

## The Influence of One Thousand and One Nights on Children's Arabic Literature

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### Abstract

One Thousand and One Nights, also known as Arabian Nights, is a literary source that evokes supernatural, magical worlds that transcend place and time and stimulate the reader's audio-visual imagination. Kamil Kelani<sup>2</sup>, the renowned Egyptian writer, as well as other writers who followed his style, derived tales from One Thousand and One Nights and simplified them for children in forms that still maintained the original marvel. The study argues that these tales from One Thousand and One Nights have saved children's Arabic literature from stagnation and the domination of a preaching didactic tone that overwhelmed it since its inception at the end of the nineteenth century.

The study confirms that the simplified tales of One Thousand and One Nights meet the various needs of Arab children today, including fantasy, imagination, and reading for pleasure. For instance, characters such as giants, mermaids, and unicorns, subjected to unusual time-place conditions, have entered the space of children's Arabic literature through the simplified tales of One Thousand and One Nights and enriched it with imagination, oddity, wonder, fantasy, and amusement. These tales also do not neglect reflections on life and death, achievement and failure, and love and hatred, being some of the key issues facing children in their

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<sup>2</sup> For further expansion on Kilani's project and "One Thousand and One Nights," see: Huraira, K. A. (2024, January 8). "Sindbad Who?": Arabization and the Transformation of One Thousand and One Nights and the Modern Arabic Children Literature (The Project of Kamel Kilani 1927–1959). *Al-Markaz: Journal of Arabic Studies*, 101-103.

foundational years. To show this, the study employed an analytical approach through which specific motifs and elements from the simplified tales of One Thousand and One Nights are analyzed for their impact on Arabic children's literature, how they were assimilated into this literature, and their influence on its content, narrative structures, character formation, and symbols. This approach aims to comprehend the interaction between the tales of One Thousand and One Nights and Arabic children's literature since the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

**Keywords:** One Thousand and One Nights; Children's Arabic Literature; Fantasy; Imagination; Literary Elements.

## Introduction

Thousand Nights and One Night, known in English as Arabian Nights, has always been a reason and source for evoking supernatural, magical worlds beyond place and time and arousing simultaneous audio-visual and kinetic imagination in a mould of captivating pleasure. Perhaps their various tales, their super-rational adventures, their human contents in harmony with the human soul's spectra, their flowing narrative structures, and their multiple voices made the Arabian Nights a narrative authority that has attracted everyone's curiosity (Al-Olaqi, p. 384-396).

Interest in the themes of Arabian Nights is reflected in a wide array of classical and modern artistic mediums, including oral narrations transmitted heart to heart and tongue to tongue, shadow plays that depict irrational events embraced by the imagination, readings, compositions, and foundational narratives that inspire writers to build upon their unique fantasies, aiming to match their originality. The tales of Arabian Nights feature detailed three-dimensional descriptions, making their adaptation into multiple artistic forms harmonious with modern techniques employed by those stories. This underscores the credit due to Arabian Nights for their contributions to

contemporary literature, elevating them to the status of an international work in both nature and influence.

This study examines the influence of Arabian Nights on literature and their spiritual and emotional connections with religious and cultural authorities, moderated to appeal to all ages and perspectives. Readers globally receive these tales with warmth, their imaginations welcoming them without the need for justification or proof. The enchantment of the Orient and its mysteries continue to extend their intertextual influence across various arenas and fields. This study focuses on literature related to the Arab child, highlighting the significant impact of Arabian Nights on children's Arabic literature that seeks to reclaim and reflect on its literary heritage, examining its implications and relevance to the present time.

### **The Arabian Nights**

The Arabian Nights are not originally crafted for written consumption or library collection but as a series of separate stories intended for oral and aural entertainment of the common folk. For centuries, narrators have carried their versions of these stories, adapting, omitting, and augmenting elements as they saw fit until a new era emerged that regarded these tales with esteem, leading to their compilation through printing or preservation in libraries" (Al-Qalamāwī. P. 24).

The first documented reference to the Arabian Nights was mentioned in Al-Mas'ūdī's book/ *Meadows of Gold and Mines of Gems* in the first half of the 4th century. He described the Arabian Nights as "invented news items from invented legends which were composed by those who sought to ingratiate themselves with kings by recounting them and vied with contemporaries by memorising and reciting them; their method is akin to the books that were written

and translated for us from Persian and Hindi, such as *Hazar Afsan*, a Persian name that translates to *One Thousand Tales* in Arabic, and people call this book The Arabian Nights. It is a compilation that narrates the stories of a king, his vizier, and his daughter and her slave. They are Scheherazade and Dunyazade; it resembles the book *Farza and Simas* in its tales of kings and viziers of India and Sindbad, among other works in this genre" (Al-Mas'ūdī, p. 251).

From Al-Mas'ūdī's description, we can conclude that the frame story of The Arabian Nights existed and was included in the collection before the 4th century of the Hijra, suggesting that The Arabian Nights followed the narrative style of *Hazar Afsan*. However, the Persian source of The Arabian Nights, as mentioned by Al-Mas'ūdī, has not yet been discovered. Lane argues that The Arabian Nights in our possession today is not the same version referred to by Al-Mas'ūdī (Khourshid, p.13).

Ibn Al-Nadīm mentions The Arabian Nights in his *Al-Fihrist*, stating, "The first individual who organised these tales into a book, placed them on bookshelves, and introduced narratives narrated by animals was the initiator of the Fihrist. This form of literature then flourished during the era of the Sasanian kings. The Arabs translated these stories into Arabic; eloquent speakers and rhetoricians refined, enhanced, and expanded them, grouping works of similar themes. The earliest work to compile such content was *Hazar Afsan*, meaning 'One Thousand Tales,' which includes The Arabian Nights and fewer than two hundred 'Samars' (evening conversations), with each Samar extending over several nights. I have seen it in complete volumes, but in reality, it is a sparse and uninspiring book (Ibn Al-Nadīm, P. 363-374); Abdulla Ibrahim argues that Ibn Al-Nadim did not give any hint to the book of The Arabian Nights in this text, but he spoke about *Hazar Afsan* and exposed its content (Abd Allāh, P. 86).

The story in The Arabian Nights was not divided initially into Thousand Nights and One Night; this division was done in later periods. The desire to

complete the number of 'nights' was the motive behind many additions to the book of The Arabian Nights. The popularity of the book prompted scribes to add strange manuscripts. Pino (tluanip) divided the manuscripts spread across the Arab and Western worlds into two parts: groups that include the tales of The Arabian Nights arranged within the well-known frame-tale and another group independent of The Arabian Nights but included tales found in editions of The Arabian Nights, such as The Brass City and The Hunter and the Jinn. Pino (tluanip) referred to these groups as "the equivalents of The Arabian Nights" (Pinault, p. 169).

The origins of the book, its source, its writer, its time of writing, and compilation constitute a complex controversy among researchers. Abdalla Ibrahim provided a glossary that clarifies this complication in his book Arabic Narrativity. Researchers attribute the book's origins to Hindi, Persian, and Arab sources. There are many views regarding the identity of the writer. Some attributed the book to an Arab author or an unknown folklore writer. Others argued that the book was written collectively by many writers.

Moreover, there are several opinions regarding the date of writing the book. Researchers have suggested various indefinite dates, such as the Abbasid Period, the Fatimid Period, the 6th century of the Hijra, the 9th century of the Hijra, and the 10th century of the Hijra. The date of the compilation of the book also raised controversy among researchers. For example, McDonald maintains that the book was compiled in the 8th century A.D. In contrast, Munir Ba'albaki maintains that the compilation of the book took place between the 13th and the 16th century (Abd Allāh, P. 9). In fact, there are several Arabic editions of The Arabian Nights, including the First Calcutta edition (1814-1818), the Second Calcutta edition (1839-1842), the First Būlaq edition (1835), and Breslau (1825-1843). Researchers are cautious regarding the Breslau edition and consider it inaccurate compared with other editions (Littmann, p. 360); among the critical

contemporary editions is the ancient Syrian text that was re-edited and scrutinised by Muḥsin Maḥdī. Jābir Aṣfūr mentioned in his introduction to Breslau's second illustrated edition, which was published in Egypt in 1998, that this edition has three features: first, it is the first complete edition of the *Arabian Nights*; second, it has preserved the original tales with the linguistic forms they had; third, this edition reminds how in the end Shahrayar brought the historians and scribes and ordered them to write down what happened to him with his wife from the beginning to the end and how he divided the book and in what way it was published (Popular tales).

Suhayr Al-Qalamawi maintains that the most critical edition of this book is Bulaq's edition in Egypt, which depended on an Indian manuscript of Egyptian origin, printed in Calcutta in 1833, and from which most different editions emerged (Al-Qalamāwī, p. 14-15).

However, the first to draw Westerners' attention to The Arabian Nights was the translation by Antoine Galland (1704-1713) from France<sup>3</sup>. Galland adopted the method of his age in translating the best classical books. This method is intended to dress foreign texts in French garments and subjugate the text to the conventions of the classical school. Therefore, Galland aimed to select stories with a didactic imprint and those wrapped in magic, jinn, and wild imagination. Galland's translation of The Arabian Nights motivated many researchers to search for its manuscripts in the Orient (Abū Al-Ḥusayn, p. 212). In his introduction to this translation, Galland mentioned that he deleted certain scenes out of modesty and decency, such as the bathroom scene in the Tale of the Porter

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<sup>3</sup> To explore the impact of One Thousand and One Nights on French children's literature, consider, for instance: Coppinger, K. N. (2006). The Arabian Nights in British Romantic Children's Literature (Master's thesis). The Florida State University, College of Arts and Sciences.

and the Three Girls; he also ignored anything that he deemed against good literary taste (Al-Mūsawī, p. 32).

The samples of *The Arabian Nights* are about extraordinary human types, and this human characteristic made the artists' feeling of shame greater than the other suggestive components in *The Arabian Nights* (Fārūq, p. 61); for example, Scheherazade represents the victim and hope, whereas Shahrayar embodies the type of the criminal-victim, with whom some readers might sympathise. Sindbad symbolises adventure and persistence, having spent many years struggling and facing difficulties. Abu Sir represents the person satisfied with his livelihood and what God gave him. He is loyal to his friends, but his companion, Abu Kir, represents his contrast, as he continuously returns Abu Sir's good favours with ingratitude and tries to achieve his goals through lies and deception. When 'Abd Allah Al-Barriyy is given God's treasures through 'Abd Allah Al-Bahriyy, he does not forget the shop owner who sympathises with him when he is poor and helps him. In the tale of Al-Sayyad Al-Afrīt / The Imp Hunter, we encounter the type of hunter who saves his life by a trick and returns the solid imp for its bottle. To make values and thoughts engage the child's feelings and imagination and touch his heart, the tales should be introduced through convincing characters he likes who can attract his heart and mind. The human types in *The Arabian Nights* accurately hit the target as the characters introduce values to the child through pleasure, which is the slogan of modern education: "The child should learn through pleasure." The characters of the tales are not confined to the geography, place, or time dimensions that we know, as they join the child in soaring into the world of the strange, the miraculous, and the imagination. This sharing brings them closer to the child's world and his heart as they resonate with his thoughts and the imagined world he builds in the kingdoms of his imagination.

### **The animal tales in *The Arabian Nights***

Among the artistic techniques that *The Arabian Nights* employed to introduce 'values' to children is the technique of telling the story by animals, as children are fond of animals. One of the main stories told by an animal is the story of *The Tale of the Bull and the Ass* (*The Arabian Nights*, p. 7-10), which is included in the frame tale. Through this symbolic tale, the child learns how to play a trick to escape from a problematic situation cleverly. The merchant, who is the owner of the animal, learns from the cock and the ass manners that help him survive difficult situations. The artistic performance of the animal in *The Arabian Nights* is reflected in several forms:

1. The animal is employed in the tales as an artistic device in the frame tale. In *The Tale of Jan Shah*, the gazelle causes his separation from his father's property. The plot of the tale depends on this event for its development. This artistic employment of the animal does not seek to introduce morals and educational values as much as it aims to cause a change in the creative technique of the tale.
2. The animal appears in its familiar image in life without playing any role except as one of the scenes of the tale or as a means of transportation.

The animal takes on the role of a character in the tale, as seen in *The Tale of the Bull and the Ass*, or the series of tales about animals introduced in sequence in the editions of *The Arabian Nights* (Al-Qalamāwī, p. 207). Most of the characters in these kinds of tales are animals, and their function is to introduce moral messages through the tale's events. Animals, and sometimes human beings, participate in forming moral messages.

3. In some tales, the animal interprets many mysteries of the afterworld and the secrets of the present life. This employment of the animal appears in the tale *The Tale of Balloukia*, which is incorporated within it. The snake harbours



hell within it; the whale carries the seven heavens and earth like them, and the lion and the bull guard the mingling of the two oceans, where the animal tales are arranged in sequence and start with the tale of the wild animals and birds of human beings and end with the tale of the peacock (Popular tales, p. 715-759).

4. Since the space of The Arabian Nights is the space of the absurd (the unreasonable), where events occur in no place, and there is no time to introduce the miraculous and the odd, it was inevitable for the animal to have an imaginary presence that differs from its ordinary and familiar daily life presence. Thus, we find that a human being or a jinn can become an animals. Moreover, animals behave in the same way as human beings do. The monkey, for example, in The Tale of the Second Pauper within The Tale of the Porter and the Three Girls, can have sexual intercourse with a human girl. This type of animal presence addresses and tickles our unconsciousness when it tickles and addresses the sexual instinct in our unconscious mind. The sexual partner, who appears as an animal, is usually male. He is generally a fiancé or a husband who seems to have been transformed into an animal under the sorcery of a witch. The hero cannot rid himself of that transformation except by making love with a woman. Such tales are based on the notion that the living of human beings in an intimate relationship with nature does not change the fact that sexual life is of animal nature. Modern psychological theories conclude that the animal's appearance in different forms in the tales and its various transformations expresses man's suppressed desires, reflecting his Freudian desires and Oedipus complex (Bettelheim, p. 319-315).

### **Kāmil Kīlānī and *The Arabian Nights***

Kāmil Kīlānī's name appears in Arabic literature as the pioneer and leader of children's literature. Although some sources refer to him and his attempts to simplify *The Arabian Nights* for children, these references are merely casual remarks as they do not address the impact of his attempts or analyse them. Among the most prominent attempts in this regard is an article by 'Abd Al-Tawwāb: Kāmil Kīlānī and *The Arabian Nights*. (Abd Al-Tawwab, p. 186-193) It is the only article about *The Arabian Nights* and children's literature among tens of studies on *The Arabian Nights* which were published in *Fuṣūl* magazine across three consecutive articles, where *Fuṣūl* magazine devoted two special issues about *The Arabian Nights*, which included different critical and analytical articles that dealt with *The Arabian Nights*. Besides, Farouq Sa published a book in 1962 about *The Arabian Nights* and the Arabic and international literary genres and arts. He addressed the influence of *The Arabian Nights* on children's literature and selected Kāmil Kīlānī's works as a sample of this influence (Fārūq, p. 288-307)

In her pioneering study about *The Arabian Nights*, Suher Al-Qalamawi highlighted the influence of the tales on animal stories in literature (Al-Qalamāwī, p. 75); in her book *Simplification of the Literature of the Adult for Children*, Suhayr Maḥfūz reviewed Al-Kīlānī's efforts to simplify *The Arabian Nights*. Her book included an analytical study of Kīlānī's story *Al-Sindibād Al-Baḥriyy* (Maḥfūz, p. 14-15, p. 9-38). Even though *The Arabian Nights* was one of the most essential books initially written for adults, it became a source of many famous children's stories worldwide. Between 1927 and 1934, Kāmil Kīlānī wrote four collections of stories for children, envisioning that each collection was suitable for one age group of children.

The third and fourth collections include what Kāmil Kīlānī derived from The Arabian Nights. Kīlānī named the third collection New Stories for Children (Abd Al-Tawwab, p. 188) which includes: Bābā ‘Abd Allāh wAl-Darāwīsh, Abū Sīr wa Abū Qīr, ‘Alī Bābā, ‘Abd Allāh Al-Barriy wa ‘Abd Allāh Al-Baḥriyy, Al-Malik Al-Ajīb, and Khesro Shāh. The fourth collection, however, was called Children’s Tales (Abd Al-Tawwab, p. 188).

This collection includes: Al-Sindibād Al-Baḥriyy, Alā’ Al-Dīn, Tājir Baghdād, and Robinson Crusoe. As we can see, Robinson Crusoe is not part of the heritage of The Arabian Nights. Later on, Kīlānī named this collection as Tales of Arabian Nights. Kīlānī also included Robinson Crusoe in the series of The Most Famous Tales along with Gulliver in his four books, replacing Madīnat Al-Nuḥās, and thus, The Arabian Nights became ten stories (Dar Al Ma’arif in Egypt published Kīlānī’s narrative works and on the cover page of each story, we notice the division of the stories into types such as comic stories, Indian stories, science stories, and so on. Under the title of the collection Qiṣaṣ min Alf Laylah wa Laylah, there are ten stories, among them is Madīnat Al-Nuḥās. Kāmil Kīlānī simplified more than ten tales from the Arabian Nights book, as we found two other stories by Kīlānī called Shaykh al-‘Aḥarīt and the famous tale of Thousand Nights and One Night. Both tales were published within the Qālat Shihrazād/ Scheherazade Said series, and the Ornet Publishing House in Tel Aviv published this series and distributed them in Israel. However, there is no publishing date on the books).

Kāmil Kīlānī’s simplification of The Arabian Nights tales is a pioneering work that legitimised writers of children’s literature’s efforts to simplify the tales and introduce them to children after Arab children had been deprived of them for a long period.

The Arabian Nights filled a large vacuum in the Arabic children’s literature library. This legitimacy encouraged writers to explore Arab heritage

for texts suitable for children and simplify them accordingly. The Arabian Nights tales, abundant with suspense, delight, and a magical atmosphere, have significantly influenced Arabic children's literature, which had previously been immersed in educational motifs. The Arabian Nights contributed fascinating atmospheres to literature, and we witness a balance between artistic, creative form and educational coded contents, precisely what modern children's literature aspires to achieve.

### ***The Arabian Nights and the attempts at simplification after Al-Kīlānī***

After Kāmil Kīlānī, there were numerous attempts to simplify The Arabian Nights, resulting in different editions that were illustrated with beautiful drawings and texts suitable for all children's ages. Due to the vast number of these attempts, this study has selected samples for examination, as it is challenging to cover all of them comprehensively. Among the chosen examples is the Read and Color series, which includes simplified stories from The Arabian Nights, such as *Sindibād*, *Baghdad's Thief*, *Scheherazade*, *Alā Al-Dīn*, and *Alī Bābā*. Beautiful colours and the large size of the book characterise the series. Several stories prepared by Hamdi Al-Saadawi were published in the Maarouf Library in Alexandria. Each story was published separately without a publication date.

### ***The Arabian Nights and the children's literature***

Since Kāmil Kīlānī introduced *Al-Sindibād Al-Baḥriyy* / *Sinbad the Sailor* and other children's stories from The Arabian Nights in 1972, interest in The Arabian Nights has increased, and many writers have started introducing them to boys and girls. Here is a review and description of the method of some samples of The Arabian Nights collections that were introduced to Arab children:

### The Titles of the Collections

Publishers of specific collections intended to add the title of The Arabian Nights next to the writer's name on the cover page for two reasons: first, to protect the writer from accusations of plagiarism; second, to exploit the title of The Arabian Nights to attract readers, knowing that The Nights holds a special status among Arab readers. The publishing houses intentionally chose famous names from The Arabian Nights for the collections based on it, such as *Scheherazade, the Daughter of the Moon* (Mashati), *The Waking Sleeper* (Popular tales), *For a Princess' Love* (Popular tales), and *Baghdad's Three Beautiful Women* (Popular tales).

In addition to the attractive titles, the publishers ensured the book cover was colourful and appealing, with illustrations derived from the atmosphere of The Arabian Nights. Some collections did not focus on attractive, conspicuous titles and colourful covers and were satisfied with writing on the cover page the title The Arabian Nights, referring with a number to the arrangement of the book in the complete collections (Jawhar); this tale was published in a collection of short stories. 13 books have been published so far, and the Nights are introduced to the young men and teenagers, as it was written on the second cover page. However, some collections had no mention of The Arabian Nights on the cover; Dar Al Ma'arif for Printing and Publishing in Tunis published a series of the best stories (Silsilat Ajmal Al-Qiṣaṣ) for young men and included 23 tales, including tales taken from the Arabian Nights such as Abū Qīr wa Abū Ṣīr, 'Abd Allāh Al-Baḥriyy wa 'Abd Allāh Al-Barriy. On the internal cover, Dar Al Ma'arif mentioned that some of the stories are inspired by the Arabian Nights, such as 'Alī Bābā wa Al-Luṣūṣ. 8th edition, but ignored the others in the book of Riḥlat Al-Sindibād Al-Baḥriyy, 9th edition (1995), while others were satisfied with pointing out that the story is taken from folklore (Mashati, P. 5-7).

This disregard of the name of The Arabian Nights can be attributed to disregarding the importance of the source from which the tale was taken or the significance of the tale in The Arabian Nights. Therefore, there was no need to mention it. The second reason is that it does not exempt publishers from mentioning the source of the story or tale. The name of The Arabian Nights might be omitted from the external or internal cover page during the stage of reprinting the book, especially since all editions of The Arabian Nights were repeatedly reprinted due to the infinity of The Arabian Nights among successive generations.

The attempts to introduce The Arabian Nights to children were intended to educate their sentiments and thoughts, especially since The Nights are abundant with themes that appeal to their emotional desires and arouse adventurous imaginations. We know this generation lives in a sensitive transitional period that requires indulgence in many existential, philosophical, and emotional issues they experience. The Arabian Nights provides children's imagination with enjoyable human activities that revolve around human relations and the fundamental elements that motivate them. The tales of The Arabian Nights introduced to children do not shy away from the issues of life and death, achievement and failure, love and hatred, which this generation faces in shaping and forming their human character.

### **The theme of "flight" between *The Arabian Nights* and children's literature**

The theme of "flight" in The Arabian Nights and children's literature is undoubtedly significant, as the tales of The Arabian Nights have imbued children's literature with motifs previously absent, such as the Giant that Emerges from the Bottle (Yahya, p. 120-121), *The Flying Horse*, and *The Magic Carpet*. These motifs are among the most repeated in children's literature due to the influence of *The Arabian Nights*. The study will focus on the Magic Carpet

*and the Flying Horse for their role in spreading the 'flight culture' in children's literature and the psychological associations related to them.*

### ***The Tale of the Flying Horse***

The motif of flight with the aid of supernatural powers recurs in *Thousand Nights and One Night*. In the tale of the *Second Pauper*, a sub-story within the tale of the *Porter and the Three Girls*, King 'Ajīb flies using a flying horse equipped with two wings (Popular Tales, p. 43). Writers have employed the horse in their stories, but its use varies from one story to another, as seen in the story of Alaā Al-Dīn and the Flying Horse (Ṣābir). The king organises a competition for the strangest invention. Alaā Al-Dīn, previously introduced as a mechanical expert, invents a horse capable of flying. The sight of Alaā Al-Dīn riding the flying horse astonishes everyone, and he wins the competition. However, the horse is later stolen by a thief who uses it for theft, leading the king to destroy the horse.

### ***The Tale of the Magic Carpet***

The Magic Carpet is considered the most significant means of flight in *The Arabian Nights*. Among the supernatural events are Prophet Solomon flying on the carpet (Popular tales, p. 37-52) and Hasan Maryam's bed moving with the wind (Popular tales, p. 143). Some historical sources highlight the connection between the carpet and King Solomon (Al-Qirmānī, p. 61). Additionally, several verses in the Quran mention King Solomon's control over the wind, further establishing the cultural and religious significance of the flight motif in these tales (The Holy Koran. Surat Saba: Verse, 22).

The motif of flight, influenced by *The Arabian Nights'* Magic Carpet, is repeatedly seen in children's fiction. For example, flight plays a significant role in tales such as *The Flying Bag* and *The Kingdom of Magic* (Abd Al-Bārī). *The Mountain of Clouds* (Majdī, P. 30). It's evident that writers of children's literature

were inspired by the methods of flight in *The Arabian Nights* to enhance children's imagination, tapping into the "dream of flight" that captivates children's imagination, delights them, and arouses a sense of adventure.

### ***The Arabian Nights and the Literature of Travels in Children's Literature***

The stories of Sinbad were subsequently included in the collection of *One Thousand and One Nights* after a relatively short period. These tales have been translated separately from the famous collection into many languages, yet they are renowned in folk literature as part of the *Arabian Nights*<sup>4</sup>. Scholars of folk literature continue to endeavour to uncover the tales of Sinbad, tracing their direct and indirect influence on narrative arts and their utilisation of excitement and wonder in children's literature. The focus is not only on the events but primarily on journeys and travels. The tales of Sinbad have greatly enriched children's literature and the creators of cartoons and films, becoming a source for many creative works directed towards children about adventures and journeys in the world of wonders and marvels. (Al-Jundi, P.16-27).

The theme of travels is a pervasive theme that *The Arabian Nights* introduced and cemented in literature. The *Sindibād* tales inspired many Western travel writers to document their journeys or imagine ones. This influence is evident in books like *Robinson Crusoe* and *Gulliver's Travels* (Al-Qalamāwī, p. 74-75), and it extended to Arab writers as well.

Ḥusayn Fawzī, a pioneer of sea travel literature in modern Arabic literature, states in the introduction to his book *Speech of the Ancient Sindbad*: "Sindbad is my first sea teacher, and if I return in my imaginative journey to the

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<sup>4</sup> To explore the editions of *One Thousand and One Nights*, refer to: Akel, I. (2016). *Arabic Editions And Bibliography*. In A. Chraïbi (Ed.), *Arabic Manuscripts of the Thousand and One Nights* (pp. 431-491). Paris: Espaces et Signes.



middle ages, I also return to my childhood when I first knew the sea and what I knew in the tale of Sinbad the Sailor (Fawzī), the book is divided into two books: The first book describes the ancient Eastern Sea from Eden to China, as it is mentioned in the book of Western Heritage. He gave a list of names at the end of the book. In the second book, the writer focuses on Sinbad tales and some other sea tales of Alf Laylah wa Laylah.

The adventures and travels in *The Arabian Nights*, especially those of Sinbad, sparked interest in this literary approach and its introduction to children, thanks to the suspense and the scientific knowledge of the countries, their people, and their traditions. For example, the description of the writer °Abd Al-Raḥmān Fahmī about his inspiration by Al-Sindibād: "I was inspired by three books from Alf Laylah wa Laylah, which are: 1. Sullam Al-°Abīd/ The Ladder of the Slave 2. Tārīkh Ḥayāt Sanam/ A Biography of an Idol 3. Riḥlat Al-Sindibād Al-Sab°/ Sinbad's Seven Travels: I gave each travel the contents of a city that describe the periods of human culture through history, and my choice of Sinbad rather than other characters of Alf Laylah wa Laylah due to its suitability to the idea, as the travels are numerous and separate, and it is He who speaks, which allows me - as a writer - to pause and explain and comment. Besides, he is the most well-known character in East and West [...]. Therefore, it was natural that my exploitation of the character uploaded him with these historical explanations required that I put his original tales aside and create completely new journeys for him" (Abd Al-Raḥmān, p. 434-437).

Simplifying Sinbad's travels and introducing them to children was the first step towards introducing the literature of travels into Arabic children's literature, as children's literature before Al-Sindibād Al-Bahriyy mainly consisted of didactic books without a focus on travels and adventures.

What supports this argument is that The Arabian Nights has been integrated into Arabic children's literature through the efforts of Kāmil Kīlānī to simplify them since 1927. It is also well-known that the tales of The Arabian Nights are rich with stories of travels and adventures. It is rare to find a tale whose heroes do not embark on travels or engage in adventures, especially since many heroes of these stories are traders. Choosing the trading profession is an artistic device that facilitates the writer's ability to move the hero from one place to another, thereby introducing adventures within the context of the trading profession. Indeed, Sinbad's travels are more than mere tales; they encompass seven voyages through which he encounters different worlds and nations engagingly. The writer has introduced Al-Sindibād Al-Bahriyy to children in simplified language, sometimes accompanied by beautiful illustrations inspired by the atmosphere of the tales (examples will be provided in the following sections).

However, dealing with Sinbad and his travels extends beyond simplifying The Arabian Nights's original texts. Thus, Sinbad becomes a motif or a source of inspiration for travel tales similar to Sinbad's voyages in The Arabian Nights, where he emerges as the main character. Moreover, Sinbad's travels have motivated certain writers to produce stories about exploratory travellers. This outlines how the literature of travels has entered children's literature.

### **Sinbad-like travels**

The Egyptian writer Muḥammad Yūsuf Hasan published a book titled Adventures of Sinbad the Porter in Egypt, the Land of Beauty (Muḥammad). The writer chose the character of Sinbad the Porter as the focus of his story. As mentioned in the book's introduction, Sinbad the Porter decides to rid himself of laziness and inactivity and stop blaming fate and accusing the world of being unfair. He decides to wander the vast lands of God to work and learn, as Al-

Sindibād Bahriyy did. It can be deduced that the story aims to introduce a new type of Sinbad, the Porter that aligns with the educational values of the twentieth century and encourages success and achievement.

### **Sinbad's Travels as an Inspiring Motive to Publish Scientific Travel Literature**

In addition to the influences mentioned, Sinbad's travels have motivated writers to publish new stories about travellers, explorers, and their adventures. One of these writers is the Egyptian writer Aḥmad Najīb, who published a series of adventures worldwide. (Aḥmad). Some stories from this collection include In the Sea of Ghosts, The Satan of Storms, The Island of the Moon, The Sea of Darkness, and Adventures of Marco Polo. These stories feature the travels of Arabs, foreigners, and ancient Egyptians. The series draws on the narrative style of The Arabian Nights for particular travels alongside a scientific approach. Aḥmad Najīb's method in this series involves presenting ancient beliefs and their modern scientific counterpoints. He introduces ancient beliefs regarding specific geographic areas, followed by the names of travellers and explorers and their journeys that debunk previous ancient claims.

### **The Role of *The Arabian Nights* in Creating Children's Sea Literature**

Sea Literature, as a literary term, is defined as literature that aims to express the world of the sea, where the sea is its main subject influencing the events, characters, and overall vision of the work (Aḥmad, p. 7). The term "sea' originally refers to a vast body of water, and metaphorically by Arabs to denote anything expansive (Al-Shūrbajī, p. 13). Geographically, the sea is "a part of an ocean, constituting a wide water surface connected to the ocean," such as the Mediterranean Sea, the Red Sea, and the Black Sea (Al-Shūrbajī, p. 13). The word 'sea' is mentioned several times in the Quran (for example, Sūrat Al-Baqara

(5), (164); Al-Mā'ida (96); Yūnis (32); Al-Raāmān (24), (35).), highlighting the sea's significance in human life (Muhammad, p. 36).

The large number of tales that have entered Children's Arabic literature includes a particular group that can be termed 'Sea tales', following the definition of 'Sea Literature' by Aḥmad 'Atiyya and Ḥusayn Fawzī. The following section will discuss some sea tales that bear the features of The Arabian Nights.

The character of the sea mermaid, possessing supernatural powers, is one of the characters from The Arabian Nights<sup>5</sup> that is prominently featured. The love between a sea mermaid and a human being is a theme seen in several stories within The Arabian Nights, the most notable being the love story between King Badr Bāsīm and Princess Jowhara bint Al-Samandal. Jullanār, Badr's mother, is a sea mermaid, and Jowhara bint Al-Samandal is the daughter of a king from one of the sea kingdoms. This indicates that Prince Badr Bāsīm and his father both married sea mermaids. Inspired by these narratives, some Arab writers have crafted stories that emulate these models, such as *The Sea Bride* (Ghaḍbān). This story was published by another publishing house and illustrated by attractive, beautiful pictures under the name *The Little Sea Bride* (Muṭṭlaq), *Princess of the Silver Sea* (Majdī), and *On the Light Island* (Ghaḍbān).

## Summary

This study underscores the importance of aligning children's literature themes with the tales of The Arabian Nights. The Arabian Nights enriches children's literature with essential elements: pleasure, fantasy, and imagination. They have opened new realms previously unexplored in children's literature, which had

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<sup>5</sup> There are those who trace the origins of the mermaid legend back to the myth of Serena.

See: Sierra, J. (2021). La Sirena: Intertextuality and Myth in Hispanic American Fantastic Fiction. *Journal of Research and Production in Humanities*, 2.

predominantly been didactic, reaching its zenith with tales from Kalīla wa Dimna.

The influence of The Arabian Nights is marked by unconventional artistic devices that emphasise 'marvel', surprise, and enjoyment, steering the narrative away from traditional character types familiar to the environment. Instead, characters are transported to unfamiliar settings, and the plots daringly engage the child's unconscious mind lightly and pleasantly. Characters such as giants, mermaids, and flying horses are placed in unfamiliar times and places, thereby igniting the child's imagination and offering a delightful and enchanting world. This alternative to the burdensome, didactic, routine text offers protection and escape.

Sea literature and travel literature, introduced into children's Arabic literature through The Arabian Nights, have enriched it with a culture of the sea that oscillates between imagination and scientific knowledge, even if not intentionally textual. Interrupted with scientific facts and imagination, the details related to the sea create a uniquely attractive and thrilling experience that enhances the child's enjoyment of fantastic, supernatural, and imaginative events. Undoubtedly, "One Thousand and One Nights" is a significant source of inspiration for children's literature, enriching it with imagination. While some enthusiasts of children's literature may underestimate the value of fantastical tales, the reality is quite different. Children are drawn to fantasy; it serves as a refuge from the routine of reality. Therefore, this study recommends continuing to infuse children's literature with fantasy alongside reality. Indeed, abandoning fantasy literature would cause it to lose many of its essential benefits.

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## تأثير ألف ليلة وليلة في أدب الأطفال العربي

رافع يحيى

### الملخص

إنّ ألف ليلة وليلة، المعروفة باسم الليالي العربيّة، تُعتبر مصدرًا لاستحضار عوالم خارقة وسحرية، تتجاوز الزمان والمكان وتثير الخيال السّمي والبصريّ. كان كامل كيلاني وغيره من الكتّاب الذين اتّبَعوا أسلوبه على دراية بهذا السّحر، فاستمدّوا الحكايات من الليالي وبسّطوها للأطفال في أشكال حافظت على روعة الأصل. تطرح الدّراسة فرضيّة مفادها أنّ ألف ليلة وليلة، أنقذت أدب الأطفال العربيّ من الركود وهيمنة النّبرّة الوعظيّة التي طغت عليه منذ نشأته في أواخر القرن التّاسع عشر. "وفقاً لبعض الباحثين، في منتصف القرن التّاسع عشر، وخاصّة حوالي عام 1927، كان هناك تحوّل نحو أدب الأطفال العربيّ الجاد. قاد هذا التّغيير كامل كيلاني، الذي يُعتبر الرّائد الشّرعّي لأدب الأطفال العربيّ. بدأ كيلاني الكتابة المتخصّصة للأطفال بقصّته الشّهيرة السّندباد البحريّ في عام 1927، واستمرت مساعيه الأدبيّة لإنتاج حوالي 200 قصّة وكتاب. وضع كامل كيلاني منهجيّة شاملة لسرد القصص للأطفال." تؤكّد الدّراسة أنّ حكايات ألف ليلة وليلة تلبّي الاحتياجات المختلفة للأطفال، بما في ذلك المتعة والخيال والابتكار. على سبيل المثال، الشّخصيّات التي تسلّلت إلى قصص الأطفال، مثل العمالقة، وحوريات البحر، والخيول الطّائرة، والتي خضعت لظروف زمنيّة ومكانيّة غير معتادة، دخلت عوالم أدب الأطفال العربيّ، من خلال نوافذ الليالي العربيّة وأثّرتها بالخيال والغرابة والعجائب والمتعة والسّرور. الحكايات المقدّمة للأطفال لا تهمل قضايا الحياة والموت، الإنجاز والفضّل، الحبّ والكراهيّة، وهي قضايا هامّة، يواجهها الأطفال في سنوات تشكيل شخصيتهم الإنسانيّة.

في هذه الدّراسة، يستخدم الباحث منهجاً تحليلياً، حيث يتم تحليل بعض الدوافع والعناصر المحددة من حكايات "ألف ليلة وليلة" لتأثيرها على أدب الأطفال العربيّ. من خلال هذا التحليل، يفحص الباحث كيفية استيعاب هذه الدوافع والعناصر في أدب الأطفال العربيّ وتأثيرها على محتواه وهيكله السردية وشخصياته ورموزه؛ يهدف هذا النهج إلى فهم التفاعل بين حكايات "ألف ليلة وليلة" وأدب الأطفال العربيّ.