy of reading and discovery. If you want more, ask your mothers to tell you about some part of their lives and it may add beautiful dimensions to what I have written for you in this book. With my love to you, the men and women of the future (Hatim 3).

The author deals with the narrative in an autobiographical manner, speaking for the narrator, the child Zainab, about the stages of her childhood, describing the Syrian home in which she grew up. Couched in the phrases that frequently appear in folk tales, such as “It is told that…” and “Once upon a time…,” the author disengages from her narrative entirely, so that the person of the author and the narrator unite due to the original narrator being unknown. The author is content to be the conduit, relinquishing creativity, because the narrator here is not committed to faithfully conveying a lived experience. Instead, she selectively chooses the elements she wants, then adds her spirituality and artistry to them to respond to the needs of the times and the requirements of educational literature.

*Folklore and Children’s Literature*

This book draws on ideas put forward by Jack Zipes, one of the pioneers of modern theory on folklore. According to this theory, each work that adults create for children reflects the views of those adults (Zipes, *Oxford Companion* 65–121; see also Al-Shamas 102, Shavit *Act of Childhood* 34–56). The cultural knowledge of the child, still in its formative stage, is lacking due to a paucity of experience. In this context, the use of folklore within children’s literature is a crucial means of shaping national identity through the texts in which folklore is used. Confronting children with their heritage is, therefore, a vital task. This is especially critical in the early stages of childhood, as their imagination becomes active between the ages of five and nine. The world of fiction to which they are usually exposed tends to be one inhabited by strange fairies, witches, giants, dwarves, and other such creatures (Zipes, *Oxford Companion* 14). Consequently, what is needed is selective and astute deployment of instructive folklore tropes reflective of the important role played by this type of literature.

Zipes adds that folklore powerfully contributes to the development of children’s mental, emotional, and social capacities by shaping their personalities and attitudes. Through folk heritage, language and content are incorporated into the imagination. Drawing children into this environment stimulates emotions and fosters excitement, which has the greatest impact on nurturing children’s personalities, ameliorating their behavior, and steering the path of their lives for the better. Zipes argues that orally transmitted folklore, with its highly suggestive methods and the power of its symbolism, helps children focus their attention on it and commit it to memory, thus expanding their expressive range and linguistic resources and enabling them to acquire the ability to understand situations and solve social problems presented to them (Zipes, *Creative Storytelling* 23).

Beyond personality development, Zipes contends that the most important aims of using folklore in children’s literature are to introduce children to their heritage and history, to deepen their sense of national affiliation and identity, and to link them to the past (Zipes 15, Zipes 155. He argues that folklore has been the main source for children’s literature in the modern era, with many writers in Europe — such as Francis Osborne (1593–1659), Charles Perrault (1628–1703), Robert Samber (1682–1745), the “Brothers Grimm” – Jacob (1785–1863) and Wilhelm (1786–1859)[[1]](#footnote-1) – and Hans Christian Andersen (1805–1875)[[2]](#footnote-2) — being inspired by folklore in all its forms and deploying it in their stories.

Bacchiliga also urges the use of folklore in children’s literature, modifying it to take into account new values it can embody and functions it can have. Children’s literature can also be used to retell folk tales by continually building, creating, and evaluating them anew (24). Another scholar, Abdullah Abu Hayf identifies two kinds of reasons for employing folklore as a source in children’s literature:

(a) Conceptual reasons: Folklore provides ready grounds for narratives which facilitate the process of communication because folklore is ultimately a cultural element transmitted from one generation to the next and constitutes a large part of the collective memory.

(b) Educational reasons: Folklore is more powerful for addressing educational weaknesses, as the child is able to interact with folktales (112).

According to Abu Hayf, one of the most important aspects of using folklore in children’s literature is that it can inspire. By this he refers to the writer’s efforts to create a new literary work based on the form or content of while adapting to the spirit of the contemporary age (121). Al-Shamas finds that using folklore is not a simple matter, because it requires the children’s writer to understand the heritage involved while seriously reconsidering it with scrutiny, scholarly criticism, and objective formulation. It is in this way that children come to terms with their heritage through a new vision, even if it leads to the modifying of the original text in favor of the new ideas presented (103–04).

To benefit from folk heritage, continual renewal is needed in order to respond to ever-changing conditions. Furthermore, two leading and closely-related components of folklore must be reconciled. The first is the historical component that represents a people and their ideas over the course of different eras. The second is the functional component evident in the potential to deploy these ideas within a new framework with the aim of preserving this heritage’s identity and shaping the response of children who encounter it. It reinforces identity through folklore, an approach we can call folkloric inspiration (Hamami 116, al-Shammas 103–105).

*Using Folklore in Arabic Children’s Literature*

Nasir Ahmad has reviewed the motives that have prompted many writers of Arab children’s literature to employ folklore in their works. He views the defeat of June 1967 in the Six-Day War with Israel as having had a significant impact on the Arab literary movement in general and on Arab children’s literature in particular, as these events inevitably led to a review of all areas of life. Intellectuals and writers came to believe that as a result of this process of reappraisal, the changes they had dreamed of making could be realized by future generations. As a result, they took it upon themselves to educate these generations in both national and international human values, often employing folklore in their work to do so. The motivations and aims of writing are largely the same for all serious intellectuals and writers across the Arab cultural map. Therefore, in employing folklore, their literature has contributed to strengthening national identity and to clarifying its character in the minds of children (Ahmad 6–7 and 76–77, Jabir 21–23).

One writer who cherished folklore and employed it to promote the concept of nationalism to children was the Syrian poet Sulayman al-ʿIsa (1921–2012). Abu Hayf notes that al-ʿIsa was deeply immersed in folklore and deployed it in the children’s literature he wrote after 1967 (205). Al-ʿIsa believed that Arab children needed a cultural rehabilitation to meet the new conditions in the Arab world. He wrote poems and hymns inspired by popular songs that were collected in a ten-part divan, *Ghannū yā Aṭfāl* (Sing, Oh Children! 1977). Presenting diverse folkloric devices and forms to children, al-ʿIsa states the following:

Two basic elements are necessary to address heritage: a new vision and a new language. The new vision enriches the past, breathes life into it, and engenders new blood in the arteries of the present; a rich tributary to the river of tomorrow that cannot freeze or cease. The new language is the means that makes this past tangible, a cherished thing that lives with us, and bears our aspirations and dreams ... It is the secret of renewal, and we stretch out our hand to heritage; we want to resurrect it from its long slumber (Abu Hayf 205).

Similarly, the Syrian writer Zakaria Tamer (1931–) has used folklore as a means of creating children’s stories with novel implications. He has drawn on ancient heritage and modernity in form and ideology, as in his collection *Limāḏā Sakata al-Nahr* (Why the River Was Silent, 1973) and the story “*Al-Jarrād fi-l Madīna*” (The Locusts in the City, 1982) (Qaranya 23).

Interest in folklore in children’s stories notably took another direction in the early 1980s. Originally deploying folklore in children’s stories to foster national identity and a sense of Arab belonging, their most pressing motivation for employing their local folklore now became their fear of losing their country’s heritage. These changes fostered interest in local folklore as an important source of inspiration linked to real life and of national heritage (Khuri *Al-Fulklūr* 60). Consequently, writers’ new inclination to deploy local heritage in children’s stories was reflected in the increase in academic studies of children’s literature that began to appear in certain Arab countries. In a study he conducted on the nationalist content in children’s literature in Jordan, Mahmoud al-Dibaʾ confirms that writers living in Jordan had begun using local folklore in their writings, especially songs, specifically to promote nationalism, especially in the early 1980s. Al-Dibaʾ adds that these writers did so to introduce children to their local heritage and to deepen their sense of belonging to the homeland, both of which support adherence to the national identity and develop children’s imaginations (99–105). For example, Jordanian writer Fakhri Kawar (1945–) introduces folkloric elements into his 1991 short story “*Ḥadīth maʿ Umaymah*” (Conversation with Umaymah), which describes the life of Jordanian villages in past decades and presents the Jordanian traditional folk games prevalent at the time (Miqdadi *Al-Qiṣṣa* 45).

We find this tendency to draw on local folklore among Syrian writers as well. For example, the writer Aref Al-Khatib (1946–) has drawn on Syrian folk tales and proverbs and transformed them into modern stories, such as in his tale “*Al-Thaʿlab wa-l Dajāja*” (The Fox and the Hen) in the 2008 collection *Mamnūʿ al-Ḍaḥk* (Laughing is Forbidden) (Qaranya 52). Works bearing the name of the country in their titles are notable in this context. For example, the Syrian writer Raja ʿAli Huwayla (1962) wrote a collection of stories entitled *Kāna Yā Mā Kāna Ḥikāyāt min Bilād al-Shām* (Once Upon a Time Tales from the Levant, 1996). A similar tendency is evident with the writer Khair El-Din Obaid (1954–) in the story “*Ḥikāyat Thalāth Layāl*” (The Tale of Three Nights) from the 2004 collection *Ḥikāyāt Shaʿbīya li-l Aṭfāl* (Popular Tales for Children). His tales drew on his environment, and he adopted the formulae prevalent in Aleppo and Idlib at the time (Qaranya 204–07).

The Egyptian Abdel Tawab Youssef (1921–2015) also took inspiration from folklore in his stories and plays. He deployed Egyptian proverbs in his 1987 play “*Juhā wa Shajarat al-Arnab*” (Juha and the Rabbit Tree) and wrote a popular 2002 story entitled “*ʿAwdat al-Saddīq*” (The Return of Al-Saddiq), in which he used Egyptian folklore relating to such matters as folkloric customs and traditions (Ghanim 251).

Interest in folklore increased significantly with the dawn of the third millennium: websites dealing with children’s literature proliferated, and writers who recognized the critical importance of exposing children to folklore began publishing their works in online magazines. In this regard, Qaranya says that this leap was a spontaneous response to the turmoil of globalization, which seeks to eliminate cultural particularity on the one hand and to link children to their past and family heritage on the other hand (14).

*The Relationship of Children’s Literature to Palestinian Folklore*

Folklore in its various forms has proven an effective tool in constructing texts for children. Writers are able to rediscover the past in the light of present phenomena, in all its human and social dimensions, and reshape it once again. Anyone who has followed how folklore was used in Palestinian children’s texts before 1967 will note that it was used directly for national political purposes only, without the functional educational goal.

In the late 1980s, and especially after the 1987 “First Intifada,” those who were prominent rebels against traditional children’s literature reached the apogee of their influence, as renewal began to impose its presence on its artistic forms. It was at that time that the use of Palestinian folklore became one of the most important general literary devices, in Palestinian children’s literature in particular. The events of this time necessitated a review of all aspects of life among the Palestinian people, especially children. Palestinian writers came to believe that the next generation could bring about the desired changes. As a result, they made it their task to educate these generations on national and human values and used the Palestinian folklore to inculcate national values in their writing. Their writings contributed to strengthening the Palestinian national identity and clarifying it in the minds of children.

With the passage of time, this use of Palestinian folklore became a prominent phenomenon in texts. The sources of its heritage diversified, as did the methods of its deployment. At the same time, new trends in children’s literature emerged, including that of renewal, which adopted the idea of inspiring readers through employing folklore. It is noticeable that it took time for this form of inspiration to mature on a technical level. The folkloric aspects appeared randomly and did not seem to serve the literary construction of the text. In the 1990s, the employment of folklore took another turn, as the folkloric elements went beyond the simple narrative and became an essential element in symbolic construction. Thus, communication between the past and the present took place through the symbols of folklore, with wide-ranging connotations, as the writers of this period sought to employ the folkloric elements artistically as expressions of the concerns of and issues faced by contemporary Palestinians.

Given the development of children’s literature styles and trends in the late 1990s, we discover a new way in which Palestinian folklore can provide inspiration in literature directed at children and from one writer to another, from a variety of perspectives. By this time, Palestinian folklore was being dealt with in a more conscious manner than ever before. Literary forms multiplied; the traditional elements inspired by the texts varied, and their allusiveness were exploited to convey new types of content. Thus, it was at this time that the Palestinian folklore became a key source of creativity for many writers who wrote for children.

In this way, Palestinian children’s writers’ level of artistic awareness and use of folklore evolved with time. These writers first used folklore in children’s literature based on their awareness of their cultural heritage and desire to revive it. Later, the use of folklore and its presence as a source of inspiration in stories became an important part of the literature’s inherent structure and artistry.

*Summary*

Writing for child-readers with the aim of educating them to meet their social and psychological needs began in the early eighteenth century. Texts then reflected a change in perspective toward children themselves. Subsequently, the conception of children changed fundamentally and the need to educate them emerged as an imperative, not only at home but also at school. This new mission dominated the eighteenth century, which led writers to adopt a predominantly romantic view of childhood. This led to a change in the style of literature addressed to children, making it compatible with their needs and cognitive abilities as determined by the education system. Children’s literature, while considered part of the education system, is based on its own systems. It has its own fields of activity, marketing, publishing, libraries, and criticism distinct from adult literature. The study of children’s literature thus differs from that of literature in general, given that the former field is a discrete and independent discipline.

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**Chapter 2: The History of Palestinian Literature for Children**

*Introduction*

Many Palestinian writers in Israel, the West Bank, Gaza, and the diaspora have contributed to the development of Palestinian children’s literature. This chapter focuses on the general history of this literary sub-genre from 1967 to the present.

Elad-Bouskilia considers Palestinian literature as that which is written by Palestinians. This definition was unproblematic only until 1948, with every Palestinian who wrote literature, whether within or outside Palestine until 1948, deemed a Palestinian writer. However, 1948 was a turning point, as the Palestinian literary community became divided between those who lived and wrote inside Israel and those who did so outside. Elad-Bouskilia believes that the questioning of whether some were Palestinian writers at all was driven by political considerations and not by how those writers defined themselves (Elad-Bouskilia 14–24, Cohen 122, Gottsfeld 76).

Hussam al-Khatib defines Palestinian literary writers as those Arab citizens who had habitually resided in Palestine until 1947, whether they subsequently remained or were exiled, along with everyone born to a Palestinian Arab father after this date, whether inside or outside the country. He argues that there are various impediments to applying this definition, including issues related to nationality and law. A large proportion of Palestinians live abroad in Arab and other countries and may or may not have a formalized nationality status. They may also contribute to the economy of the country in which they live, including literary and artistic production. Thus, Palestinian literary production has become heterogeneous, developing in a variety of environments and subject to diverse experiences. Some of it has remained faithful to the concept of a recognizable Palestinian Arab literature, but some is entirely assimilated into the literature of the place in which it is produced. Despite such complexities in defining what Palestinian literary identity encompasses, al-Khatib believes that the term Palestinian literature includes everything produced by those of Palestinian origin, whether within the original borders or in the diaspora (al-Khatib 21–23).

*Palestinian Children’s Literature in the Mandate Period up to 1948*

Several historical and political factors contributed to the crystallization of a sense of Palestinian belonging in the children’s literature of the Mandate era (formally speaking, 1923–48). The most important of these were the emergence of the Zionist project, the 1917 Balfour Declaration, and the formalization of the British Mandate for Palestine (al-Asad 195–208, Jibran 16–18). Palestinian aspirations to assert their own identity began to emerge in literature and politics in response to these developments. Palestinians perceived an imminent danger to their homeland and sought to express their patriotic sentiments toward it through poetry and prose. This led to the emergence of a distinctly Palestinian national literature (Jibran 16–18). The development of formal education, establishment of printing presses, and emergence of political and cultural associations also contributed to its development. Arabic also became an official language in place of the Turkish of the now-defunct Ottoman Empire (al-Asad 195–208, al-Shaʿbi 25).

Some writing aimed at children had emerged from these early Palestinian literary flowerings, even as early as the late nineteenth century, but only sporadically. Certain Palestinian educators made an early contribution to modern Palestinian culture by focusing on and writing for children, especially textbooks. This sharpened an awareness of children’s status within society and fostered an incipient literature directed at Palestinian children. It is, of course, impossible here to discuss every such literary product in detail, so we will confine ourselves to the writers who most significantly contributed to the emergence of writing for children: Khalil Beidas (1874–1949),[[3]](#footnote-3) Khalil Sakakini (1878–1953), Isaaf al-Nashashibi (1885–1948), Iskandar al-Khuri al-Beitjali (1889?–1973), Ishaq Musa al-Husseini (1904–90), Ibrahim Tuqan (1905–41), and Mustafa al-Dabbagh (1898–1989). Before examining these writers individually, we should preface the discussion by saying that, in general, their knowledge of foreign languages and cultures was an important factor in shaping their political and social awareness (Jibran 18).

Khalil Baydas wrote a series of educational books for primary school pupils between 1898 and 1924, the first of which was the 1898 *al-ʿAqd al-Thamīn fī Tarbiyat al-Banīn* (The Precious Covenant of Educating Boys). He has also translated many stories from around the world (al-Asad 31–35). Al-Nashashibi is considered the first to have written poetry for Palestinian children, compiling them in a 1927 book, *Ashʿār ʿArabiyya* (Arabic Poems). In the same year, he issued an anthology of children’s songs entitled *Al-Bustān* (The Garden) (Salih *al-Nashāshībī* 12). The poet al-Baytjali published the book *Al-Ṭifl al-Munshid* (The Child Singer) in 1936 and another entitled *al-Mathal al-Manẓūm* (The Poetic Ideal) in 1937.

Al-Sakakini is considered the first to have written short stories for children. In 1942, he published the book *al-Jadīd* (The New), written in ascending degrees of sophistication to reflect children’s growing perceptibility. His stories are derived from contemporary realities as well the popular heritage of the Palestinian people (*Mawsūʿ* vol. IV, 242). Al-Husayni published stories for schoolchildren between 1944 and 1947, including *Mudhakkirāt Dajāja* (A Chicken’s Recollections), *ʿAwdat al-Safīna* (The Ship’s Return), and *al-Kalb al-Wafī* (The Faithful Dog). Tuqan enriched the textbooks used in Palestine’s schools with poems and national paeans (Fasha *Dalīl* 127). Al-Dabbagh, a Department of Education inspector in the 1930s, took pains to ensure students had books to read in schools (al-Shaʿbi 30). The books published during this period were for systematically pedagogical purposes and presented themselves in a directly declarative way (Abu Bakr). Writers and educators in the Mandate era generally produced children’s literature in reflexive defense of the Palestinian identity, notably in the face of the Zionist movement (al-Shaʿbi 37).

*Developments in Local Palestinian Children’s Literature After 1948*

*Al-Nakba* (The Disaster) in 1948 and subsequent establishment of the State of Israel was accompanied by the emigration of numerous Palestinians writing for adults and children to many other countries. Those Palestinians who remained in Israel were subject to military rule by the Israeli state authority until 1956, becoming minority community members subject to restrictions after military rule was lifted in 1956. The Israeli authorities took control of the Arab educational stream and implemented educational policies aligned with their goals. This narrowed Palestinians’ opportunities to write for children beyond the strictures of those policy requirements and even limited the chances of children to become acquainted with works produced in the Arab world.[[4]](#footnote-4) As a result, the children’s literature produced was low in quantity and quality, little different from that preceding *al-Nakba*. This although some Palestinian writers continued to write for children in officially approved school textbooks. The approach to writing in this period, like that preceding it, was pedagogical in nature, and mostly consisted of songs aimed at pupils. Prominent writers in this regard were Manʿam Haddad (1919–1997) and Georges Naguib Khalil (1932–2001).

Beyond these textbooks, Mahmud Abbasi (1931–) and Jamal Qaʿwar (1930–2013) wrote stories inspired by ancient Arab history and world heritage, both seeking to emulate the work of Kamil Kilani (1897–1959). That said, pupils would have readily detected the pedagogical aims of these short stories, which sought to introduce schoolchildren to Arab and Islamic history in suitably simple language (Abu Fanna *Ittijahāt,* Abu Fanna *Mirāyā* 23*,* Abu Fanna *Al-Qissa* 43). In the wake of Abbasi and Qaʿwar’s efforts, there was something of a revival in local writing aimed at children. Between 1960 and 1967, 24 books were published from children, whereas only two had been issued from 1948 to 1960. The Arabic-language magazine *Al-Yawm li-Awlādinā* (Today for our Children), affiliated with Israel’s Labor Party, was also first published in 1960 (Abu Fanna *Āfāq* 95). However, most short stories remained directed at schoolchildren as such rather than toward the young generation in a more general sense. Ancient folk tales and the Arabized traditional heritage invoked in them served as the key source for children’s literature, with scant reference made to the children’s real life and environment (ʿAlaynat *Bayn al-Tarbiya* 13).

In the early 1960s, after the end of Israeli military rule, there was significant growth in local Palestinian literature, with the first wave of educated Palestinian young people beginning to take up positions in many fields of work, including the cultural sector. Schools were the nexuses for raising educational and cultural levels, shaping the characters of their pupils, refining their creative talents, and encouraging them to give something back. The contours of a new era overlaid those of the previous period, marking the emergence of *al-Tayyār al-Wāqiaʿī* (the Realist Tendency). The general impact of this era on the nature of Palestinian literature became clear after the 1967 Six-Day War (Elad-Bousikilia 14–27), with Palestinian children’s literature in Israel becoming increasingly removed from developments in the Arab world. While authors tended to write more frequently for adults, there was no significant change in such writing for quite some time, and there was very little literature written for children until the early 1970s. The opportunities to read children’s literature did significantly expand, with more materials provided to libraries after the occupation of the West Bank and Gaza. Most of it was written by Egyptian writers such as Muhammad al-Harawi (1885–1939), Muhammad Saʿid al-Aryan (1905–1964), and Kamil Kilani. These were the only such resources targeted at children in Israel beyond ordinary schoolbooks (Ghunayim *Al-Madār* 46–47).

The gradual opening up of possibilities, however, increased writers’ cultural and social awareness. Soon, Palestinian society’s view of children and childhood changed, with enhanced focus on their children, so central to the lives and activities of the community (Yahya *Taʾthīr* 218). Voices began to be raised calling for a vernacular literature dealing with local realities and problems arising from the particularities of the environment and conditions. *Al-Tayyār al-Wāqiaʿī* burgeoned within the children’s literature of this period. Literature addressed at children in Israel evinced a tendency, at least among some writers, to document local realities, focusing on village and community ties, nature, customs, traditions, respect for one’s family elders, and all aspects of these matters. Mustafa Murrar (1929–2021) was one such writer, most of his stories being inspired by the pre-1948 Palestinian countryside and its realities. His focus on the past, evident through his deployment of vernacular expressions in his short stories, was a prominent feature of his writing for children (Yahya “Ṣūrat”201–27).

Another trend that emerged in this period was *Al-Tayyār al-Siyāsī* (the Political Tendency). The writings of *ʿ*Abd-al-Latif Nasser (1944–1991) are representative of this trend, bearing a decidedly political character[[5]](#footnote-5) and being trenchantly critical of authority and the violence Palestinians faced in their own homes. We can see this, for example, in his 1982 short story “*Ana Lā*” (Not I), which appeared in a collection bearing the same title, and in the tale in that collection, “*al-Malik al-Qazam*” (The Dwarf King), which describes the Jordan regime’s oppression of the Palestinians in the camps there.[[6]](#footnote-6)

There were also increased efforts in this period to gather folk heritage material for use in children’s short stories. Abdullah Ayshan (1935–2009), a prominent writer using this approach, published stories and plays inspired by Palestinian heritage between 1973 and 1980, using simple vocabulary, the classical language (*al-Fuṣḥā*), and a folktale style of narration, often featuring familiar popular figures, such as character of *al-ghūl* (the ghoul) (Yahya *Taʾthīr* 225). Munim Haddad (1940–) adopted a similar approach in his 1978 collections inspired by Palestinian folk tales entitled *Ṭāʾir al-Burhajān* (The Glitter Bird) and *Qiṣaṣ Shaʿbīya Maḥalīya* (Local Folktales) (Fasha *Dalīl* 55). Abbasi and Qaʿwar continued translating and Arabizing stories and plays drawn from world heritage and Hebrew literature between the years 1969 and 1986 (Fasha *Dalīl* 158), while Khalil continued producing his educational textbooks for schoolchildren.

In 1986, Jamīʿat Aṣdiqāʾ al-Aṭfāl al-ʿArab (Friends of Arab Children Association) decided to publish a new children’s magazine, *al-Ḥayat lil-Aṭfāl* (Life for Children), which aimed to direct domestic Palestinian children’s literature toward a greater commitment to Palestinian identity. Writer and its editor-in-chief, Muhammad Badarna (1956–), declared that the magazine’s mission was to serve both the homeland and the diaspora, adding:

Reinforcing the identity of children within the homeland is a goal that we must achieve in relation to every aspect of childhood. Given this standpoint, the Association has initiated a modern-style magazine in Arabic dealing with children’s literature with aims related to our heritage and identity.[[7]](#footnote-7)

Analysis of literary texts aimed at Palestinian children within Israel in the 1980s indicates that writers continued exploring these themes in the same vein. Mustafa Murrar, for example, continued publishing stories inspired by the Palestinian countryside. His 1988 collection *Awrāq Maṭrūd al-Halwāni* (Matrud al-Halawani’s Papers) includes 12 stories about the writer’s childhood under the British Mandate, inspired by his mission to preserve the memory of an important period in his people’s history (Abu Hajla 563–68).

The early 1990s were marked by major social, economic, and cultural changes in the Palestinian community within Israel. They prompted, among other things, a rapidly growing interest in children’s literature. Many cultural institutions emerged that took an interest in children’s literature, such as the Dar al-Ṭifl al-ʿArabī (The House of the Arab Child) in Acre under the supervision of the Jamīʿat al-Nisāʾ al-ʿAkkiyāt (Acre Women’s Association). One of its goals was to improve the cultural and educational level of pre-school children by publishing books aimed at them. It published *Alʿāb Tarbawīya li-Jīl al-Ṭufūla* (Educational Games for the Early Childhood Generation) in 1990 and *Hayyā Nalʿab wa-Natasallā fī Shahr Ramaḍān* (Hey, Let’s Play and Have Fun During Ramadan) in 1992 (Fasha *Dalīl* 158), both books relying more on illustrations than words, aiming to strengthen the Arab community in Israel’s collective sense of belonging and to focus on Palestinian customs and traditions.[[8]](#footnote-8)

In addition, several centers devoted to Arab-language children’s literature were established in Israel, starting with the Markaz Adab al-Aṭfāl (Center for Children’s Literature) at the Arab Academic College for Education in Haifa in 1995, through the Markaz Adab al-Aṭfāl al-ʿArabī fī Isrāʾīl (Center for Arab Children’s Literature in Israel) in Nazareth in 1995, the Markaz Thaqāfat al-Ṭifl (Center for Children’s Culture) in the Al-Aswar Foundation in Acre in 2005, and to the Markaz Adab al-Aṭfāl (Center for Children’s Literature) in Al-Qasimi College of Academic Education in Haifa in 2007.[[9]](#footnote-9) All of these promoted awareness about the importance of children’s literature, holding conferences and publishing research on the topic. They also encouraged authors to write for children by publishing such works themselves. The number of children’s books translated from Hebrew to Arabic has also markedly increased since that period. These institutions do not, however, operate on clear criteria when selecting children’s stories for publication, as these vary in quality and content and some topics are pursued somewhat repetitively (ʿAlaynat *Bayn al-Tarbiya* 12).

Setting their sights beyond the short story that has predominated in children’s literature, some institutions have become interested in poetry aimed at children, as is evident in works by Qaʿwar and Shakib Jahshan (1936–2003) in particular. The 1990s also witnessed the emergence of new poets, such as Fadil Ali (1952–), Lamis Kanana (1961–), and Ahmed Sawalha (?–). Children’s poems of this period tend to focus on young readers’ needs by placing children as the central protagonists. For example, most of the pieces in Fadil Ali’s 1995 poetry collection *Khaddī kal-Ward* (My Rosy Cheek) are educational in character, both by conveying messages aimed at children and by containing guidance for teachers and parents. Ali’s 1996 *Lī al-Dunyā* (The World is Mine) and 2001 *Insān* (Humanity) anthologies continue this educational approach of seeking to develop children’s independent personalities.

The use of the colloquial dialect is also a notable phenomenon in the children’s poetry of that period, with Ahmad Sawalha’s undated *Qaws Qazaḥ* (Rainbow) and the work of Qaʿwar prominent in this regard. We also find a noticeable increase in the publication of poems that express both patriotism and a longing for the past.[[10]](#footnote-10) Qaʿwar’s poems, for example, tend to be patriotic in tone, expressing his powerful sense of connection to Palestinian heritage and desire to link the past to the present. His poetry frequently draws on popular expressions and proverbs. Kanana also seeks to introduce children to the history of the homeland, from the Galilee to Jerusalem to Bethlehem, and to deepen their sense of belonging to the homeland by depicting the nature of the terrain, with its plains, mountains, and trees, and exalting the glories of the Palestine’s past.

Along with these poems’ direct expressions of patriotism and nostalgia, we also find many writers drawing considerably on folklore in their short stories, suitably modified for today’s generation while preserving its original and distinctly Palestinian spirit. Abbasi, for example, decidedly focuses on documenting Palestinian heritage in a new way. He also tries to acquaint children with crafts on the verge of extinction by artistically reformulating popular songs from the past using allusions and narrative in a way that matches the spirit of the modern era. He explains that his allusions to Palestinian heritage seek to embed and nourish the roots of Palestinian identity in the hearts of children.[[11]](#footnote-11) Another prominent writer also putting a modern twist on local folklore is Abdullah ʿAyshan, whose stories are all based on Palestinian folk tales but reformulated to make them popular with contemporary children. Nabiha Jabbarin (1951–) adopts clear aims, methods, and vision in drawing on Palestinian folklore in her short stories. Her 2001 book *Aghānī Awlādinā Intimāʾ li-Bilādinā* (The Songs of Our Children [and] Belonging to our Country) addresses Palestinian children through popular ballads, reminding them of these almost forgotten songs.

Other writers have emerged who work via independent or semi-official channels, allowing them to add a political dimension to their stories for children through allusions and symbolism. For example, Yacoub Hijazi’s (1947–) 2009 short story “Buḥayrat Marḥabā” (Marhaba Lake) does not mention the Palestinian *Nakba* directly, but in coded language when the lake dries up and the fish come out on the shore in search of salvation. The lake in the story symbolizes Palestine and the writer’s preoccupation with a sense of place is evident, especially in the face of attempts to obliterate its original identity. Ahmed Hussein (1939–) also talks about Palestine through symbolism in the short story “Khalīl wa-Jalīl” ( Khalil and Jalil), in which he describes both the northern and southern parts of the country and gives the characters placenames. Ain Ghazal in the story is a beautiful girl whose heart Khalil and Jalil duel over, but it is also no secret that this name is also that of a destroyed and deserted Palestinian village located on the Carmel plains south of Haifa. The symbolism here is clear (Muhammad Hamad 48–50).

This period also witnessed a great cooperation between West Bank writers and Israeli educational institutions in the field of children’s literature. The best example of this cooperation is the 1996 *Mawsūʿat al-Turāth al-Shaʿbī al-Filasṭīnī lil-Aṭfāl* (Encyclopedia of Palestinian Folk Heritage for Children) compiled by Abd-al-Latif al-Barghuti and published in *al-Ḥayat lil-Aṭfāl*. Sonya Nemer (1955–), who lives in the West Bank, has also published her works via the Al-Aswar Foundation, notably her 2007 short story “Mandūra.” Such works for children have been accompanied by an increased awareness of their importance and role in raising children and shaping their characters. Children’s joys and sufferings are expressed in some of these works, while others deliberately depict child characters as creative and proactive.

Within all these developments in children’s stories published in Israel, a revisionist trend has emerged that seeks to distance itself as much as possible from pedagogical literature and embrace a literature for children in which all literary dimensions can be enjoyed. Naim Araidi (1950–2015) well-known for his adaptation of Palestinian poet Mahmoud Darwish’s (1941–2008) poem “Ana Yūsuf yā Abī” ( “I Am Yusuf, Oh My Father”) for children, was one writer who embraced this trend. Likewise, Yaʿqub Hijazi selected Darwish’s poems entitled “*ʿAlā Hādhihi al-Arḍ Mā Yastahiqq al-Ḥayat*” (What Deserves Life in this Land). In his introduction to the 2008 book, Hijazi wrote:

The choice was difficult, due to the diversity of the contents of the poems and the distinctiveness in thought and language, but I envisaged the easiest text and the one closest to children’s souls and worlds. This poetry is interspersed with seductive language charged with honest human emotions and radiating beauty, joy, and love. (Hijazi 5)

Another trend has emerged in the twenty-first century that focuses on propagating religious culture and symbolism among children. This religious trend is evident in the 2005 magazine *Ishraqa* (Sunrise) affiliated with the northern branch of the Islamic Movement in Umm al-Fahm, which in 2009, began publishing the magazine *Ishraqa lil-Aṭfāl* (Ishraqa for Children) based on an Islamic perspective. Short stories for children from a religious perspective have also begun to appear (Czernitskyi *HaBiniat* 14). Murrar published a number of religious stories in 2003, including “Khurūf al-ʿĪd al-Saʿīd” (The Happy Eid Sheep), “al-Ḥajj wa-ʿĪd al-Aḍḥā” (Hajj and Eid al-Adha), “Ramaḍān” (Ramadan), “al-ʿĪd al-Saʿīd” (The Happy Eid), “Ḍayf Ramaḍān” (The Ramadan Guest), and “Ṣumnā wa-ʿAyyidnā” (Our Fasting and Our Eid) (Fasha *Al-Bīblyūgrāfiyā* 61). Abbasi has also published religious short stories including “*Hāla wa-Hilāl* *Ramaḍān*” (Hala and the Crescent Moon of Ramadan), “*Yāmin wa-Khurūf al-ʿĪd*” (Yamin and the Sheep of Eid), “Duʿāʾ wa-ʿĪd al-Aḍḥā” (Duʿa and Eid al-Adha), and “Silsilāt al-Qurʾān al-Karīm” (The Holy Qur’an Series). Likewise, Araidi published short stories in 2002 that focus on cultural and religious symbolism, including “Darajāt al-Miʾdhana” (The Steps of the Minaret), “al-Fiṣḥ” (Easter), and “al-Mīlād” (Christmas) (Fasha *Al-Bīblyūgrāfiyā* 49–51).

*The Fragmenting of Palestinian Children’s Literature Since 1948*

Arabic-language children’s literature fragmented in Israel after *al-Nakba*. The vast majority of writers left for neighboring Arab countries in its wake, eventually becoming subject to the curricula prevailing in them, despite their divergences and contradictions (Ahmad 20).[[12]](#footnote-12) In the face of these new circumstances, writers continued to publish, each in their own way, while a new generation arose in the diaspora, some of whom became known as writers from the country in which they came to reside. For example, the works of Rawdat al-Hudhud, though she a Palestinian born in Jaffa, are considered Jordanian literature (Miqdadi *Al-Qiṣṣa* 34).

There was little writing for children in the diaspora in this period, although some authors continued to produce poetry, songs, and anthologies for children to study in school. These books represented a form of continuity with the pre-1948 educational approach. Literature was directed mostly to adults, but the authors sometimes saw in it something suitable for children, whether in terms of artistic construction or content (ʿAlaynat 2013 9). The language of some of the songs, such as those of ʿAbd-al-Karim al-Karmi (1910–1980) and Khalil al-Sakakini, was in a factual, reporting style, making it alien to children’s cognitive levels and vocabularies (al-Musallah *Adab al-Aṭfāl fil-Urdun: Al-Wāqiʿ wal-Ṭumūḥ* 43–45). Other writers documented Palestinian life before and after 1948, with the aim of “reviving Palestine” in literary terms. This period is evidently characterized by depiction of and nostalgia for the homeland. Radi ʿAbd-al-Hadi (1910–82), ʿAbd-al-Raʾuf al-Masri (1896–1960), and Fayyiz al-Ghul (1910–72). The last of these wrote between 1955 and 1966, penning stories inspired by Palestinian folk tales such as “al-Dunyā Ḥikāyāt” (The World is Stories), “Asātīr min Bilādī” (Legends from My Country), and “Sawālīf al-Salf” (The Forefathers’ Sidewhiskers) (ʿAlyanat 2013 10). Through these stories, their writers sought to preserve the essence of the vernacular originals’ artistry, to urge their continued importance, and to perpetuate the events of the original stories without changing them in a way that affected their narratives or sequencing. All to educate children about this folklore (Miqdadi *al-Qiṣṣa* 45).

The 1967 Six-Day War defeat had an undeniable impact on the Arab literary movement (Ahmad 6, al-Shaʿbi 31). Many writers living in the diaspora notably stopped writing for children for an extended period due to the political situation, directing most of their works during that period at adults instead. However, in the late 1970s, writers’ interest in children’s literature revived. The appearance of *Majallat Sāmir lil-Aṭfāl* (The Samir Magazine for Children) in 1977 encouraged writing aimed at children, including that of Muhammad al-Qaisi (1944–2003), Mahm§ud Shuqayr (1941–), poet ʿAli al-Butayri (1944–), and others. This, in turn, encouraged a reconsideration in all areas of life and, within this framework, Palestinian intellectuals and writers turned their attentions to childhood and children’s literature, with a notable accompanying preoccupation with national values (Miqdadi *al-Qiṣṣa* 29–34). Some of these writers tried to incorporate new concepts into their stories, like the ethnic struggle against the occupiers, the values of the homeland, and the consequent deepening of the sense of belonging, highlighting heroism and the desire for liberation. Shuqair and Mufid Nahla (1939–) stand out in this regard (Miqdadi *al-Qiṣṣa* 34). There was also an attempt to introduce new content into poetry via new artistic forms, with the poems dealing with the child’s aspirations for nationhood and freedom, while emphasizing the love of the land and optimism for the future. ʿAli al-Butayri and Mahmud al-Shalʿabi (1943–) are key poets in this change.

The Dar al-Fata al-ʿArabi publishing house established in Beirut in 1974 became an important resource in the dissemination of Palestinian children’s literature dealing with issues of freedom and patriotism. It published most of the books in the “*Qaws Qazaḥ*” (Rainbow) series, the “*al-Mustaqbal lil-Aṭfāl*” (The Future for Children) series, and the “*al-Ufq al-Jadīd*” (New Horizon) series. Most of them dealt with the Palestinian cause and the armed struggle in a symbolic manner without mentioning them directly. One of its publications was Ghassan Kanafani’s (1936–72) book for children entitled *Aṭfāl Ghassān Kanafānī* (The Children of Ghassan Kanafani), issued posthumously in 1979. It also published Kanafani’s *al-Qandīl al-Ṣaghīr* (The Little Lamp) in 1985. A number of writers also published *Ḥikāyāt Shaʿbiya min Filasṭīn* (Folktales from Palestine) in 1987, the aim being to contribute a further moral dimension to the world of values: originality. At the beginning of the 1980s, with Israel’s invasion of Beirut and accompanying political and military changes, Dar al-Fata al-ʿArabi lost access to financial and professional resources, especially after its headquarters and management moved to Cairo and subsequently to Amman. These changes led to a dwindling in its publications until it finally ceased operating in the mid-1990s (Miqdadi *al-Qiṣṣa* 45). In 1979, Jamīʿat Nawras (the Nawras Association) a Palestinian publishing house founded in Beirut by writer Tawfiq Fayyad (1938–) to introduce Arab children to the issue of the Israeli occupation of Palestine. This house was an extension of Dar al-Fata al-ʿArabi but wound down its activities after the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982 (al-Shaʿbi 33).

These publishing houses encouraged writers to attach great importance to writing for children. Shahada al-Natur (1939–), who chose the animal world to explore the concerns of the homeland, and poet Mahmud al-Shalʿabi, who also raised patriotic issues of belonging and selfhood as concerns for children, were prominent figures influenced by this approach (Fasha *Dalīl* 107).

The Palestinian cultural movement’s transfer to Amman resulted in initiatives to promote Palestinian children’s literature there, with most being published by Dar al-Karmal and Dar Ibn Rushd in the Jordanian capital. Muhammad al-Zahir (1951–), Yusuf Hamdan (1944–), and Rashad Abu Shawar (1942–) were among those writing for children. Perhaps what particularly distinguishes these writers is that they wrote directly about the suffering of the Palestinian people under occupation. Instilling the national idea in the minds of children was a deliberate and conscious mission that all these writers pursued through their stories (Asʿad 72).

Miqdadi affirms that patriotic content was widespread in the short stories and poems addressed to children by Palestinian writers living in the diaspora, highlighting the past of their forefathers (Miqdadi *al-Qiṣṣa* 33). Palestinian writers also focused on depicting the suffering in the refugee camps and the longing to return to the homeland.

The early 1980s witnessed a salient tendency to document Palestinian history among writers in the diaspora. One such writer is Rawda al-Hudhud, who wrote a large anthology of short stories under the title *Ḥikāyāt Buṭūliya lil-Aṭfāl* (Heroic Tales for Children), the first, entitled *Fī Aḥrāj Yaʿbad* (In the Forests of Yaʿbad), published in 1979 (Ahmad 34–45), deals directly with the national issue, and realistically discusses modern heroic acts, documenting the relevant historical material for the stories at the end of each tale (Miqdadi *Al-Qiṣṣa* 61–63). She furthermore published a collection of stories in 1985 entitled *Ḥikāyāt al-Ghūl* (Tales of the Ghoul) that had been compiled by the writer Fayiz al-Ghul in 1966, thus drawing on folk tales and presenting them to children with some modifications and including suitable illustrations (Miqdadi *al-Qiṣṣa* 45).

The 1987 First Intifada further encouraged diasporic writers to address Palestinian suffering through children’s stories. The depiction of resistance is apparent in children’s stories of this time, such as in Hani al-Titi’s (1959–) *Ghābat Ḥayfā* (The Forest of Haifa) 1991 anthology, in the writer seeks to consolidate the values and principles of the struggle and to foster awareness of the Palestinian cause and its continual battle (al-Hudhud “Al-Intifāḍa” 2 and 12–19).

Al-Hudhud continued to publish stories drawn from the history of the uprising. She wrote *Laylā wa-Fūrn al-Ṣumūd* (Layla and the Furnace of Steadfastness), the short story “Sirr Sakkīn ʿĀmir wa-Majzarat al-Aqsā” (The Secret of Amir’s Knife and the Al-Aqsa Massacre), and stories of heroism for children reflecting the reality of the Intifada entitled *al-Mulaththam wa-Jarīmat al-Aḥad al-Aswad* (The Masked Man and the Crime of Black Sunday) (Fasha *Dalīl* 225).

Some writers in the diaspora, such as al-Butayri, Shahla al-Kayyali (1942–), Rashid Issa (1951–), Munir al-Hur (1950–), refrained from directly mentioning the Intifada in their poetry and prose works but continued to highlight the Palestinian cause and the liberation movement either directly or through coded language. In the 1990s, there were a number of writers in the diaspora who devoted most of their literary production to children, whether short stories, poetry, plays, or novels. Poets such as al-Zahir, al-Butayri, al-Shalʿabi, and Issa continued to write for children and their collections were printed, sung on cassette tapes, or otherwise disseminated. The publications of these four poets represent almost half of those published for children in that decade (ʿIsi *Shiʿr* 76).

Along with these already described developments, new topics and new ways of presenting topics emerged, such as those relating to the environment, nature conservation, and human rights. We find, for example, some of al-Zahir’s poetry, such as *Kawākib al-Asrār* (Planets of Secrets), revolving around the issue of children’s rights.

Some writers, inspired by events and personalities from history, continued to document these in their stories. The works of al-Hudhud are notable in this regard, particularly her short story collection *Ḥikāyāt al-Arḍ al-Ṭayyiba* (Tales of the Good Land) (Fasha *Dalīl* 224) that introduces children to the heroic acts of their forebears. In this work, she states that the reason for her orientation toward history is that it is necessary for children to understand the heroism and events of the past in a format that they can accept, so that heroism is not presented in either a bland sloganizing or with a view to sowing hatred in the hearts of children (Miqdadi *al-Qiṣṣa* 71).

*Palestinian Children’s Literature in the West Bank and Gaza After 1967*

The Israeli authorities imposed a blockade after their occupation of West Bank and Gaza them in 1967, naturally including a cultural embargo that inevitably negatively affected the cultural environment. This had an impact on enthusiasm for writing, with some authors leaving the craft permanently and others curtailing their productivity, whether because of the exceptional circumstances they found themselves in, or their direct involvement in the political struggle against the occupation, or due to being among the number of writers, such as Shuqayr, who were deported from their homeland.

In the late 1970s, the literary movement in the West Bank and Gaza managed to move beyond the sense of suffering that had prevailed after the June setback in 1967 and writers resumed their literary activities, without any notable changes from the stylistics of the early 1960s. Writers’ intentions at that time were to document Palestinian realities and sufferings through realist stories, with Ibrahim al-ʿAlam (1941–), Samia al-Khalili (1953–), and Ali al-Khalili (1943–2013) notable in this regard. These stories are distinctive in the bold way in which they expose children to the realities of life and prompt them, directly or via symbolism, to help change them. Realistic stories received increasing attention, with the national issues infused into much of everyday life experience and its tragic realities. Consequently, these stories bore the imprints of war and jihad against the enemy and addressed both the past and the present of the homeland question (Ahmad 79–82).

The First Intifada resulted in increased suffering of the Palestinian people in the West Bank and Gaza, and this was unsurprisingly reflected in the children’s stories of the time. There was a marked preoccupation in the Territories with both childhood and direct and unambiguous addressing of the conflict with Israel that was mired in violence (ʿAlaynat *Yaldut* 122). Writers took great care to incorporate their ideas and politics into the stories of childhood. Considerable vocabulary and imagery from the uprising, such as of the martyr, the occupation, the arrests, and the resistance, became prominent. Writers also portrayed children’s encounters with the occupation and focused on depicting Israelis negatively as violent while portraying Palestinians positively as either victims or heroic resisters.[[13]](#footnote-13) Such characterizations appear in Jamil al-Salhout’s (1949–)1989 short story collection *al-Makhāḍ* (The Ford), all of whose protagonists are children. These stories describe another aspect of the suffering of the Palestinians and its impact on the life of the child – the arrest of fathers and their enforced absence from their families. Aida Ayoub’s (1950–) short story “Nūra,” from her 1990 anthology *Qiṣas lil-Aṭfāl min Wāqiʿ al-Intifāḍa* (Stories for Children from the Reality of the Intifada), reveals the suffering and loss the daughter experiences after her father’s arrest, as she prefers to remain silent so as not to burden her family with her cares (ʿAlaynat “Ṭufūla fī Ṣirāʿ” 28).

During this period, writers interested in preserving the collective Palestinian memory through children’s literature appeared, such ʿAbd-al-Rahman Abbad (1945–), who wrote the collections *Dhākirat al-Burtuqāl* (Memory of Oranges), *Dhākirat al-Zaytūn* (Memory of Olives), *Dhākirat al-Nakhīl* (Memory of Palms), and *Dhākirat al-ʿAṣāfīr* (Memory of Birds) (Fasha *Dalīl* 6–239). These works map the chronic and acute exigencies of Palestinian life in all their social, religious, and patriotic dimensions. The image of the homeland that emerges in his writings symbolically express a sense of belonging and national identity (al-Karki 121–58).

The works of West Bank and Gazan writers diverged after the 1993 and 1995 Oslo Accords between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO). This divergence emerged out of differing political affiliations and opinions on the Accords among Palestinian writers, which was reflected in some of their works. The sense of the “other” began to impose its presence in many stories’ agendas, especially among local and Palestinians who began returning following the Accords. We mention here, by way of example, Mahmud Shuqayr, who returned to the homeland in May 1993. In his story “*Qalat Maryām Qala al-Fatā*” (Maryam Said, the Boy Said), the conflict is depicted as a struggle between Eastern and Western civilizations, not between the strong, as represented by the Israelis, and the weak, as represented by the Palestinians. The writer also airs values new to children’s literature in this story, such as those related to freedom of thought and expression (ʿAlaynat “Ṭufūla fī Ṣirāʿ” 32–33).

Comparing Abd al-Rahman Abbad’s works before and after Oslo, we find that the collection *Dhākirat al-ʿAṣāfīr*, published in 1996 after the Accords, features matters of pedagogy and cognition, since most of the stories in this collection are educationally and psychologically oriented (al-Karki 121–58). The writer sought to paint a new picture of the Palestinian child, as no longer merely rebellious, combative, and self-sacrificing, but also intelligent, inquisitive, tolerant, open to the world, and nature loving. This is also evident in Ali al-Khalili’s 1998 story “Mūsīqā al-Arghafa” (Music of the Flatbreads) in which he tries, through the child Ahmed, the hero of his story, and his family, to make observations on the transformations that have taken in Palestinian society in the West Bank and the Gaza after Oslo. The writer urges an end to the occupation while also, as one longing for peace, constructing a vision of a Palestinian state based on pluralism and tolerance as inevitable developments (Shuqayr *Al-Tasāmuḥ*  29–30).

Muʾasasat Tāmir lil-Taʿlīm al-Mujtamaʿī (The Tamir Foundation for Community Education) was established in Jerusalem in 1989, subsequently moving its headquarters to Ramallah in the West Bank. The Foundation has worked on the development of children’s literature at all levels, issuing books of a variety of subjects, with the tendency toward realism prevalent in its publications (Badwan 21–22). It also provided books for children in the Occupied Territories through the publishing unit it established in 1992. In addition, it has encouraged children to write essays, stories, and poems for its magazine *Yirāʿāt* (meaning both “fireflies” and “pens”).

During this period, institutions, centers, and projects were established, such as the Awghārīt lil-Nashr wal-Tawziʿ (Ugarit for Publishing and Distribution) house in 1997 (Badwan 21–22), the Markaz Badīl (the Badil Center) in 1998, the al-Mashrūʿ al-Waṭanī al-Tanmawī li-Adab al-Ṭifl al-Filasṭīnī (National Developmental Project for Palestinian Children’s Literature”) in 1997, and Markaz al-Bīrah li-Tanmiyat al-Ṭufūla (Al-Birah Center for Childhood Development), this last on the initiative of the Swedish Diakonia Foundation). All of them have tried to contribute, through studies and conferences as well as through writing and publishing, to shaping the character of Palestinian children, deepening their cultural capital, encouraging them to be creative, and fostering the reading habit, while elevating the status of books and making them available to every Palestinian child.

It is notable that the children’s stories written after the Al-Aqsa Intifada (2000–05) were pacific in character and limited to affirming the right to resist for the sake of freedom. Naglaa Bashour’s (1947–) 2004 short story “*Shaʿnūnat al-ʿĪd*”, for example, makes observations on the siege of the Church of the Nativity during the Israeli invasion in 2002 while foregrounding the mutual Muslim-Christian tolerance and coexistence inside the church (Fasha *Al-Bīblyūgrāfiyā*  12).

During this period, the number of authors who wrote for the young generation also increased significantly. Jamil al-Salhout published the novel *ʿAshsh al-Dabābīr* (The Hornet’s Nest) in 2007, Shuqair published the novel *Kawkib Baʿīd li-Ukhtī al-Malika* (A Far-off Planet for my Sister, the Queen) in the same year, foregrounding citizenship and patriotism by featuring aspects of the Palestinian cause (Shuqayr *Al-Tasāmuḥ* 31).

Changes in values also affected the stories inspired by Palestinian folklore, with some writers drawing on it and on traditional methods of storytelling. In this field, Zakaria Muhammad (1950–), Sonya Nimr (1955–), al-Salhut, Sharif Kanaʾina (1936–), Nimr Sarhan (1937–), and others emerged. An example of this approach is Dima Sahwil’s 2009 short story “Riḥlat al-Sulṭān” (The Sultan’s Journey), which emulates the folktale style. The story revolves around promoting love for the Sultan as a lover of knowledge and not tyrannical in his opinions, noting that the advocacy of tolerance has a place here. We also find these changes reflected in the stories of Sharif Kanaʾina, in which the Palestinian colloquial language is prominent and of which Kanaʾina says that the folk tale template used serves primarily the enjoyment of those who hear it read aloud.[[14]](#footnote-14)

Given the publication of hundreds of stories for children in the West Bank and Gaza, we cannot even briefly cover all aspects of the topics at play here. However, we can affirm that nationalist values were not absent from children’s stories in the period after the Al-Aqsa Intifada; they were simply accompanied by the emergence of new values of openness, acceptance, understanding of the other, concern for the environment, and pacification.

During this period, the focus on children’s magazines also increased, in tandem with a strengthening use of cultural and religious symbols. Thus, for example, Muʾasasat al-Ashbāl wal-Zahrāt (Lion Cubs and Flowers Foundation), affiliated with the Fatah Movement, issued the *Waʿd* (Covenant) magazine, which covers various topics of interest to children, especially the understanding of Islam and its history. The *al-Fatḥ lil-Aṭfāl* (Fatah for Children) magazine for children, affiliated with the Islamic Movement in the West Bank, was also published in this period, with the goal of familiarizing Palestinian children with their homeland (Czernitskyi *HaBiniat* 16).

*Summary*

This chapter has covered the history of Palestinian children’s literature from 1967 to the present, showing how many Palestinian writers in Israel, in the West Bank, in Gaza, and in the diaspora have contributed to its development.

With the 1960s emerged new currents in children’s literature, including the trends toward realism and politics. Palestinian children’s literature took another turn in the early 1990s, as attempts to collate archives of Palestinian folklore and employ what they contained in children’s stories increased. This period was marked by great changes in the structure of Palestinian society inside Israel, in the West Bank, in Gaza, and in the diaspora, prompting a greater preoccupation with children’s literature.

Political events had a major influence on the content of stories aimed at children. The events of the First Intifada were reflected in children’s stories, with a strong focus on childhood and the conflict with Israel characterized by violence. After the Oslo Accords, the conflict was represented more as a struggle between Eastern and Western civilizations rather than between the powerful, represented by the Israelis, and the weak, represented by the Palestinians. Children’s stories written after the Al-Aqsa Intifada tended to have a pacific character and to limit themselves to affirming the right to resist for the sake of freedom.

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**Chapter 3:** **Folk Heritage and its Forms**

*Folk Heritage: The Definition*

In order to focus on the importance of folk heritage on Palestinian children’s literature, we must first define “folk heritage” in general and “Palestinian folk heritage” in particular before reviewing the most important types of folk heritage under examination. The term “folk heritage”[[15]](#footnote-15) commonly refers to the material and moral heritage, both private and scholarly, inherited through a community’s ancestors.[[16]](#footnote-16) The scholar Ibrahim Mahawwi includes within folk heritage all the activities that typically represent daily nonverbal arts, such as folk music and dance as well as verbal arts, like folk songs, poetry, stories, legends of saints, riddles, jokes, and handmade folk crafts (Kanaʾina *Man Nasiya* 16–17). Heritage is considered a vital means for linking past and present nationalism. In his book *Interpreting Folklore*, the anthropologist Alan Dundes maintains that heritage represents a fundamental element of the cultural identity of all peoples and plays a prominent role in consolidating the different conceptions linking people’s lives, history, and the meaning of their existence. Dundes adds that heritage serves to identify a group of people (regardless of their racial, ethnic, or religious background) that shares commonly recognized traditions (Dundes 101).

Roland Barthes views heritage as a scholarly and spiritual remnant from the past from which to draw inspiration for interpretation to reflect modern meanings. Literary modernity cannot continue without turning to heritage (65).[[17]](#footnote-17) According to anthropologist Shelagh Weir, heritage represents the backbone of national identity or patriotism, and without it, people lose the essentials of their being, as well as the rationale for their existence as a people. Thus, heritage becomes a symbol of national identity within every population and culture (Weir 273).

Despite the multiplicity of the concepts of heritage and the curricula for its study, there is a consensus among scholars and researchers that heritage must be linked to the present while also applying a modern vision to it that give rise to suggestive dimensions expressing the present (Mabruk 17).

*Interest in Folk Heritage: Its Origin and Directions*

Researchers agree that the scientific study of folklore emerged at the beginning of the nineteenth century as a result of the romantic and nationalistic movement in Europe.[[18]](#footnote-18) This movement came to be known as the Romantic Nationalistic School and its approach was focused on folk heritage. Thus, writers gravitated towards compiling folk stories, songs, and customs that reflect the past, subsequently enabling the reconstruction of ancient life by comparing folk stories and customs (al-Jawhari “Al-Turāth” 48–58, al-ʿAnatil *Bayn al-Fulklūr* 11–27).

Jacob and William, the “Brothers Grimm,” are credited as the first folklorists, emerged during Germany’s romantic period (1785–1859) and played a pioneering role in compiling folklore. They aimed to set national classics for the German people and preserve German identity during Napoleon’s conquests. With the aim of distinguishing German identity from that of the neighboring populations, they published a collection of German folk stories under the titles *Kinder und Hausmarchen* (1812) and *Deutsche Mythologie* (1812–15) (von der Leyen 44–156).[[19]](#footnote-19)

With this, the study of folklore became exclusively linked to the peasant class. Indeed, Dundes confirms that the work of the Brothers Grimm marked the beginning of the study of folklore (2–9). At that time, folklore was considered a branch of sociology influenced by modern anthropology and, according to the British researcher Edward B. Taylor, by evolution as well. This approach posited that human evolution underwent several stages found in the folk life of communities whose traditional beliefs survived the advanced stages of human evolution and perhaps through which those older stages can be reconstructed.[[20]](#footnote-20)

Furthermore, it is worth noting that at the turn of the twentieth century, interest in folklore grew among the leading anthropologists responsible for establishing a branch of anthropology focusing on the study of folklore. From their focus on folk beliefs and legends,[[21]](#footnote-21) a new definition of the term “folklore” emerged: “oral transmission,” through which customs and traditions were passed on from one generation to the next without the need for orthographic documentation (Khuri *al-Fulklūr* 19). Drawing on this new definition, researcher Khuri maintains that folklore consists not solely of remnants from earlier ages, but is actually a live performance of individuals, evolving along with society’s development. Thus, folklore represents that persistence of humanity, thereby rendering folklore accessible to all (*al-Fulklūr* 20–21).

The study of folklore took a new direction in the 1960s, when researchers began studying heritage through texts in line with the work of the Russian folkloric researcher, Vladimir Propp, who proposed a general theory for the study of cultures in his 1977 book *The Morphology of the Folktale* (see Propp 12–24). This theory had a particularly strong impact on The Narrative School, which focused on the study of linguistics through the analysis of folk texts (Hazan-Rokem 5–13). This subsequently led to the development of formalist theories and curricula as independent studies in and of themselves. Folklore scholarship was strongly affected by this change, as it merged into a postmodernist context and shifted its focus to studying the issue of social identity among minorities.[[22]](#footnote-22)

Investigating the historical details of these European schools and the theories of the study of various schools folklore is beyond the scope of the present. Instead, the primary focus of this study is the influence of their adherents on the evolution of the study of folklore, especially the study of Arabic folklore.

*Arab Interest in Folk Heritage*

Modern scholars’ interest in the question of heritage began in the Arab countries after examining modern European cultures and opening up to western civilization. This interest crystallized during WWII and its aftermath and during the 1950s, when the Arab world began to achieve its political independence as the era of colonialism was coming to a close. Al-Barghuthi explains that the delay of Arab interest in heritage stemmed from their fear of colloquial Arabic’s tyranny on Standard Arabic and, consequently, the Holy Qurʾan (10–24).

Serious interest in folk heritage thus received a new impetus, especially after a series of defeats suffered by the Arabs, which were followed by the political and intellectual transformations that led to an emergence of republican regimes and the collapse of monarchial rule. These transformations encouraged the interest in heritage, which began to serve as an important source of inspiration due to its link to real life as an important patriotic legacy (Khuri *al-Fulklūr* 60). This is evident in the increase of specialized scientific studies which started to emerge in some Arab countries, as can be seen in Ahmad Taymur’s (1871–1930) 1953 (posthumously) published book *al-Amthāl al-ʿĀmmīya wal-Kitābāt al-ʿĀmmīya wa-Khayāl al-Ẓill wal-Laʿb wal-Tamāthīl al-Muṣawwara* (Colloquial Proverbs and Writings and Imagination of the Shadow, Playing, and Photographed Statues). Ahmed Amin’s (1886–1954) 1953 book *Qāmūs al-ʿĀdāt wal-Taqālīd wal-Taʿābīr al-Maṣrīya* (The Dictionary of Egyptian Customs, Traditions, and Expressions) also evidenced an interest in heritage. After the Culture Directorate took over the Ministry of Education in 1945, patriotic motivations prompted the establishment of what came to be known as al-Jāmiʿa al-Shaʿbīya (The People’s University) which aimed to spread culture to the masses via lectures and symposiums. It also spurred a movement to translate important literature in the field of heritage into many languages.[[23]](#footnote-23) Conferences were held that called for collecting and preserving heritage, as well as exploring how to form scholarly bodies at the national level (such as institutes for Arabic folkloric studies and national archives) and convene international and Arab meetings on folk heritage (ʿAlqam 32–33).

It should be noted that the 1960s are considered the period in which Arab countries became officially interested in heritage because of the increased challenges these countries faced, whether economic, social, or cultural in nature. This led to increased material and moral support for local efforts to preserve cultural, indeed, civilization identity of Arab society, as reflected in the emergence of local official foundations to preserve local heritage, as well as the founding of different museums in various Arab countries.[[24]](#footnote-24) This newfound emphasis on heritage arose from the region’s fear of losing part of its history, as studying the traditional practices prevailing in the region shed light on the social, intellectual, and political history.[[25]](#footnote-25)

In the early 2000s, calls for the preservation, verification, and recording of heritage increased—perhaps globalization was the driving force for this increased interest, in addition to the pursuit of collecting and defining it as a means of preserving cultural identity (Ismaʾil 253–66). Furthermore, interest in heritage became more nationalistic after having been an Arab national interest.

*Palestinian Folk Heritage and its Importance*

Folk heritage is one of the most important sources of identity for Palestinians, especially in light of the political situation that often threatens their very existence. This deep connection throughout history enables them not only to endure the difficult circumstances they may presently face, but also gives them faith in the future. Thus, heritage is important to Palestinians, supporting their unity as a people despite differences in gender, age, religion, and location (Mahawwi 2000 16–17).

In the twentiethcentury, the Palestinian community endeavored to reconstruct its national identity and collective memory. In the past, Palestinians saw the past as an important tool in creating a national identity and attaining their vision of the future in which the young generation played a large role. In this respect, al-Barghuthi observes that society’s education of its young about its cultural heritage is vital for the society itself, which is searching for its identity in the present and planning for its future (40–43). If we examine the historical development of interest in Palestinian heritage, we can see that scholars divided it into six stages (Kanaʾina *Man Nasiya* 35–53 but compare with al-Mutawwir 20–25). However, since this study confirms that beginnings of interest in heritage in children’s literature increased noticeably after 1987, we prefer to divide it into four separate stages, as explained in the sections below.

*Palestinian Folk Heritage in the Orientalism Stage (Until 1948)*

Foreign researchers became interested in the Arab countries in the aftermath of colonialism,[[26]](#footnote-26) and it is in this context that the Orientalist Movement[[27]](#footnote-27) began in Palestine. While they were in the region, European Orientalists collected a considerable amount of folk heritage. However, among the many books and articles these European scholars published, Palestinian folk heritage was mentioned only fleetingly, as their work focused far more on the Torah and the Gospels (Al-Mutawwir 21, Kanaʾina *Dirāsāt* 145). Later, as the elements of the study of folklore started to become defined and crystallized, some Orientalists began showing an interest in Palestinian heritage. Finnish researcher Hilma Granqvist was at the forefront of folklorists who conducted in-depth and comprehensive studies of Palestinian society between 1925 and 1947. Her research yielded three publications: *Birth and Childhood Among the Arabs*, *Child Problems Among the Arabs*, and *Marriage Conditions in a Palestinian Village* (See Kanaʾina *Man Nasiya* 159–72, Al-Mutawwir 21–22).

Between 1928 and 1942, German scholar Gustav Dalman published seven volumes of a work entitled *Arbeit und Sitte in Palastina* (Work and Customs in Palestine), in which he describes all aspects of Palestinian daily life. He also published another book containing research and descriptions of folk songs in Palestine, Jordan, and Syria entitled *Palastinischer Diwan* (Palestinian Collection)*.* During this period, European Orientalists continued their studies on Palestinian folk heritage and life. According to Kanaʾina, only a small number of Palestinian researchers joined these Orientalists,[[28]](#footnote-28) publishing their research in *Journal of Palestinian Oriental Society.*[[29]](#footnote-29)Kanaʾina further assertsthat the reason for the Palestinian researchers’ lack of interest in this topic during that period stemmed from their fear for CA (Kanaʾina *Man Nasiya* 47–53, Al-Mutawwir 25).

For the present discussion, we are primarily concerned with the Palestinian researcher Tawfiq Kan’aan (1882–1964) and his role in compiling and studying Palestinian folklore. Kanaʾina considered, perhaps Kan’aan’s greatest contribution was his collecting of heritage and how he employed it, as his motivations were both the advancement of scholarly documentation and nationalistic. This enabled him to accomplish a quantum leap in increasing the interest in Palestinian heritage. Thus, according to researchers, Kanaʾina’s works and writings make him “the undisputed spiritual father and founder of the Palestinian folkloric movement” (Kanaʾina *Man Nasiya* 175**–**82). He published his studies in English in *Medical Journal of Palestine*, where he focused on myths, folk medicine, seasons, holidays, shrines of saints, folk proverbs, and the traditional Palestinian home.

*After al-Nakba (1948–67)*

After the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948 and its first two decades of state-building, many Palestinians sought refuge in neighboring countries, taking their heritage with them. This heritage, as Kanaʾina states in the introduction to his book *Man Nasiya Qadīma-h Tāh* (He Who Has Forgotten His Ancient Past is Lost), was a source of strength and resilience during this time (24). Thus, awareness about Palestinian identity increased, especially among the Palestinian diaspora, as they resorted to deepening their attachment to their homeland and heritage, as well as recreating their homeland in the refugee camps. Palestinian folkloric research became a means of defending Palestinian identity, especially in the wake of the formation of the PLO in 1964 (al-Munasira 8–9, Kanaʾina *Dirāsāt* 393–99). However, the Palestinians who remained in Israel were cut off from the rest of Palestinian society after the mass exodus, leaving them a minority, despite having been the overwhelming majority prior to the establishment of Israel. Furthermore, they were subject to military rule, which forbade them from leaving their cities and villages without permission from the military.

*After al-Naksa (1967–86)*

Kanaʾina asserts that the War of 1967 marked the start of a new stage in the history of the development of the Palestinian folkloric movement, adding that it coincided with the expansion of the national liberation movement as well as the establishment of several Palestinian nationalist foundations, many of which focused on the conservation of Palestinian heritage (al-Munasira 52). The Jamaʿiyat Inʿash al-Usra (Family Revival Association) in al-Birah was the most important of these foundations, with reviving, preserving, and protecting Palestinian folk heritage at the forefront of its mission. It branched into the Lujnat al-Abhath al-Ijtimaʿiya wal-Turath al-Shaʿbi al-Filastini (Committee of Social Research and Palestinian Folk Heritage),[[30]](#footnote-30) which was founded in 1972 and published themagazine *al-Turath wal-Mujtamaʿ* (Heritage and Society)*.* This journal, still in print,[[31]](#footnote-31) is considered one of a kind in it focus on studying and analyzing Palestinian heritage (Rabiʿ 28–58).

Interest in heritage increased after 1967, at the behest of the Palestinian Liberation Organization, which by then had become the effective representative of the Palestinian people. At the same time, Palestinians were convinced they could achieve national liberation only by taking matters into their own hands and making their own destiny rather than relying on Arab states (Kanaʾina *Man Nisiya* 50–51). Some studies on Palestinian heritage were published in the late 1960s.[[32]](#footnote-32) Palestinians in Israel viewed their situation as a Palestinian minority in their own homeland as a threat to their existence, spurring their ambition to preserve their identity and heritage. Viewing this route as an alternative to political activism, they chose to express themselves through heritage, *dabka* troops, dancing, folk music, folkloric festivals, seminars, and conferences.[[33]](#footnote-33)

In 1984, Salih Baransi (1928–99) founded the Markaz Ihyaʾ al-Turath al-ʿArabi (Center for the Revitalization of Arab Heritage) in the al-Tayba al-Muthallath area of Israel. This center initiated the convening of heritage conferences and festivals, the most important of which was the Jerusalem International Conference for Palestinian Folk Heritage in 1987. It also founded the heritage museum in the town of Sakhnin and published several studies about heritage. Tawfiq Ziyyad (1929–94) was also interested in compiling heritage, expressing his motivations in his book *Ṣuwwar min al-Adab al-Shaʿbi* (Pictures from Palestinian Folk Literature, 1974) and more precisely in “Li-Nanqiḏ Adab-nā al-Shaʿbī min Khaṭar al-Ḍiyāʿ” (Let’s Save Our Folk Literature from Getting Lost). He considered heritage a creation of the people themselves that is always open to modification from future generations. As a result, it is also in danger of being lost; hence the importance of compiling and recording the Palestinian folk heritage in writing.

In Ziyyad’s view, the younger generation must learn their heritage in order for them to absorb and build on their national and humanitarian traditions (Ziyyad *Ṣuwwar* 10). Ziyyad wrote a series of articles about Palestinian heritage between 1967 and 1970 that were published in the Haifa-based journal *al-Jadīd*. He also published studies entitled *ʿAn al-Adab wal-Adab al-Shaʿbī fī Filasṭīn* (On Literature and Folk Literature in Palestine, 1970) and *Yawmiyāt Naṣrawī fil-Sāḥa al-Ḥamrāʾ* (Nasrawi’s Daily Life in the Red Square, 1973), as well as a collection of stories from Palestinian heritage entitled *Ḥāl al-Dunyā* (The State of the World, 1975).

Tawfiq’s employment of heritage in his poems represents a semantic phenomenon with significant qualitative and quantitative significance, as can be seen in the use of heritage in stories, folk songs, customs and traditions, and folk proverbs (Ziyyad *Ṣuwwar* 10). Palestinian writers in Israel (e.g., Emile Habibi (1921–96), Jamal Kawar, Tawfiq Fayyad, Samih al-Qasim (1939–2015) were inspired by heritage, using it to express national issues (Khuri *Al-Maṣādir* 26–33). Kanaʾina asserts that the Palestinian folkloric movement belongs to the Palestinian national liberation movement, and that the success of the folkloric movement in the aftermath of the 1967 war reflects the success of the national liberation movement’s efforts to create a national identity (Kanaʾina *Dirāsāt* 151).

*From After the First Intifada to the Present*

The First Intifada erupted at the end of 1987, increasing patriotic and nationalistic sentiment, especially among Palestinian writers. Thus, interest in Palestinian heritage also increased, as well as the call to collect and preserve it (Khuri *al-Fulklūr* 98), as Palestinians perceived the Intifada as a new, clearly-defined phase in their struggle against the occupation, seeing it as new way of living and thinking (Kanaʾina *Dirāsāt* 87). The Intifada was the peak of the Palestinian national movement and Kanaʾina maintains that evidence of the formation of the unity of the Palestinian people began in practice after 1967, although this unity first emerged only after the First Intifada.

As Kanaʾina observes: “Today, Palestinians are confronted with the danger of the decay and loss of Palestinian identity. The danger is not that of physical genocide or the loss of land, but rather that of dissolution resulting from the loss of identity” (*Dirāsāt* 155). Subsequently, Palestinian writers became seriously interested in the importance of preserving the Palestinian heritage of that period. In this spirit, the researchers Ibrahim Mahawwi and Sharif Kanaʾina compiled Palestinian folk stories and published them in English in a book entitled *Speak Bird, Speak Again* (1989),which was translated to Arabic in 2001.

*Speak Bird, Speak Again* is an important reference for Palestinian folktales. In the book’s introduction, the researchers state that by collecting these stories, they aim to preserve the collective memory of the Palestinian people and strengthen their cultural identity, especially among the younger generations who live either under occupation or in the diaspora, as both groups are alienated from their society’s traditions.[[34]](#footnote-34)

British researcher Shelagh Weir published her book *Palestinian Folk Costume* in 1989 through the British Museum. In 1992, the Center for the Revival of Arab Heritage in Taibe, in Israel, adopted an initiative to preserve a collective Palestinian identity. In 1994, the center held a conference in Jerusalem, The First International Conference on Palestinian Folklore, with the aim of conveying “the voice of the Palestinian folkloric movement and consequently the voice of the Palestinian people to the rest of the world” (Kanaʾina *Dirāsāt* 166). Interest in Palestinian heritage continued with the declaration of the Oslo Accords in 1993 and the establishment of the Palestinian government and its national institutions that also took responsibility for preserving and maintaining interest in Palestinian heritage. Indeed, the Palestinian folkloric movement can be said to be part of the Palestinian national liberation movement, in that they both faced the same problems and difficulties.

*Forms of Folk Heritage*

Here we will shed light on the most important types of folk heritage, summarizing the most popular forms found in literature in general and more specifically in Palestinian children’s literature. After reading many compilations of children’s texts, we found that the authors had drawn on the most important forms of folk heritage; namely folktales, proverbs, and folk songs. While they did turn to other forms of Palestinian literature as well, they did so only occasionally, and thus does not contribute to the aims of the study. Thus, here we will simply summarize e the findings that are applicable to this book, as there are many studies that provide detailed explanations of the various genres of folk heritage (See Khuri *al-Maṣādir*, *al-Muṣṭalaḥ*). This chapter’s unique contribution is in its focus on defining Palestinian folk heritage.

*The Concept of Folktales*

Before explaining the concept of folktales, we should first clarify that this study distinguishes between fairy tales and folktales (Hassuna 119, see also Khuri *al-Maṣādir* 43). In order to prevent confusion, we will explore only the features of folktales. Folktales are considered among the oldest known forms and are a form of social expression through which a people’s reality and dreams are expressed (Hassuna 80). According to Nabila Ibrahim, folktales are pieces of information that connect past events and transmit them orally from one generation to the next, thereby creating the collective imagination connecting important events, people, and historical sites (Hassuna 106). As folktales have a flexible structure, they are open to omissions, additions, or substitutions, thus enabling stories to change according to social and cultural factors.

It is this flexibility that enables the folktale’s function to remain constant. According to Hassuna, “stories may differ in subject matter from place to place, and the details and purposes of the tale may change when it moves from one country to another” (80). Folktales are considered a means of human expression and are a literary device through which people can convey their thoughts, beliefs, and philosophies. Furthermore, the entertainment and suspenseful qualities of these tales, combined with their linguistic simplicity, aid in their preservation. Folktales represent cultural and spiritual aspects of life, offering significant glimpses into the past (al-Ashhab 7).

*Features of Folktales*

The artistic structure of folktales has semi-fixed components. These components, known as “Olrik’s Narrative Laws,” were set forth by Danish researcher Axel Olrik in 1909 after he carried out his research on European and Scandinavian folktales in particular (Dundes 123–233). The researcher Aliza Shenhav asserts that these rules are also applicable to children’s literature (8). The following are the central principles most applicable to our examination:

1. “The Law of Opening and Closing:” In the beginning of every folktale, the narrator attempts to grab the listener’s attention. The introductory phrase “once upon a time” is a customary opening in folktales and most folktales have a happy ending;
2. “The Law of Repetition:” A specific scenario is repeated and emphasized in folktales so that the recipient can relate to the main character;
3. “The Law of Contrast:” Folktales favor good characters over evil ones;
4. “The Law of Two to a Scene:” There are typically three main protagonists in a folktale: A good, a bad, and a neutral one. At the climax of the tale, the neutral character joins forces with the good character to defeat the bad character.

*Palestinian Folktales*

Palestinian folktales have several influences, the most important of which are historical factors, as these tales have preserved thoughts and facts from ancient eras. Geographical factors also have a strong influence on the structure of folktales, as they all contain elements of the Palestinian natural environment. Religion and the political and economic situations in Palestine have also influenced the content of the tales. Thus, it can be said that whatever shocks and afflictions the Palestinian people experienced left their mark on Palestinian folktales (al-Ashhab 40).

Through the course of history, Palestinian folktales have depicted various social stages, and they came to serve as a representation of social changes involving the Palestinian people’s right to freedom, ownership, and expression of free will. Hassuna emphasizes that folktales are one of the fundamental elements highlighting the historical and vital link to the Palestinian people (al-Ashhab 40). He adds that the obvious employment of Palestinian Arabic is one of the most important characteristics of Palestinian folktales.

*The Concept of the Folk Proverb*

In her book *Proverbs in Medieval Occitan Literature*, Wendy Pfeffer stresses the difficulty of defining the term “folk proverb,” writing: “It is an integral part of our daily spoken language, and we have grown up hearing it and using it to express our needs, thus making it difficult to construe” (9). Nabila Ibrahim defines folk proverbs as the adages that encapsulate a philosophical concept (*al-Dirāsāt* 154). In his book *Palestinian Personality Traits as Expressed in Folk Proverbs,* Salim al-Mubayyid contends that the folk proverb is the byproduct of a conscious experience balanced by reflection and intellect (7). Khuri, on the other hand, prefers the definition of folklore provided by Mughniya in the preface to his book *Maʿjam al-Amthāl al-Lībiya* (Dictionary of Libyan Proverbs): “A genre of colloquial literature distinguished by its eloquent brevity, simplistic style, and succinct meaning” (Khuri *al-Maṣādir* 26). Hassuna defines folk proverbs as wise, eloquent sayings with deep meanings, spoken easily and simply by the population. They represent the epitome of a deep experience formed over a long time and passed on from generation to generation, reflecting and expressing meaningful and difficult historical experiences (Hassuna 9).

*3.14. Characteristics of Folk Proverbs*

Folk proverbs are the most widespread form of folktale, and thus they play an important role in highlighting the social and economic values in society. Through their circulation, the general public strives to deepen its moral standards, customs, traditions, and views. In this way, folk proverbs serve as forms of modern heritage (Hassuna 9). Chaim Weiss defined the main features of folk proverbs as currency, repetition, the use of old-fashioned words, rhyming, and metaphors. Al-Mubayyid identifies the principal features of popular proverbs as currency, repetition, use of old-fashioned words, rhyme, and metaphor (166–86). Khuri adds other features to this list, namely didacticism, imparting of wisdom, ease of memorization, and expression of a known truth (*Al-Maṣādir* 123).

*Palestinian Folk Proverbs*

Palestinian folk proverbs resulted from historical, geographic, literary, material, and economic factors combined with the customs and traditions of both the masses and the intellectual elite. Consequently, folk proverbs express people’s lives and feelings, as they emerge from the reality of their environment. In Abu Janna’s view, Palestinian folk proverbs arise from a specific event or story (121–23). ʿAbbas sees Palestinian folk proverbs as a result of residual echoes in the popular conscience of a record of life experiences, reflecting people’s customs, beliefs, concerns, occasions, and actions level of individuals and at the level of the group.at the individual and collective levels (16–17). Fatima Shuqayr presents several characteristics distinguishing Palestinian folk problems (54–55), including:

1. The need for continuity in life in light of change being an essential part of life, as expressed in the folk proverb, “nothing is eternal” (Lubani 565).
2. The paradoxical combination of words in the same proverb; “neither tall nor short nor swaddled in bed” (Lubani 677).
3. The reflection of the Palestinian people’s daily life, beliefs, and social lives: “do not talk while eating” (Lubani 676–77).
4. The folk proverbs are distinguished by their eloquence and match the words to the appropriate situation: “it is like being dressed in seven souls” (Lubani 741).

*The Concept of Folk Songs*

Al-ʿAnatil defines the “folk song” (*volkslied)*[[35]](#footnote-35) as a poem of unknown origin with music and lyrics. Folk songs originated among the masses in the past and remain in circulation for a long time (*Bayn al-Fulklūr* 245). They are characterized by a myriad of social phenomena and can often more effectively express folk customs, traditions, and rituals than can more eloquent poetry. This is due to folk songs’ closeness to society on the one hand, and their association with social norms and traditions on the other hand (ʿAlawwish 62). In contrast, Hassuna defines folk songs as an offshoot of folk literature, as folk songs are clearly connected to the environment in which they are circulated and to the circumstances in which they are sung before they gain widespread acceptance. Khuri adds that the most important distinguishing traits of folk songs are their direct connection to the melody, vocal performance, and the activation of movement (*al-Fulklūr* 44).

*Folk Song Characteristics*

ʿAli al-Khalili presents the most important folk song characteristics, namely the brevity of sentences and the use of old folk melodies, with their distinct communicative style. Within each melody are words relayed in colloquial Arabic. He adds that folk songs rely on their words for impact, with each song having a specific musical style based on the various meters of its poetry. Furthermore, he maintains that folk songs are characterized by their linguistic simplicity and delicate elocution, as they have no known composer or author, nor known date of composition (*Aghānī* 23).

*Palestinian Folk Songs*

Hassuna defines Palestinian folk songs as an art form within the realm of popular literature that originated in the colloquial Palestinian dialect and were created by one or more conveyers of heritage from the past. These songs resonated about the Palestinians, as they expressed what Palestinians truly cared about. As a result, they spread and were passed down from generation to generation. Ultimately, they were to become anonymous, belonging to the people and expressing their collective emotions (25–26). They are characterized by concise phrases, catchy melodies, and strong rhythms (al-Khalili *Aghānī* 23).

Khuri notes that Palestinian folk songs have gone through several stages, including the classical, romantic, realist, and socialist realism periods.[[36]](#footnote-36) Between the period spanning 1948–67 during which the Palestinian people witnessed *al-Nakba* and the “setback of June,” Palestinian folk songs conveyed the national struggle, focusing on themes of migration, exile and yearning for the homeland (Hassuna 376). Nimr Sirhan presents several distinguishing features of Palestinian folk songs, including their prevalence and popularity in Palestinian society, their oral transmission, and their anonymity (*Mawsūʿat* 52–83, but see also ʿAlawwish 11–20 and Khuri *al-Maṣādir* 70–72).

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**Chapter 4: The Use of the Folktale in Palestinian Children’s Literature**

*Introduction*

This chapter is divided into two historically defined sections, one dealing with the period from 1967 to 1987 and the other from 1988 to the present, corresponding with those in the theoretical chapter.

In order to study the use of folktale paradigms in Palestinian children’s literature, one must focus on the extent to which writers preserve their features or adapt them to correspond to contemporary social and cultural realities. To what extent do stories reflect the aesthetic constructs of folktales and the techniques used by the writers of these stories?

To discuss the exploitation of folktale paradigms in Palestinian children’s literature, I have chosen a representative sample from various fields of Palestinian literature and compared them to Nimr Sirhan’s 1978 book *Ḥikāyāt Shaʿbiya Filasṭīniya* (Palestinian Folktales) and the 2001 book by academic researchers Sharif Kinaʿina and Ibrahim Mahawwi entitled *Qawwil Ya Ṭayr* (Speak, Bird!), both works considered essential sources of folktale collection.

*The Use of Folktales in the 1967–87 Period*

**4.2.1 Introduction**

Palestinian writers’ preoccupation with promoting Palestinian identity and its distinctive characteristic burgeoned after the 1967 *naksa* (“setback”) and Israel’s occupation of the remaining Palestinian territories. Due to these developments, the trends in story writing for children were subsequently based on translation from Arab or global heritage sources. Palestinian writers realized the importance of reviving Palestinian folk heritage in children’s literature by reworking the forms or narrative structures of folktales. Some of them began reworking folktale forms without altering the literary structures, while others reworked them by making fundamental changes to the narrative structures to make them compatible with the spirit of the age and the age group targeted.

**The Use of Folktale Features**

*The Use of Traditional Styles of Beginning and Ending*

During this period, Palestinian writers were keen to use Palestinian folktale stylings and researched the origins of folktales. They refined and adapted these tales for children, resulting in an unprecedented level of attention from the public. Nimr Sirhan evinced a great interest in reworking folktales, emphasizing their importance in the introduction to his short story collection *Fanūn Shaʿbiya lil-Aṭfāl* (Folklore Arts for Children), where he writes: “Reviving folktales and reading them anew to the young generation is a way of reviving the image of the nation and lodging it in their memory” (5). He also expressed his aim to bring the life experiences of the Palestinian people closer to children through these stories in a way that did not interfere with folklore structures. Sirhan reworked 17 Palestinian folktales, from which I have chosen “Al- Bāṭiya” to discuss. This tells the story of a poor woodcutter named Abu Sharkh who goes to the forest every day to chop down trees to sell in the city for a pittance. He uses this money to buy food for his wife and ten children. One day, while the woodcutter is chopping down a dry, old tree, a black slave with a frightening mien emerges out of the parched timber and curses the trouble the woodcutter’s actions have brought upon him. The dialogue that follows between the woodcutter and the slave culminates with the former marrying off his daughter to the son of the latter in return for the slave giving the woodcutter a wooden receptacle called a *bāṭiya*. The woodcutter stops chopping wood because of the *bāṭiya* has magical powers: Whenever he asks it for meat and rice, the *bāṭiya* fills itself up with them. However, the chief of the tribe tricks the woodcutter by stealing the magic *bāṭiya* and replacing it with one similar in appearance that has no such powers. With a heavy heart, Abu Sharkh, the woodcutter, returns to chopping wood in the forest to support his children. He seeks out the slave once again and tells him what has happened. They agree that the woodcutter will marry a second daughter of his to another of the slave’s sons in exchange for a magic turkey that lays golden eggs. As before, the chief steals the bird from the woodcutter, who returns to working in the forest yet again. The slave appears once more and a new agreement between the two sees the woodcutter obligated to marry his third daughter off to a third son of the slave in return for the slave giving the woodcutter a magic wand. As the *dénouement* begins, the woodcutter goes to chief and makes him return his *bāṭiya* and bird, threatening to use the magic wand against the chief if he refuses. The story ends with the woodcutter gathering his family together to serve them up a delicious feast while burying the wand in the ground in front of the house.

The author of this story is interested in rewording it, but only in a few respects. He begins with the traditional style of opening, given that child readers/listeners are psychologically receptive to such things, as it both attracts and holds their attention. He also places the expression *yā mā kāna* (“once upon a time”) between parentheses in folktale fashion (see bracketed transliteration below) as if, through this phrase, he will take the child reader back to his own past, through a flashback technique characteristic of this narrative style:

Once — Once upon a time — you who hear these words[*Kāna* — *yā mā kāna — yā mustamaʿī al-kalām*], once there was a very poor woodcutter named Abu Sharkh, who

took his ax each day to the forest to chop down wood and carry it off on his back to

then sell it, buying with his earnings a morsel of bread and a few radishes and olives for his children to eat (*Mawsūʿāt*, 35).

Sirhan also retains the traditional ending to the tale, which is seen in the bracketed transliteration below. This ending also summons up the past.

The wand began to beat them wherever it could wound. They began to cry for help and their screams grew louder until Abu Sharkh demanded they return the turkey and the *bāṭiya* or he would command the wand to beat them again; so they returned the turkey and the *bāṭiya* to him and he returned home. And off flew the bird and may God bless all those present with His goodness [*Wa-ṭāra al-ṭayru wa-Allahu yumassī al-ḥādirīna bil-khayr*] (*Mawsūʿāt*, 36).

Thus, Sirhan clearly preserves the external framework of the narrative without interference by employing the opening and closing styles of folk tales.

Writer ʿAbdullah ʿAyshan reformulated the folktale “al-Ṭayr al-Akhḍar” (The Green Bird) in the same consistent spirit he adopted throughout his anthology of folktale reworkings entitled *al-Ṭayr al-Akhḍar wa-Qiṣaṣ Ukhrā* (The Green Bird and Other Stories). ʿAyshan’s introduction to the collection emphasizes that, due to his deep interest in children’s literature, he had reformulated the folktales that he collected orally from storytellers and shaykhs to preserve them as part of the heritage and protect them from either extinction, piracy, or falsification (*al-Ṭayr*, 3).

“Al-Ṭayr al-Akhḍar” relates the story of a man whose wife dies, leaving him with a son and daughter to fend for. Near the man’s house lives a wicked widow who dreams of marrying him. Exploiting his two children's good natures, she accomplishes this through deception and guile. After the marriage takes place, the life of the house changes. The kindness and tenderness that was supposedly in the widow’s heart turns into open malice and loathing, especially after she gives birth to her own son and daughter. The man owns a yellow cow that keeps them fed with cheese and milk, but the evil widow wants to get rid of it, so she asks her husband to slaughter the cow, claiming it is diseased. The widow’s scheming does not end with the slaughter of the cow, however; she also wants to rid herself of her husband’s son . One day, she puts poison in the meal she cooks for the family. Her own son returns home unexpectedly, eats the poisoned food, and dies. The widow’s hatred for her husband’s firstborn son grows ever stronger and she contrives another way to kill him, this time by putting him into a large cauldron of boiling water under which she has lit a fire. The boy’s sister carries off his bones and buries them in a grave she has dug, thereafter defying her stepmother by going every day to where her brother’s bones are buried to shed tears over them. One day she sees a green bird which she recognizes as her brother. Whenever she comes across the bird, the bird tosses her gold and silver coins. The stepmother hears about this bird and asks her stepdaughter to bring her to meet it so that she can also acquire some gold and silver. When they arrive at the usual location, the bird instructs the evil wife to open her mouth. She does so, but this time, the bird drops only needles and pins into down her throat. The story ends with the wife’s agonizing, tortuous death.

Here, we see how the writer-narrator uses the traditional style of beginning of *yuḥkī anna...* (“the story goes…” or, more literally, “it is recounted that…”). The writer uses this expression in most of the anthology’s tales as a narrative indicator, symbolizing the past. The expression is in the passive form (*ṣīghat al-majhūl*) that possesses an aesthetically enchanting quality. Thus, the tale begins:

It is recounted that [*yuḥkī anna*], long ago, there was a man who was married to a righteous woman who had borne a son and a daughter by him. They lived in the finest way blessed with prosperity. However, it came to pass that the wife fell gravely ill and died, leaving their two children motherless (*al-Ṭayr*, 11).

Despite the tale having a happy ending, the writer does not use the traditional ending in his narrative:

For lo and behold the needles and pins tumbled into her mouth, so she swallowed them, and her blood did flow. Then, after severe torment and mortal pain, she died and, thus, the green bird took his sister’s and his own revenge on this evil woman (*al-Ṭayr*, 11).

Rawda al-Hudhud is another writer who has reworked the form of Palestinian folktales to make them suitable for children. In the story “Laylā wal-Kanz” (“Layla and the Treasure) from *Silsilat Ḥikāyāt al-Ghūl* (Collected Tales of al-Ghul), she draws on a folk tale originally collected by Fayiz al-Ghul and published in a book entitled *al-Dunyā Ḥikāyāt* (The World is Stories). Al-Huhud’s version of “Laylā wal-Kanz” differs from its predecessor in that she attempts to remove its predominantly traditional structure. The title of the story creates considerable thrilling anticipation in children right from the outset. They are eager to understand who Layla is and what the secret association between her and the treasure is. The story begins with Layla strolling through the forest with her father. Since he warns her to keep away from him as he is busy chopping wood, she goes deeper into the forest. There she meets a lion, an elephant, a wolf, a rabbit, a dog, and other animals. While the lion, elephant, wolf, and some of the other animals are keen to look after Layla and keep her safe, the fox, known for his cunning and deviousness, attempts to trick her. Layla is able to escape from the fox, after which she encounters a child called Shujaʿ — a name that means “bravery” in Arabic — and his father Salim. They both try to calm her by looking for her father for her. A wizard who is aware of Layla’s talent for finding treasure learns that she is in the woodcutter Salim’s log cabin. The wizard initially implores the woodcutter and his son to help him obtain the treasure, threatening to turn them into inanimate objects if they do not. They refuse, and the wizard resorts to practicing deception on Layla. He pretends he is a humble and goodhearted man and not a wizard all, despite what many say about him. He claims to have lost his own daughter, but that Layla can come to his rescue. Layla and Shujaʿ together find the treasure, though by pure coincidence. A cut to Layla's hand causes drops of blood to fall on a rock, splitting it in two. Emerging from the rock, a genie, who is the resident guardian, saves her from the magician by thwarting the magicians powers to do evil. The genie then hands back the treasure to her so that all the forest’s inhabitants can share it and enjoy it together within the forest. Thus, Layla’s mission to return to her father is successful.

In this text, the author introduces only a few minor modifications while incorporating some of her own narrative techniques. She begins with the verb *kāna* (“to be”) in the past tense, third-person singular rather than using the traditional opening. This enables the writer to intervene, via her narrator, setting the stage for the events to come and then introducing them gradually. This all the while commenting on the various scenes that arise in the tale, as we see in this passage:

One of the tribal shaykhs had a very beautiful daughter [*Kāna li-aḥad shuyūkh al-qabāʾil bint jamīla jaddan*] with a good heart and pure intentions who knew nothing of cunning, malice, falsehood, or deceit. Her name was Layla (*Silsilat*, 3).

*The Use of Popular Expressions*

During this period, writers began using popular expressions in their stories, lending the tales a vernacular, folkish air and a greater narrative realism. This was especially fitting since the stories were adaptations of folktales. These expressions also help the child to interact with the text. Once again, Nimr Sirhan was significant in this regard in trying as much as he could to incorporate popular Palestinian expressions and thus distinguishing them from other such stories in the Arab world. He did so while bearing in mind that many such tales were common currency in the wider region. Whoever reads the story “Al- Bāṭiya” will observe the author’s keen interest in highlighting the local Palestinian character of his stories and retaining Palestinian vernacular terms, as we see in the expressions I highlight, for example, in this passage:

Abu Sharkh replied: “Good, may God increase your wellbeing [*Ṭayyib, kaththir Allah khayr-ak*]. And he walked on. On the way, he said to himself: “I will try it.” So, he stopped in front of a tree and said to it: Oh *bāṭiya*! our mother and our father [*ummunā wa-abīnā*], fill yourself up with meat and rice for me. The *bāṭiya* became full, so he sat down to eat like one bereft [*ka-l-mafjūʿ*]. In his haste, he ate himself a bellyfull [*akala wa-kabba*] and walked home with a swagger (Sirhan, *Mawsūʿāt*, 36).

Other examples of his use of popular expressions are to be found in the following passage:

And the next day, the woodcutter picked up his ax and went to the tree: knock... knock... [*ṭaq…ṭaq*] and with the first knock [*khabṭa*], the spirit appeared and said to him: “Why did you come here when I have already given you something that makes you rich?”(*Al-Ghalṭa*, 37).

ʿAyshan, however, consistently tries to use high-level Classical Arabic (*al-Fuṣḥā*, or CA) in “al-Ṭayr al-Akhḍar” and, more than occasionally, metaphors, though he does introduce some popular expressions while placing them within double quotation marks. An example can be found in the following from “al-Ṭayr al-Akhḍar”:

And when his sister summoned him, she was crying and shouting: “Hey, come and don’t stir things up. Your aunt sharpened the knives and brought the barbers before you.” [“*Hayya khayyan taʿāl wa-mā tajīsh..khālat-uk wannat lak al-sakākīn, wa-ʿālat lak al-khallaqīn*.”](13).

​*The Use of Repetition Techniques*

In the short story “Al-Bāṭiya”, Sirhan uses repetition techniques, which are a distinctive feature of folktales' aesthetic structures. Examining a sample extract already cited, we can see how the writer is keen to deploy repetition techniques, whether in repetition of present tense verbs or in repeated sequences of threes (highlighted in bold below):

***yuqaṭṭaʿ*** *al-ḥaṭab wa-****yaḥmil****-uh ʿalā ẓahr-ih wa-****yarūḥ yabīʿ****-uh, fa-****yashtarī*** *bi-thaman-ih li-awlād-ih shayʾan min al-khubz wal-fujl wal-zayt.*

[to chop down wood and carry it off on his back to then and sell it, buying with his

earnings a morsel of bread and a few radishes and olives for his children] (35).

The repetition of verb form is not an addition to the artistic structure of folktales. It is, in fact, a phonetic, enunciatory, and syntactical feature that it performs its role by embodying the action. We observe their deployment in the present tense form, indicative of continuity, so that it lodges itself indelibly in the memory. It serves a not inconsequential purpose for the writer in that, in most cases, repetition serves to provide emphasis and focus reader attention. It is not surprising that repetition has these meanings for this writer, Nimr Sirhan, as he lives outside of his own homeland, having migrated from his village in 1948. The writer thus reflects his own personality and psychological realities through such repetition of certain words.

In his Encyclopedia of Palestinian Folklore, *Mawsūʿat al-Fulklūr al-*Filasṭīnī, Sirhan explains that repetition is a peculiar characteristic of popular stories. If the hero embarks upon an adventure, he does so three times. The number 40 is also be repeated in such stories. (For more on the importance of numbers in folk heritage, see *Mawsūʿāt* 360–72). Kinaʿina and Mahawwi consider the role of numbers in stories to be significant since there are magic numbers in many civilizations. The use of repetition in such narratives eliminates any sense of realism about the events and instead imbues them with an irrealistic ambience. Kinaʿina and Mahawwi add that the use of repetition is not limited to numbers but encompasses the structure of sentences as well, with many authors using verbs or characters for these purposes (*Dirāsāt*, 12–13). Nabila Ibrahim explains that this use of numbers in folktale endows them with a secret quality that distinguishes their beginnings, middles, and ends, as well as their pasts, presents, and futures (43).

The feature of repetition appears in al-Hudhud’s short story “Laylā wal-Kanz” in relation to both in events and the description of characters. Al-Hudhud work confirms this use of repetition in stories as a linguistic feature that children enjoy. An example of this is shown below (repetitive features highlighted in bold):

And when he **finished** doing that, he **lay down** for about an hour, he **turned** to Shujaʿ and said: “If you do not accept my preconditions, I will **go away** and leave you as you are forever, until you die of **hunger, thirst, and fatigue**, with no one who can save you (*Silsilat*, 13).

​*The Use of Descriptive Techniques*

Rawda al-Hudhud is a prominent figure whose powers of description in her story “*Layla wal-Kanz*” are widely considered excellent. The way she depicts certain exterior appearances, as well as implicitly moral features of certain characters that reflect the battle between good and evil, is also lauded. She also describes locations in a way that illuminates their value and aesthetic role in the piece. Qurayna stresses that most folktales lack descriptive qualities, yet some writers who rework children’s stories are preoccupied with description. She adds that description draws one’s attention primarily to visual delights and then the rest of the emotions it engenders in short stories. It therefore prioritizes visual aesthetics related to nature over character descriptions and external appearances (147–49).

Some archetypal folktale characters are described definitively, such as the wizard and his evil, Layla’s good-natured beauty, and Shujaʿ’s strength and bravery, as his name suggests. The description of the characters in the stories thus artistically correlates with the narrative structure, archetypal folk characters, and the struggle between good and evil, an essential element in the short story.

Al-Hudhud deliberately employs descriptive techniques to optimize human values of sympathy toward Layla. This makes sense in children’s literature because the description in itself correlates with certain specific details. Thus, al-Hudhud seeks to bring objectives aspects of description closer to artistic realism, as can be seen in this passage: “One year, the country became parched, with no rainfall, so crops dwindled, wells dried up...milk became scarce...sheep grew skinny, and the tribe found it tough to make a living.” (*Laylā* 4)

Another key feature of the short story is the internal conflict within the characters themselves. Layla is courageous, as can be seen in her resilience while alone in the forest, but she also longs to be rescued and return to her lost father. Likewise, Shujaʿwants to overcome his fear of the forest by proving his courage. External conflict is manifest between Layla and the wizard, as well as between Shujaʿ and his father on the one hand and between Shujaʿ and the wizard again on the other. These represent the conflict between good and evil, the most important theme in folktales that we have already mentioned.

*The Use of Dialogue Stylings*

Dialogue an important aspect of folktale stylistics that can stand in for narrators. Critics have differed over whether CA or vernacular dialect is suitable for folktale dialogue. They tend to concur that CA is appropriate for narration. Some people believe that using CA for dialogue is more expressive and better at conveying thoughts, feelings, and emotions, as it is capable of representing human inner worlds. Some people argue that using CA fosters a sense of Arab unity and protects the “language of *ḍād*” (sometimes called that because of the claim that this phoneme is unique to CA) from any threat to its existence, any chance of its neglect, or even its disappearance. Writing in CA, therefore, achieves both artistic and national goals. Some children’s writers support this conclusion, seeing the call of certain writers and critics to eschew the “standard language” as unjust and irresponsible because it steers children away their mother tongue and national sentiments, and forces them to use registers that range between simple and complex. Those who urge the use of vernacular dialect believe that it lends texts more realism, vivacity, and honesty than CA does, because it is the language of daily life that short stories depict (see Kanaʿinna, *Dirāsāt*, 259–64).

Al-Hudhud pays close attention to dialogue for artistic reasons. This is because dialogue brings out the nature of characters, their way of thinking, and their awareness of the jeopardy the writer has places them in. These are the subjects she seeks to convey to the child reader. The register of the language used in the story's dialogue varies notably. In the following example, some of the language is written in a high register, similar to that of adults:

The wizard said: I want to buy your wife for a thousand dinars! This is a sum you will never amass in your lifetime, though you live 100 years. Shujaʿ said, w**hile his anger at him reached a mighty pitch** [*wa-qadd balagha al-ghayẓ min-hu mablaghan ʿaẓīman*]: “Is a wife to be sold like chattel? Repent wayward one! [*khasant yā khāsir*!]” (*Laylā* 12).

Sometimes, however, the writer seeks to make the narrative dialogue simpler, rendering it closer to the spoken language. This is not just to strengthen the sense of realism, but also to make it more credible and expressive. It also helps convey the situation that they are in and to lend a realistic air to it, as in this example:

And when she took the **things** [*al-ḥājāt*] from him, she said: “What is this? Is that an invitation? Well... I will perform the role of your guests as well. He was choked up by the thought and said to her: “No, I do not have guests. All that matters is that **I earned a penny or two** [*innī laqayt dīnāran*], so I bought these **things** [*ḥājāt*] so that we can eat our fill together even if it for once in a lifetime. I don’t plan on working and will stay here, close to you (*Laylā* 15).

Al-Hudhud also uses interior monologues, conversations speakers have with themselves. Qurayna states that this type of dialogue is less frequently found in folktales because their audience needs open dialogue (159). It is often preceded by the phrase “he said to himself,” as in the following:

He bought meat, vegetables, fruit, and a chicken with a dinar, kept the rest and **said to himself** [*qāl li-nafsi-h*]: “She has lived with me for three months, watching over my comfort and trying to cheer me, but I have not found how to make her happy at all, and this is the last day of her life, for her to cook, eat, and be happy (*Laylā* 14).

The short story also features another type of dialogue: The soliloquy form that one uses to communicate with one’s Creator. This is a form of communication with a holy dimension (Qurayna 160). It takes on the form of a monologue, as al-Hudhud demonstrates in this example: “Layla said: ‘Oh God, I ask you to provide him with means to earn his livelihood, that he may find treasure and live a rich, carefree, abundant life’” (*Laylā* 15).

Al-Hudhud’s use of dialogue techniques in her story lends nuance to it, endearing it to the child reader, and avoiding any dullness and monotony in the narrative.

​***Evoking Traditional Characters in Children’s Stories***

We will examine Muhammad Al-Zahir's 1973 short story “*Shamaʿdān al-Dhahab*” (The Golden Candlestick) to explore this topic. The story features a *ghūl* as a character. We found no traditional characters from Palestinian folklore in the works of writers from the first period, indicating that they did not recognize the importance of using such characters in their stories.

*The Conception of the Folklore Character in Children’s Tales*

The character is a crucial element in narrative texts, especially in children's stories. In fact, characters are the most important aspect of these stories. According to Greimas, “character” refers to the central character around whom the story revolves, whether they are real or fictitious (52). However, Barthes argues that character depends primarily on the writer’s imagination, with no one specific character having a real-world correlative (72). Barthes believes that traditional characters draw on traditional narrative forebears, but writers imbue them with contemporary features through symbolic projection and suggestion (79).

*Evoking Ghūls as Characters*

The character of the *ghūl* has great importance in folk memory as a supernatural being vacillating between good and evil. Al-Khalili adds that at times the character of the *ghūl* more unusually takes on a third form of manipulating, belittling, and intimidating people (37). The *ghūl* is a very familiar type of unseen power that appears in short stories more often than any other. Tales of *ghūl*s are prominent in folktales too, capturing the imagination of readers and listeners, especially if they are children, due to the mythical, strange, and magical dynamic it brings to the narrative. Al-Khalili defines a *ghūl* as a mythical creature that is sentient and states that such creatures are expressive of both real and symbolic processes of transformation. He attributes the creation of these beings to the subconscious, which reflects the mysterious aspects of existence. Because these beings are lodged in the subconscious, this type of story character represents an intimate aspect of ordinary people’s experience (87).

Al-Zahir uses the character of the *ghūl* in “*Shamaʿdān al-Dhahab*” to present us with an unadulteratedly terrifying image. He uses this traditional character to both revive folk memories and introduce aspects of that character to the reader:

“Oh vessel of patience, have patience with me!” Then she opened Hana’s box and said: “Oh vessel of happiness, save me! He devoured my siblings, and you said nothing. He devoured my mother, and you said nothing. He devoured my father, and you said nothing. He destroyed the whole caravan, and you said nothing. He took my children, and you said nothing. Oh, vessel of patience, have patience with me! Oh, vessel of happiness, save me!” Moments later, the *ghūl* appears at the golden candlestick with the two children, the first six the second five years old. And he says to her: “Oh, golden candlestick! you have witnessed a wonder!” She says: “I saw him praying, fasting, and worshipping the Eternal, Everlasting One.” The *ghūl* then gives the children the golden candlestick as a reward, while keeping the secret of what happened to it (*Shamaʿdān* 34).

Al-Zahir understands that the *ghūl* has a symbolic role in the story that is possibly beyond a child’s comprehension. Thus, as the end of the tale, he explains: “The *ghūl* in this tale is not mere symbolism; it furthermore speaks to real evil and destruction. Ignorance is a *ghūl*, disease is a *ghūl*, poverty is a *ghūl*, and injustice is a *ghūl*: each of these things exist in every society.”

​*The Use of Folktales in the 1988–2015 Period*

The use of folktales in children’s stories took a new path in the 1988–2015 period in the ways writers drew on them for inspiration and deployed them in their works. Some reformulated them without fundamentally changing them, while others retold them through changing their basic content. Still others developed their own stories with fairytale elements incorporated, while some simply provided guidance about similar narrative techniques. Here, we focus on the most significant techniques writers used in reworking folktales, including the various ways in which they used them for inspiration and their deployment as models for form and content, as well the significance of certain characters and events, communicative techniques, and the lines drawn between them and the source tales. Key questions that arise from this discussion relate to how new tales have used traditional methods in the use of contemporary forms and content, how they have deconstructed traditional narrative structures, and to what extent they have challenged traditional techniques. Or have they rather simply rehearsed and rehashed them through dreary repetition of stereotypes? Below, we review three ways in which folktales were used for inspiration and/or as exemplars.

***Reformulating Folktales***

Some writers in this period tried to revive folktales and reformulate them to match the spirit of the times. They also attempted to “create” stories that emulated such tales but presented them in a new written format for children that replaced the oral folktales that their parents would tell them.

In a March 12, 2013 interview, Rawda al-Hudhud argued that reformulating Palestinian folk tales is necessary to re-present themes of national duty and education to Palestinian children. Kanaʾina, in a 23 April 2012 interview, endorsed those writers who rework these stories within a new framework, not simply due to the mental and educational benefit these stories can have when told to children, but also because they have long been lodged in the depths of popular experience across time and throughout the places that formed the Ancient World. Kanaʾina points out that these stories are not uniform in character. They are preserved in the popular memory and transmitted orally in a way that makes them amenable to flexibility and modification. This is more compatible with the spirit of the societies and cultures of the times and adapted to contemporary educational and psychological aims. This applies to Arab culture, particularly Palestinian culture, but also to others. This period saw a surge of social, political, and cultural changes that prompted a shift in the way popular stories were told and reimagined to align with these new realities. However, this is not the appropriate place to provide a detailed explanation of these changes.

We can divide the works of writers of this period into three types. The first is the traditional inclination, which continued, as in the previous period, to represent the folktale in the unchanged colloquial language of their ancestry. Kanaʾina is one such writer, reproducing Palestinian folk tales as they were and in the vernacular dialect in his short story anthology of fourty-five Palestinian folktales *Qawwil Yā Ṭayr* (Say, Oh Bird!), considered an important reference work for Palestinian folktales in the oral tradition. The second group, Zakaria Muhammad and Fatima Dhiab notable among them, adopted CA as its linguistic medium. They were keen to rewrite Palestinian folk tales, as in the previous period, with some modification to their verbiage and content. The third group is most relevant to our concerns here and perhaps features some of the most strikingly new elements of the short story. This is particularly evident in its new narrative forms, specifically in relation to its sense of spatiality that was unknown to classical forms. These writers — among them, Sonya Nimr and Mahmud ʿAbbasi —interwove their storytelling with folktale narrative structures and stylistics.

The example we will look at in this regard is Sonya Nimr’s 2001-published “*Qiṣṣa Awwalu-hā Khayāl wa-Ākhiru-hā Khayāl*” (The Story that Begins with a Fantasy and Ends With a Fantasy) which was inspired by the folktale documented by Nimr Sirhan called “*Qiṣṣa Awwalu-Hā Khadhab wa-Ākhiru-Hā Khadhab*” (The Story that Begins with a Lie and Ends With a Lie; *Mawsūʿāt*, 122–27).

The tale is one of a great, very powerful, and munificent king, whom God has blessed with a handsome and intelligent, though obstinate son who loves reading and telling stories. One day the king summons his son to tell him he wants to arrange a marriage from him. The prince responds that he seeks neither a beautiful nor rich wife, but a sweetly articulate and clever girl. He asks his father to host a feast to which he can invite all the girls around, both high-born and commoner. The one who tells the most imaginative tales will be chosen for his wife. Girls from far and wide, each dreaming of being chosen, recount tale after tale that do not please the prince. But then, one emerges from the crowd, walking resolutely and confidently but without conceit. Without so much as uttering a greeting, she begins to tell her tale, leading the prince and the rest of the audience through a story of fairytale events, times, and people. The prince married her, the girl of his dreams, and they lived happily ever after as soulmates.

Nimr indicated that he made many modifications to the story at the behest of the Education Ministry, in conjunction with the Tamer Foundation in Ramallah which published it. They wanted her to rework “*Qiṣṣa Awwalu-Hā Khadhab wa-Ākhiru-Hā Khadhab*” in a contemporary style according to modern educative principles to be circulated in schools (*Munawwira* 8). This meant that she had to rewrite it in CA rather than the spoken dialect, and incorporate hypertextual features that began with a play on the original title, where “fantasy” replaced “lie” to make it more pedagogically appropriate. Passages from the original were also removed and much of what remained was significantly modified. The result was a reconceptualization of the source tale. While critics have differed over the validity of making such changes (Kanaʿina, *Dirāsāt* 259–64), but our aim here is to explain the motivation for them rather than justify the rationale. We will also examine the relationship between the new tale and its source to demonstrate how the former functions as a hypertext. Genette, among others, calls this type of interaction hypertextuality, with a hypertext relating and being influenced by a preceding hypotext (Yaqtin). Nimr’s tale is a recreation of the original story, with a similar structure, plot, and narrative. It is not simply a copy of the source text, but instead a fresh creation. While the protagonist of the original story is a poor fisherman, the heroine of the new one is an intelligent young girl. This means that certain events in the original narrative have to be replaced by new ones. Nimr also removes any subplots present in the original to focus attention on the heroine in her version. The original story does not provide information about the characters’ personalities, while the new version foregrounds the girl’s personality traits from the beginning to the end of the story. What is most striking is that Nimr retains the traditional folktale opening:

*Kān yā kān fī qadīm al-zamān*

*Wa-sālif al-ʿasr wal-awān*

*Malik ʿaẓīm kabīr al-shaʾn*

*Kathīr al-mulk wal-khayr wal-aṭyān*

(“Once upon a time, long ago,

In a far-off time indeed,

There was a mighty king of great import

Abounding in estate, goodness, and wealth.” *Munawwira* 2)

Nimr uses a variety of narrative styles, including the imaginary and the fantastic, and often relies on digressions to achieve this. Folktales are frequently replete with the miraculous and strange, where realism is interwoven with imagination, the rational with the superrational, and the conscious with the subconscious. Through the heroine’s tales of imagination, the writer seeks to convince the child reader to believe in them. The use of the miraculous and imaginary serves to validate the strange and the absurd, as we see in the following passage:

*Duʿaytu ilā zafāf jaddī wa-jadditī*

*Ghanaytu wa-rakaṣtu kathīran min farḥatī*

*Ahdawnī bayḍa kabirat al-masāʾ*

*Ḥajmu-hā taqrīban kubbat al-samāʾ*

*Ḥamaltu-hā bi-khiffa wa-rakaḍtu naḥwa al-dār*

*Aqdhifu-hā marratan bi-yamīnī wa-marratan bil-yisār*

(“I was invited to my grandfather and grandmother’s wedding.

I sang and danced constantly; much to my joy,

They gave me a huge, shiny egg

Nearly the size of the sky’s dome.

I picked it up daintily and ran to my home,

Tossing it up first with my right hand and then with my left.” *Munawwira* 2–9)

The final narrative section of the original tale, which tells of the sultan’s son’s death after he became sultan himself, was also removed, showcasing the folktale trope of the triumph of good over evil. The original dark ending was replaced with a happy one in which the girl wins the prince’s heart, and he announces their engagement. This can be seen in the following comparative passage:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Sirhan, “*Qiṣṣa Awwalu-Hā Khadhab wa-Ākhiru-Hā Khadhab*” (hypotext) | Nimr,“*Awwalu-Hā Khayāl wa-Ākhiru-Hā Khayāl*” (hypertext) |
| *Rawwaḥa al-ṣayyād li-marati-h wal-nās taḥkī wa-taqūl: Illī Allah maʿā-h kull al-nās maʿā-h.*  *Wa-ibn al-sulṭān ṭaqqa wa-māt min al-qahr. Wa-ṭār al-ṭayr tuṣbuḥū ʿalā khayr* (*Mawsūʿāt*, 32). | *Fariḥa al-amīr wa-ʿallat ḍaḥkātu-h faqadd wajada akhīran sharikat ḥayāti-h* (*Munawwira* 34). |
| The fisherman returned to his wife, while the people all said: “God is with him, and the people are with him!” The sultan’s son dropped down and died in agony and the bird flew away. Sleep well tonight! | The prince was happy and his laughter rose up, as at last he had found his partner for life! |

Comparing Sirhan’s hypotext to Nimr's hypertext, it is clear that they follow similar patterns of emotion. However, Nimr’s hypertext structurally exploits the tropes of folktales while simultaneously distancing itself from the source by adding, deleting, and reworking elements.

*Deploying Narrative Structures in Folktales*

Forms of Narrator Presence in Children’s Tales

The narrator, as the unseen voice, is a particularly important feature of folktales. Every tale needs a narrator that draws the audience in; without one, there is no story. The narrator mediates between the narrative and the reader to govern what the latter will be exposed to (Miqdadi, *Al-Bunā*, 62). The narrator also advances the plot of the story. Genette defines the roles of narrators by reference to various narrative phenomena. The first role is narration, which involves the narrator leading the narrative. The text is the second role, and the third is the narrative situation that the narrator inhabits. The fourth role is the narrator's standpoint on the text, which is the distinctiveness of the narrative. This is evident when the narrator indicates the source of the tale. The narrator's standpoint towards the narrative is the fifth role, which is an ideological matter. The narrator intervenes directly or indirectly to comment on the narrative, as stated in (692-93). As numerous studies have dealt with defining what narrators are and what their significance is, we need not dwell too much on those debates here. Instead, we will focus on narrators’ perspectives; that is, how they manifest themselves in children’s tales. This will also help determine the extent to which children's writers have mastered the use of the narrator as a device to serve the audience in any given case. How does one quantify narrators’ interventions in their stories? By what criteria? To what degree do narrative styles differ in this context? To what extent have children's writers incorporated modern theories of the narrator?

Deploying Narrative Styles in Children’s Tales

Catering to the age-related and psychological characteristics of the anticipated reader is crucial when writing for children or adults. The boundaries of writing for children are circumscribed in ways that do not apply to writing for adults. Writing for adults is only limited by the laws of creativity. Thus, writers of children’s literature are governed by the need to define their role in the narrative from the outset in a way that creators of adult fiction are not. If narrators in adult literature are omniscient, they are considered poor specimens of the type because an all-knowing narrator is a writer who has failed to appear either in a non-interventional guise or in the mediatory guise of one narrating about others.

Narrators in children’s literature are usually omniscient ones because their child readers often need the narrator’s explanation, interpretation, and commentary instances to understand the narrative intention. Thus, a simpler, more direct approach to narration is more appropriate. The narrator may use techniques that the reader is already anticipating will be in the tale, such as narrative devices and standard opening phrases like “once upon a time. These distance the narrator from the narrative entirely but also foreshadow the type of content to come in the tale. The narrator is, thus, content to be the story’s simple medium (Miqdadi, *Al-Bunā*, 57).

The narrator sometimes resorts to addressing the child directly, having otherwise been concealed behind the text. It's possible that these techniques are a vestige of the oral tradition that gave birth to folktales. Maryam Hamad uses this narrator style in *Asrār Ṣandūq al-Azrār* (The Secrets of the Button Box), an important element in this folktale. In it, a grandmother tells her granddaughter a story through flashback that, by drawing on her memory, effectively returns the grandmother to the past and another story. Thus, the grandmother becomes a narrator herself distinct from the tale’s narrator, who here simply relays the narrative without participating in the events:

I liked their shapes, colors, and textures, but I collected them in this box for the memories that each button carries! Eagerly, I said: “Tell me, grandmother, What are their stories?” My grandmother bent over slightly, picked out a shiny white button, and said: “This fell off your Aunt Hanan’s wedding dress and got lodged in my scarf when I kissed and hugged her.” (*Asrār* ?*)*

The narrator in some texts for children are guides to the story’s content or ideas whereby the writer creates the illusion that there is a narrator telling a story recounted in the past. In this case, the goal of this technique is realized in both form and content. In *Al-Miftāḥ al-Ḍāʾiʿ* (The Lost Key), Mahmud ʿAbbasi uses a grandmother narrator’s past tense recollection as a technique:

The grandmother sat her two granddaughters on her knees and began telling them an amusing little tale about when she was a little girl. Grandma Safiya said: “Once upon a time, long, long ago, there was a little girl named Khayzaran. Her grandpa gave her a bracelet, a dress, and a talking doll as a gift. Khayzaran stowed her gifts away in the closet, but she lost the key to it. Her grandfather searched for it in the drawers and all over the place.” (*Al-Miftāḥ* ?)

The narrator remains neutral here and does not intervene in the narrative directly, simply conveying what another says. The writer has projected the narrator’s role onto the grandmother, as grandmothers often play such roles in folktales. A folktale-like story emerges within a story. This tale is of the relationship between Safiya and her granddaughters, ʿUrayn and Safiya. The grandfather, not finding the key anywhere, goes to the carpenter who made the closet. However, the carpenter tells him that the key is at the blacksmith’s. The blacksmith asks the grandfather to pay him for it with a hen’s egg, which the grandfather duly does. When he returns home, he uses the key to open the closet and remove the gifts once again.

Abbasi employs the technique of the tale within the frame tale to create a contemporary style of story that evokes folk heritage by reshaping it for contemporary audiences in a way that allows past and present to interact. He interrupts the narrative to tell another story and then returns to the main tale, as demonstrated in the previous example. The writer’s tendency to insert the traditional opening into the middle of the tale, using past tense verbs, shows his attachment to his past. It also highlights his desire to comprehend the past and to acknowledge the limited resemblance between the era of the grandmother and that of the children. This piques the curiosity of child readers and engages them in the story. From the point of view of technique, the third-person narrative was and is the only formula for narrating folktales. The grandmother therefore takes on an external role in the story, as though a neutral commentator. She does not find it necessary to insert herself into the text that supposedly take place before the present, as illustrated in the passage: “Once upon a time, long, long ago, there was a little girl named Khayzaran.”

This new version of the story also takes into account children’s need, containing an element of suspense that stimulates imagination and curiosity. He uses themes of adventure to introduce the element of suspense — adventure being a familiar folktale *leitmotif* — but ʿAbbasi does not do so directly. Rather, he takes the folktale and builds narrative modules on top of it, layering adventure symbolically not concretely. The search for the lost key, from this perspective, is equivalent to the search for the truth. The lost key is symbolic of what the Palestinian people lost during their displacement in 1948. All of this emphasizes ʿAbbasi’s conscious curation of popular heritage, transforming it from the fantastical to the real. He does not sever all ties with folk heritage, but seeks to bridge past and present, heritage and modernity.

Mustafa Murrar is another writer who exploits such narrator-related techniques, as we see in his short story “Al-Wuqūd” (Fuel) from the anthology *Al-Mashrūʿ.* Here, Safiya asks her father to tell her a story, to which he replies:

My beloved, my story tonight is the story of this land of goodness, this benevolent and generous land. As for you, with your love and smiling faces, I will overcome all obstacles. Once upon a time, once long ago, an old peasant man...( *Al-Mashrūʿ* 17).

The story narrated by the grandfather is secondary to the main narrative and separate in terms of characters, times, and places. The grandfather narrates the story but does not participate in the events. At the end of the story, the narrator returns to the child, bringing the reader back to the main story.

*Conjuring Up Traditional Characters in the 1988–2015 Period*

The examples above suggest that during the 1988–-2015 period, writers pursued diverse approaches rather than a single one when conjuring up traditional characters in their stories. Many children’s storywriters use characters as expressive tools for contemporary reality. They seek to convey their view of it and to express their own ideas by through traditional characters. The writers’ approach to the deployment of traditional characters in this period differed according to their creative abilities and awareness of folk heritage. The writers were careful not to simply place traditional characters onto their narratives as unchanging icons, as had been done in the past. Instead, they aimed to modernize the characters, giving them attributes that matched the authors' contemporary experiences.

Invoking the Traditional Characters of Hasan al-Shatir and the *Ghūl* in Stories for Children

As our examples indicate, many writers in this period were keen to introduce the youthful character of Hasan al-Shatir into their stories. They did not all use the same strategies or characters to accomplish this. Some use the character to retell traditional events in a new way, while others reformulate the character itself, transplanting it from the past to the present to interact with contemporary characters while simultaneously drawing on their traditional associations to make new and unique characters out of them. This allows writers to express their ideas about modern times while also facilitating communion between past and present. We will focus here on how the writers of this period dealt with the characters of Hasan al-Shatir and the *ghūl*, examining what techniques they use and what function the characters play in their tales.

The first story we raise here is Mahmud Shuqayr’s “Awlād Al-Ḥayy al-ʿAjīb” (The Children of the Wondrous Neighborhood). It places Hasan al-Shatir directly in the narrative, with all the folkish allusiveness involved in doing so. The writer is fully aware of the symbolism he invokes through this character and has a specific idea to convey thereby. Shuqayr aims to broaden the symbolic meanings of the character by relying heavily on the implicit folktale connotations, thereby artistically crystallizing a new personality for the character. The relationship between Hasan al-Shatir, who is portrayed as both a child character and a folk hero, and the character of Mahir is one of resemblance. Mahir dreams of transforming his neighborhood into one inhabited by many kings and queens:

Mahir and only Mahir takes it upon himself to transform the neighborhood into a wondrous one full of kings and queens. This happened after his grandmother told him the story of the smart lad Hasan, who could turn mountains into gold after opening his amazing book, reading a little of it and then asking it to turn mountains turn into gold. And lo and behold! The mountains do turn into gold (*Awlād Al-Ḥayy al-ʿAjīb*?).

The traditional character here has two faces: an ancient one that conjures up the past and a modern one inspired by how we see our own times. However, Shuqayr does not create the character of Hasan as one divided between past and present, but as one of inhabiting elements of antiquity and modernity simultaneously. He has the past and presentcommunicate, as we see in this passage:

That night, clever young Hasan visit Mahir without his grandmother being aware of it. Nor did Mahir’s mother and father see clever young Hasan arrive while their son was getting ready for bed.

Mahir said to quick-witted Hassan: “Would you lend me your book for a day?”

Smart little Hasan smiled and said: “I’ll lend you it on one condition: That you do not use it to cause any harm to anyone.”

Mahir replied: “I can’t harm anyone. I want to turn the men of the neighborhood into kings and the women into queens.” Hasan liked that idea, so he lent the book to Mahir. (*Awlād Al-Ḥayy al-ʿAjīb* ?)

Here we see Shuqayr using the character of Hasan al-Shatir to symbolically express the desire to do away with the negative aspects of Mahir’s neighborhood.

The second story we examine in this context is Taghrid ʿArif al-Najjar’s “Ḥaṣan wal-Ghūl” (Hasan and the *Ghūl*). The title of this story can be interpreted in many ways and may be associated with another text, which can signal specific ideas to the reader. The title relates the present tale to its source, making the present the interacting context. Genette suggests that the functions of titles are seduction, definition, description, and/or suggestion and that the aim of a title is to enchant readers and direct their attention to it, thus encouraging them to read the tale itself (Yaqtin 111). The writer here uses highly suggestive symbolism by having Hasan in the title of his story. After that, incidents in the text reveal the supernatural dimensions of this character, alluding to a journey, adventure, and the hunt for the terrifying *ghūl*. The title’s association with folktale heritage may lead readers to expect an unreal story.

Despite his parents’ efforts to comfort him, Hasan was still consumed by fear:

“Not a single one of you have ever seen a *ghūl* before,

and not once heard its voice!

Yet you’re sure it exists and dread it indeed!

I will fear no more this *ghūl*, as you call it.

I will play and yell and laugh and clamber up the mountain too.

Tomorrow morning, I’ll begin my journey.

Don’t try to thwart my resolve!”

Hasan’s mother cried, begging him:

“Please! Please, my son!

Don’t go! I fear the *ghūl* will eat you up!” (Al-Najjar ?)

Al-Najjar also features the character of the *ghūl* in her story, but in a way contrary to traditional depictions. The *ghūl* in al-Najjar’s tale, in contrast to the conventional symbolism of ghūl characters, comes to fear humans.

The *ghūl* was as the villagers described it:

“It looks terrifying with thick hair and long and pointy claws, with one eye only in the middle of its forehead!”

Hasan’s blood froze with fear!

He wished he had believed what the villagers had told him and had never left his village.

The *ghūl* drew closer and closer to Hasan, then encircled him cautiously, and then suddenly ran away roaring!

Hassan followed the *ghūl* to his cave, crying out: “Oh *ghūūūūl*!”

Al-Najjar also draws on devices of the weird and supernatural through the character of young Hasan, who traps the terrifying *ghūl* after journeying in search of it:

Early in the morning, Hasan gathered up his supplies,

said goodbye to his parents and left the house.

The villagers gazed upon him with great interest.

Then someone whispered: “What a brave boy he is!

He will save us from the *ghūl*.”

But another replied: “I don’t think he will.

The *ghūl* will eat him up without a doubt!”

Hasan walked until he reached the mountain foot,

then began to climb, chanting over and over:

“I’m Hasan al-Shatir, the good and the brave!

I’m never afraid of *ghūls* for a minute!

I will never, ever, ever be afraid of a *ghūl*.” (Al-Najjar?)

*Employing Folktale Features in Children’s Stories*

Employing Traditional Opening Styles

Some writers are influenced by the formal structures of folktales in their own works, lending a folklore character to them. One example is Dima Sahwil’s 2006-published tale *Al-Amīr wal-ʿAjūz al-Ḥakīm* (The Prince and the Wise Old Man). Although the story is not directly inspired by folktales, the writer seeks to imitate their familiar narrative stylings, thus suggesting oral narration and summoning up the past for the reader. For example: “Once upon a time, in the ancient times of long ago[*Kān yā mā kān, fī sālif al-ʿasr wal-zamān*], there a greedy prince gulped down all kinds of food, leaving no room in his stomach.” (Sahwil ?). The beginning of Sonya Nimr’s 2011-published tale “Mukhtār Abu Dunayn Kibār” (2011) also mimics the familiar opening of folk tales: “Once upon a time, at a certain time [*Kān yā mā kān wa-fī zaman min al-azmān*], there was a boy named Mukhtar. He was intelligent, active, and full of ideas. He was kind, gentle, artistic, and talented with music and melody” (*Mukhtār* ?). In similar vein, Muhammad Bidarna’s 1997-published “Aḥmad al-Ṣaghīr” (Little Ahmad) begins in traditional style: “Oh honored gentlemen, oh woken ones and sleeping ones, after greetings and wishes for your tranquility [*Yā sāda yā kirām, yā ṣuḥā yā niyām, baʿd al-taḥayya wal-salām*] being carried on the wings of doves, I tell you the story of a brown-skinned child named Ahmad” (*Aḥmad* ?).

Deploying Repetition in Tales for Children

Most writers used repetition as a technique in their stories in this period. The use of repetition in children’s stories in our corpus ranges from simple repetition — the most common being the simple reiteration of a word or phrase — to other, more complex forms. Repetition is a rhythmic element that suggests the importance of the words’ or phrases’ connotations. Repetition can play a highly expressive role in stories suggests the persistent governance of the idea expressed in it of the writer’s thought. In contemporary literary texts, repetition has both enhanced and degraded the aesthetic value of creative work. It possesses the same expressive potential as any other feature of literary texts, such as semantics, imagery, and so on. Maryam Hamad uses repetition in her 2011-published story “*Bābunj wa-Zaʿtar wa-Marmiya*” (Chamomile, and Thyme and Sage):

She is there in the **meadow** [*al-maraj*], and the **meadow** [*al-maraj*] is **far**, **far** away [*baʿīd baʿīd*]... and the road is rough and dangerous and surrounded by thorns, so who dares go there? The grandmother returns, saying over and over: “**Chamomile and thyme and sage, chamomile and thyme and sage, chamomile and thyme and sage** [*bābunj wa-zaʿtar, wa-marmiya bābunj wa-zaʿtar wa-marmiya, bābunj wa-zaʿtar wa-marmiya*]” (*Bābunj*?)

The repetition here lends a rhythmic dimension to the text, as the reiteration of words constructs tuneful and expressive constructs that form an impression of the general scenario and crystallize the ideas within it. It achieves cohesion between the sentences and conveys the larger-than-life picture that the writer seeks to convey about the grandmother’s obsession with eating these herbs. Repetition serves both the meaning and the artistic structure, imbuing it with a particularly resonant elegance. Elsewhere, Bidarna uses repetition of numbers in “Aḥmad al-Ṣaghīr”:

...But love is sown upon it, and goodness prevails among its people and Ahmad...has **four in years of age and seven in brothers and sisters** [*la-hu min al-ʿamr arbaʿa wa-min al-ikhwa wal-akhawāt sabaʿa*]. They lived in a small warm house and slept on a mattress on top of a mat. (*Aḥmad* ?)

The writer here uses numbers repetitively to consciously lodge “four” and “seven” in the child reader’s mind by emphasizing them in this way, as they have an import for the story.

The writers of this period tried to employ various features of folktales in their stories to imitate the traditional narrative structures, but in a somewhat different manner. For example, Nabiha Jabarin, in her 2007-published tale “*Al-Muhandisa al-Ṣaghīra Yārā*” (Yara, The Little Engineer Girl), the writer tries to take the child back to olden days through stories told then. Such allusion embodies the benefits of drawing on popular heritage in form and content alike, as in the following passage:

My father said: “Gather round me and sit down and **I will tell you a lovely story** **about our** **childhood games** [*anā sa-aḥkī la-kum ḥikaya jamīla ʿan alʿābi-nā fil-ṭufūla*]. We sat around our father **and he told us a story that entertained us** [*fa-ḥakā la-nā ḥikayatusallī-nā*]. He said: ‘We, the neighborhood kids, met up one time to play together, and I loved the idea of construction as a profession...’ (*Al-Muhandisa* ?)

Zada Salama also uses certain features of the folktale in her 2001-published story “*Jaddī wa-Ḥimār-uh*” (My Grandfather and His Donkey):

My father Fares named me after my grandfather because he loved and respected him. After the celebration ended and as was my custom when I visited my grandfather and grandmother, I refused to go home with my parents because I wanted to sleep next to my grandmother so that **one of them could tell me one of their enjoyable stories** [*li-yaḥkī lī aḥad-humā ḥikaya min ḥikayāti-h al-mumtiʿa*].

Another example comes from Muhammad Bidarna’s 1996-published “*Al-Shaykh wa-Ḥafīd-uh*” (The Sheikh and his Grandson): “Then Hassan tells the elephant **all the stories** [*kull al-ḥikayāt*] he heard from his grandfather during the day, and the elephant dances for her in joy” (*Al-Shaykh* 8).

Note that in these examples, the grandfather or grandmother is the one who tells the entertaining stories to their grandchildren. The recounting of folktales is a communication between grandparent and grandchild that echoes the past and sounds in the present.

*Summary*

We have seen that Palestinian children’s stories based on folktales from 1967 to 1988, while not changing the events and characters, mostly reformulated them in CA. It seems that conservative writing traditions for demanded the use of a high-level, formal style of language. However, we found many echoes of the spoken vernacular represented in the popular phrases and vocabulary that remained in these texts.

Of the period that followed up to 2015, we observed that using folktales in this way was driven by the content and that the new and original texts were linked in order to make them compatible with the spirit of the times. The initial basic attempts were followed by more complex ones that went beyond a simple relationship with popular heritage in children’s stories, as we saw in the works of Muhammad Bidarna and Mahmud Shuqayr. Some writers tried to reflect the values and culture of their era in their stories. They modified the source texts to introduce concepts that were driven by modern education methods and to match the spirit of their own times.

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1. The Brothers Grimm collected folk tales from peasant narrations, trying to preserve them. Their intentions were both nationalist and romantic at the same time. They sought to preserve the remnants of Teutonic culture and to contend that this culture was no less great than that of the classical world. In many cases, they reworked the oral stories they had collected as they pleased and altered the tales to the standards of good taste appropriate to written literature. The Brothers Grimm began to combine multiple versions of the same story, as they thought, and came up with complex texts that were presented as if they were original. This was nothing more than an attempt by them to foster a legacy of national pride. Their manipulation of the spoken tradition served these national goals: See Kana’ina and Mahawi 2001: 2–3. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Andersen wrote an 1835 collection of Danish popular folk tales called *Andersen’s Tales*, re-writing and reframing these tales for children: See Ben-Amos and Goldstein 17, Hazan-Rokem 144; Regev 22. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Baydas, a pioneer of the modern Arabic short story in Palestine, graduated from the Russian Teachers’ College (the Seminary”) in Nazareth and spoke Russian fluently. He was familiar with writers like Pushkin and Tolstoy and translated many of their works into Arabic: See ʿAlaynat, *Bayn al-Tarbiya*, 16. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. On the political and economic circumstances after *al-Nakba*, see Jarbawi and Khalil 26–54. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. ʿAlaynat emphasizes Nasser’s political role in the Communist Party and its impact on his political awareness, his view of the Palestinian issue, and his criticisms of the authorities, not just the Israeli ones but also those of the neighboring Arab countries: See *Bayn al-Tarbiya* 16. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. On Nasser’s works, see Yahya *Taʾthīr* 232 and ʿAlaynat *Bayn al-Tarbiya* 15–17. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Interview with Badarna on 12 January 2014 [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. See http://myschool.co.il/daraltiflar [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. See http://www.qsm.ac.il/web/Main.aspx?did=67&pid=0 [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Interview with Kanaʾina, 11 April 2014. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Interview with Abbasi 5 August 2014 [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Of those studies which indicate the programmatic differences, of course due to organizational differences, see particularly Bashawwur *Al-Qaḍīya* and ʿUthman. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Studies of children’s literature in the West Bank and Gaza during the First Intifada pre-eminently include that of Salwa ʿAlaynat, who finds that children’s stories reflect the internal and external conflicts as being between generations, classes, and cultures. She also finds that Israelis are represented in all the violence experienced by children in the invasion and destruction of their homes, exchange of gunfire, arrests and so on (Ṭufūla fī Ṣirāʿ 13–47). Rafiʿa Yahya also indicates that the content of children’s stories of this period vary between reportage and comical styles, as is familiar in children’s literature generally (Ṣūrat 43–62). Walid Ihshayyish finds that there is a distinction between writers with regard to which patriotic values they focus on and that the image of self-sacrifice and martyrdom is very evident in these tales (1991, 35–51). [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. The 2001 collection *Qawwil yā Ṭayr* contains 45 stories which Sharif Kanaʾina confirmed, in my 15 January 2013 interview with him, were preserved in the colloquial dialect because it was an important way to teach national identity. Hence the stories are read aloud in public, not read in book form. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. *al-Turāth al-Shaʿbī* (folk heritage) is the Arabic term recommended as a substitute for the famous foreign term “folklore,” which was coined in 1846 when British researcher William John Thoms recommended its use as a name for the field that teaches customs, traditions, practices, legends, epics, and proverbs (Sirhan *Mawsūʿat* 20, Khuri *al-Fulklūr* 19). In order to avoid confusion, this study will use the term “folklore” to denote the scientific study of the field of folk heritage and the Arabic term “folk heritage” to refer to the same cultural materials in the applied study. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. According to al-Munasira, heritage is one level of the national and patriotic culture of a people. This level is related to the formation of emotions and spirituality. It transcends the shifts of folk history, as evidenced in its dialectical literature written by a known or anonymous individual and becoming an essential part of the collective consciousness. Heritage, which people receive from their parents, moves chronologically across the past, present, and future, thereby imbuing it with an immense emotional impact (7–9). Al-Mutawwir defines folklore as comprising the entire formation of ideas, beliefs, morals, laws, and language and encompassing all the tools, instruments, weapons, and other inventions that people find suitable for use in their lives (29–33). [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. See also al-Jabiri, who ascertains the importance of heritage as a unifying element for identity in Arabic communities and describes it as a component of the Arab psyche and a fundamental element for its unity. According to Al-Jabiri, heritage forms one of the pillars of cultural identity (*al-Turāth* 23). [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. For more on the study of folklore, see Lowie 12–34. Interest in folklore began in the nineteenth century with the beginning of the industrial revolution and the renaissance movement of that period. The nineteenth century represents an important stage in the development and expansion of the field of humanities (Krappe 112–345). For more on the romantic movement, see Hilal 12–123. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. For the patriotic motives of the Brothers Grimm, see ʿAlqam 5 and Khuri *al-Fulklūr* 16. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. Taylor’s theory was that human evolution went through three stages: Savagery, barbarism, and civilization (Dundes 3). [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. James George Frazer (1854–1941) is considered one of the pioneers in the study of folklore, mostly notable for his books *The Golden Bough*(1890) and *Folk-Lore in the Old Testament* (1918)(al-ʿAnatil *Bayn al-Fulklūr* 161–226, ʿAlqam 1993, 10–11). [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. On the late emergence of interest in heritage among Arabic, see Al-Mutawwir 25. In this regard, Khuri says that the Arab nations were under foreign rule for centuries, first Ottoman, and then European colonialism. He adds that, in the wake of their independence, these nations began to recognize the importance of folklore in confirming national identity and some Arab governments took an interest in traditional and folk intellectual and artistic cultural heritage (*al-Fulklūr* 60). [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. Ahmad Rushdi Salih translated Alexander Krappe 1967 book *Folklore*, while Nabila Ibrahim translated James George Frazer’s *Folk-Lore in the Old Testament* in 1973 and, in the same year, the German fairytales which were published by folklorist Friedrich von der Leyen (ʿAlqam 29). [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. The Markaz al-Fanūn al-Shaʿbīya (Center for Popular Arts) was founded in Egypt in 1957. One of the center’s main aims was the compilation of nationalistic heritage from across Egypt and organizing it in a scientific archive. Libya and Tunisia likewise both founded a Majlis li-Raʿayat al-Fanūn al-Shaʿbīya (Oversight Committee for Popular Arts). In Iraq, a special department for the arts and folk culture was founded within the Ministry of Information, and in 1971, a government legislation was passed to found the Center of Folklore which aimed to study Iraqi folk heritage specifically. A Markaz al-Fanūn al-Shaʿbīya was founded in Kuwait in 1965 to compile and organize Kuwaiti heritage. Furthermore, the Culture Directorate which focused on Jordanian heritage was founded in Jordan. The directorate explores folklore, and its most important objectives are to collect aspects of material, social, intellectual, and artistic life (ʿAlqam 31). [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. A folklore museum was founded in Libya and boasted many departments, including folk medicine, music, tools, and folk attire. There are also several museums in Morocco which display folk materials. Syria has a museum of Syrian customs and traditions, and Iraq has a museum dedicated to Baghdadi folk traditions and another to folk costumes. In Kuwait, there is a museum displaying models of material life such as costumes, shipbuilding materials and fishing methods (ʿAlqam 32). [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. Or, as Kanaʾina calls it “the beginning of the Arab nationalist ideology stage” (*Dirāsāt* 144). It is also necessary to point out the importance of the Palestinian land and its holiness. Palestine attracted the attention of many foreigners. Visitors wrote diaries and books about what they saw, and researchers in various fields of arts and sciences, especially archaeologists, historians, geographers, and folkloric scholars wrote many books and published many studies about the various aspects of folk life (Bisusu 22). [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. “Orientalism” is the name given to the different academic branches dedicated to studying the languages and cultures of the East. An “Orientalist,” on the other hand, is a Westerner who studies the heritage of the East, such as India, Iran, China, Japan, the Arab world, and other Eastern nations (Sa ʿid 2, Haddad 86). [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. Some Palestinian researchers took an interest in studying everything related to Palestinian heritage. One such researcher was Estefan Estefan (1899–1949) who was interested in Palestinian folk tales. ʿArif al-ʿArif (1891–1973) published *al-Qiḍāʾ bayn al-Badūw* (Staying with the Bedouins; 1934), while ʿAmr Salih al-Barghuthi (1894–1965) focused on village customs and traditions. Mustafa al-Dabbagh (1898**–**1989) published *al-Madrasa al-Qarīya* (The Village School, 1935) and *al-Tārīkh al-Qadīm lil-ʿĀlam al-Waṭanī* (The Ancient History of The National World, 1951). Meanwhile, ʿIsa al-Muso (1923**–**2003) was interested in Palestinian folk proverbs (al-Barghuthi 32–40). [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. The first issue was published in Jerusalem in October 1920 and was released annually until its nineteenth issue in 1939. The twentieth issue was not published until 1946, after nearly a seven-year hiatus. In June 1948, the twenty-first and final issue was released. The journal boasted a diverse range of studies on languages, literature, history, folklore, and the antiquities of the ancient Near East. Four Palestinian researchers contributed to this journal, (most of whom specialized in folklore): Estefan Estefan, Ilyas Haddad, ʿUmar Salih al-Barghuthi, and Tawfiq Kan’aan (ʿAqlam 214**–**15). [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. The aims of the committee include compiling everything that was written, photographed, recorded, and said about Palestinian heritage cross linguistically and archiving it in the Markaz al-Abhath al-Ijtimaʿiya (Center for Social Research)’s library that was attached to Jamaʿiyat Inʿash al-Usra. The aims of the society are to publish studies about Palestinian folklore and to translate everything written about Palestinian heritage (in any language) into Arabic. It also strives to found a museum of Palestinian heritage (ʿAqlam 211–13). [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. A visit to this association on 12/3/2014. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. Among the most notable works of that period are: Abd-al-Latif aAl-Barghuthi’s (1928–2002) study “Folk Songs in Jordan and Palestine” (1963); ʿUmar al-Sarisi’s (1938–2013) “Palestinian Folk Tales” (1972); Fayyiz Ali al-Ghul’s story anthologies *The World is Stories*, *Legends from my Country*, and *Tales of the Forefathers* (1964–1968); Nimr Sirhan’s collection of books on heritage published between 1964 and 1974, namely *Reviving Folklore*, *Canaanite Architecture in Palestine*, *The Encyclopedia of Palestinian Folklore*, *Our Folk Songs in the West Bank*, and *Palestinian Folktales*. Additionally, Yusra Arnita published *Palestinian Folklore* in 1968, while Nabil ʿAlqam published *Introduction to the Study of Folklore* (1976) and ʿAli al-Khalili (1943–2013) published *Introduction to the Study of Fables and Work Songs* (1979). [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. There were individual initiatives to establish other foundations dedicated to heritage. ʿAbd-al-Hakim Samara (1959–) published the magazine *al-Masira* (The Path) between 1959 and 1988. He also founded Manshurat Shams (Sun Publications) in 1993 and, in 2004, he founded al-Khabiya Foundation to compile and document Arabic publications (Mahawwi 25–26). [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. In the introduction to *Speak Bird, Speak Again*, anthropologist Alan Dundes says that the book is important for an array of reasons, some of which are political. He added that these stories belong to the Palestinian people and that regardless of one’s view towards the erection of an Israeli state in 1948, one cannot deny that it left the Palestinian people fragmented and displaced. He added that it is similar to what colonial states did when they claimed ownership of already-inhabited land (1–6). [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. The term *volkslied* was coined by the German scholar Herder in 1773 and its translation spread to different European languages. Arabs adopted this term and translated it to “folk song” (Khuri *al-Muṣṭalaḥ* 42). [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. For this and more on Palestinian folk songs, see Khuri *al-Muṣṭalaḥ* 97–173. [↑](#footnote-ref-36)