

**Did the Mermaid Continue to Dive into the Sea? The Representation of the One Thousand- and One-Nights' Mermaid in Arabic Children's Literature**

By

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**Abstract**

The study will delve into the influence of mermaids on literature and art, with a particular focus on children's literature in general and Arab children's literature in particular. Mermaids have appeared in myths and literary texts worldwide, including in Arabic literature. The study will give significant importance to the symbolism of mermaids in children's literature and their appeal to children. Additionally, it will provide numerous examples of their use in children's literature. In addition to examining the aesthetic role of mermaids in children's literature, the study will investigate their origins in Arab children's literature. Are they derived from myths, Western literature, or the Arabian Nights? We have found numerous texts in the Arabian Nights that discuss mermaids, confirming that their origin in Arab children's literature is indeed from the Arabian Nights. This book has enriched Arab and global literature, including children's literature, with its abundance of imagination and fantasy.

**Key words:** Middle East, Arab Palestinians, Identity, One Thousand- and One-Nights' Mermaid, Arabic Children's Literature, Representation

## **Did the Mermaid Continue to Dive into the Sea? The Representation of the One Thousand- and One-Nights' Mermaid in Arabic Children's Literature**

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### **Introduction**

Numerous studies have extensively examined the mermaid narrative, encompassing themes ranging from sexuality and gender equality to feminist perspectives. Some have explored its fantastical elements, while others have addressed its political dimensions, its alignment with various values, and its connections to folklore and popular culture. Additionally, certain studies have focused on narrative analysis. This study will delve into the origins of the Little Mermaid tale and its relationship with mythology and the Arabian Nights. We will also explore its aesthetics, employing both historical and aesthetic methodologies. Ultimately, this study represents a fresh perspective in the discourse surrounding the narrative, seeking to contribute new insights to its interpretation.

The central question regarding the phenomenon of mermaids revolves around multiple factors, including their strange appearance and mythical beauty, in addition to the peculiar and intriguing narrative surrounding them, filled with mystery and imagination. These factors collectively contribute to the allure of this character and captivate the hearts of people in both the East and the West, regardless of age. Was it her mythical form, half fish and half maiden, that attracted everyone to her?

### **Statement of the Problem**

Literature educates, informs and entertains. It is therefore paramount to understand the aesthetics and connotations that mermaids carry as cultural and mythical symbols to grasp the depth of their impact on different societies. Furthermore, the theme of mermaids has been further disseminated and popularized through various mediums, including literature, art, and modern media. It has been adapted and reimagined in stories, poems, paintings, films, and even modern theme parks, contributing to its cultural appeal and worldwide significance.

### **Roots**

The roots of the mermaid tale can be traced back to various cultures and mythologies worldwide. In ancient folklore and myths, mermaids were often depicted as half-human and half-fish beings residing in the depths of the ocean. The origins of the mermaid legend can be found in stories from different civilizations, such as Greek mythology, Assyrian mythology, and Slavic folklore.

The collective perception of the siren embodies a hybrid creature, part woman and part fish, accentuating feminine beauty above the waist and featuring a fishtail instead of human legs, often associated with notions of compassion. However, its mythological origins present a contrasting image, initially resembling half-bird women rather than the familiar half-fish depiction seen today. These early portrayals symbolized omens of doom and suffering rather than conforming to contemporary beauty ideals.

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In *The Odyssey*, the siren's abode is depicted as a tomb and entrance to the underworld, challenging the conventional perception of innocence and beauty typically associated with sirens in modern culture. The siren's allure resides in its captivating song, often leading sailors to their demise. This musical prowess may be traced back to their avian origins, as depicted in ancient artwork where they were rendered as bird-like entities with female visages.

Over time, the depiction of sirens has transformed, transitioning from avian creatures to piscine beings. In contemporary Spanish, the term siren commonly refers to the fish-woman, while other languages distinguish between bird-sirens and fish-sirens, utilizing terms such as siren and mermaid, respectively. This evolution reflects shifting cultural interpretations and understandings of the siren archetype. (Sierra 2021: 39-41)

In Pausanias' *Description of Greece*, General Pausanias, during the reign of King Licaon, emphasized that during his travels, specifically upon arriving in Coronea, he found a statue of the goddess Hera with sirens in her hands, and narrated about the sirens as follows: "It is said that they, the daughters of Achelous, were persuaded by Hera to compete in singing with the Muses and that when the Muses won, they cut the feathers of their wings to make crowns for themselves. This particular story offers a possible explanation for why the sirens lost their aerial abilities. It is worth noting that the term siren in Spanish refers to the fish-woman compared to other languages that distinguish between bird-sirens and fish-sirens. (Sierra 2021: 42). The mermaid character gained global prominence after Hans Christian Andersen's publication in 1873 (Anderson. C.H. 1909). This text, widely acclaimed and disseminated, has become a staple in both written and visual media, finding adaptation in cinema for audiences of all ages.

It is important to emphasize that *One Thousand and One Nights* (al-‘Adawī 1252 Hijrī) became known in Europe following the initial European translation into French by Antoine Galland between 1704 and 1717. Galland, aiming to appeal to the tastes of a firmly bourgeois European audience, condensed and simplified the tales, removing Arabic poetry and sexual content and introducing entirely new stories into the narrative. Despite European recognition of the distortion introduced by Galland to *One Thousand and One Nights* and their earnest efforts in the 19th century to locate the original manuscripts of the text for philological investigation (Abu Huraira, 2024: 115), it is clear that the appearance of *One Thousand and One Nights* and its English translation preceded the publication of Andersen's tales in 1837. Was Andersen influenced by *One Thousand and One Nights* and its depiction of the mermaid character featured in the tales?

### **The Arabs and the Sea**

Within the discourse of terminology, the concept of Marine Literature is delineated as "the literary domain endeavoring to articulate the maritime realm, wherein the sea assumes primacy, exerting profound influence over both events and characters, and fundamentally shaping the overarching thematic essence of the literary composition" (al-Shārūnī 1997: 7). Etymologically, the term sea inherently conveys the notion of expansive bodies of water, a semantic connotation underscored in Arab linguistic usage wherein it conveys vastness or expanse, exemplified in the lexeme sea (Alshrbāyj 1972: 13). Geographically, the sea is delineated as a constituent element of an oceanic expanse, characterized by its immense aqueous breadth, enveloped within an overarching oceanic framework, notable examples being the Mediterranean Sea, the Red Sea, and the Black Sea (Alshrbāyj 1972: 13). The sea finds multiple references within the Holy Quran

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(Sūrat al-Baqarah 50, 164, al-mā'idah 96, Yūnus 32, al-Rahmān 24, 35), indicative of its pivotal significance within the human experience (Abdel Haleem 1999: 36).

"The Arabs of the Arabian Peninsula have historically maintained enduring connections with the contiguous seas: the Sea of Rome (Mediterranean Sea), the Sea of Qulzum (Red Sea), and the Sea of Arabia (Indian Ocean) [...] However, this association remained ephemeral in their commercial expeditions to the peripheries of their territories [...]. The sea during the era of ignorance persisted as a source of reverence and a reservoir of narratives and myths, emanating from the fertile Arab imagination, serving to mitigate the environmental privations through its artistic and wondrous manifestations while concurrently delineating a boundary from the encroachment of the sea and its unfathomable depths" (Nawfal 1972: 5).

Pre-Islamic poetry bears testament to the thematic prominence of the sea, with poets such as Tarafa bin Al-Abd expressing profound admiration for the maritime domain, as evidenced in his suspended poem wherein he extols the majesty of his beloved's ships as they gracefully traverse the waters (ibn al-'Abd 1961: 20).

The transformative impact of Islam engendered a profound reevaluation of the sea and its concomitant descriptions amongst the Arabs, as evinced by the verse: "It is He who subjected the sea for you to sail therein by His command" (Nawfal 1972: 7, 11). Furthermore, the Islamic conquests precipitated direct encounters between Muslims, Arabs, and the sea, an observation underscored by Ibn Khaldun, who attributed the initial Arab reluctance to maritime navigation to their nomadic predispositions, remarking: "The Arabs, owing to their nomadic predilections, initially lacked proficiency in maritime customs and navigation [...]. As Arab dominion stabilized and maritime territories came under their sway [...], maritime navigation and culture experienced a resurgence [...], catalyzing a fervent dedication to jihad upon the sea, prompting the construction of specialized ships and vessels (adapted for maritime jihad) and the mobilization of fleets with men and armaments..." (al-Tilimsānī n.d: 234). The allure of maritime descriptions and imagery was particularly pronounced among the Andalusians, where the sea served as a wellspring of inspiration, yielding a plethora of rhetorical devices, including simile, metaphor, metonymy, and allegory (Ḥasan 1972: 58-67).

Arab Andalusian poets accorded considerable attention to ships and fleets, as elucidated by Al-Tilimsani, who remarked: "Indeed, individuals have exhibited mastery in delineating ships, adorning them, and endowing them with beauty and dignity" (hwāshmy 1987: 53-56).

In contemporary poetry, the expanse of the sea has been metaphorically extended over vast territories. Present-day poets have articulated their sentiments towards the sea, capturing the tumultuous emotions it stirs within them. Many have employed it as a recurring motif to express the complexities of their inner thoughts and feelings (Mīnah 1990: 51-76). In modern prose, the novels of Syrian writer Hanna Mina have garnered attention for their thematic focus on the sea. Some literary critics have even credited Mina with pioneering the genre of maritime literature in Arab novels (Bāshā 1990: 51-76). Despite the historical maritime prowess of the Arabs during the advanced Islamic periods (Ibn Khaldūn, al-Muqaddimah:253), their reverence and trepidation towards the sea persisted, influencing the narrative fabric of their tales, which continued to orbit around its enigmatic allure. A narrative suggests that Umar ibn al-Khattab prohibited Muslims from maritime voyages following Umar ibn al-As's cautionary depiction of its perils. Umar ibn al-Khattab enforced penalties on those who contravened this decree until Muawiyah ibn Abi

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Sufyan lifted the prohibition. However, the veracity of this narrative is contentious, as the Quranic scriptures explicitly acknowledge sea voyages (al-Iṣfahānī 1973: 173).

The Arabs regarded the sea as a realm imbued with secrets and perils, thus inspiring the creation of myths and legends surrounding it. A proverbial saying about this matter asserts: "The knowledgeable individual observing the sea resembles one who beholds its vastness; while admiring its visible expanse, the greater mysteries elude his grasp" (al-Gharnāṭī 1993: 119). The corpus of heritage literature is rich with narratives depicting the wonders and enigmas of the seas. Abu Hamid al-Andalusī, in his work *Tuhfat al-Albab wa Nukhbat al-A'jab*, elucidates: "God brings forth from the depths of the sea immense blackfish, pursued by larger predators. They flee, traversing the confluence of two seas, where the pursuing predator overtakes them. The confluence marvels at the size and grandeur of the predator's body" (al-Qalamāwī 1966: 80). Based on these observations, it is evident that the Arab imagination has become entwined with the sea, giving rise to a multitude of literary expressions. The mermaid was not merely a distant figure within the aquatic environment but an intrinsic component.

### **One Thousand and One Nights and Maritime Literature**

One Thousand and One Nights emerges as a pivotal text that has spurred writers to delve into maritime storytelling. Soheir al-Qalmaoui suggests that the documentation of One Thousand and One Nights has influenced storytellers to explore Arabic or translated Indian and Persian story collections, as well as to delve into literary narratives and records found in various texts detailing the marvels of the seas and its denizens (‘Aṭīyah 1984: 59). The compilation of One Thousand and One Nights draws from three primary sources: the original Indian narratives, Persian translations, and extensive Arabic supplements, collectively constituting a substantial body of work. These additions were sourced from diverse Arabic literary sources, travel accounts, and accounts of Arab merchants, forming the basis for the maritime tales within One Thousand and One Nights (Ighnāṭiyūs n.d: 142).

The maritime narratives woven throughout One Thousand and One Nights present a cohesive tapestry of episodes. Notably, the Voyages of Sinbad stands as a hallmark of its renown, initially existing as an independent collection before being assimilated into One Thousand and One Nights. Historically, The Voyages of Sinbad can be traced back to the Abbasid era, with its narrative traversing India and the Malay Archipelago (Shuḥayyid 1978: 145-149). Numerous works of global literature have been influenced by the adventures of Sinbad and the maritime milieu, with Voltaire's *Candide* emerging as a notable example (Adykswn 1978: 253-259). Moreover, Herman Melville, renowned for his maritime epic *Moby Dick*, drew inspiration from the tales encapsulated within One Thousand and One Nights (Fawzī 1943: 187-188).

The maritime tales encapsulated within One Thousand and One Nights unfold across, above, and below the sea's surface. Among these narratives, the adventures of Sinbad stand out as quintessential expressions of the sea within Arabic literature. Other notable tales include those of Abou Seer and Abou Keer, the legendary exploits of Balouqiah spanning the seven seas, the sagas of Haseeb bin Daniel the Wise, and the account of Badr Basim, son of King Shahraman, and the mermaid Yinnat al-Samandal. These tales illuminate the intricate interplay between humanity and the sea, portraying it as a source of sustenance through fishing, a pivotal geographical locale facilitating maritime commerce, a nexus where human and marine realms

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converge, a symbol of the perpetual struggle between humanity and the natural world, and a gateway to discovery and adventure.

According to Hussein Fouzi, a narrative qualifies as maritime when the sea assumes a central role in the lives of its protagonists and the unfolding storyline itself. Fouzi defines maritime narratives as those that transpire within the sea, upon its surface, or along its shores and islands, with the sea exerting a palpable influence on the events and characters portrayed (Ghaḍbān 1997).

As numerous tales from One Thousand and One Nights permeated Arabic children's literature, maritime adventures also found their way into this domain. Recurrent motifs include characters such as the Sea Bride, a supernatural entity, and the romantic entanglements between mermaids and humans encountered in One Thousand and One Nights. For instance, the tale of King Badr Basim's love and union with Princess Jawhara bint al-Samandal illustrates this thematic continuity. Queen Gelnar, Badr's mother, is depicted as a mermaid, while Princess Jawhara bint al-Samandal hails from one of the underwater kingdoms. Such narrative parallels, reminiscent of One Thousand and One Nights, inspired Arab authors who crafted analogous stories, underscoring the enduring influence of maritime themes on literature.

### **Sea Bride**

The narrative commences with a vivid portrayal of the ocean: "One of the remote seas exhibited clear azure waters, akin to the celestial sky and the lucidity of crystal. Its profound depths extended to thousands upon thousands of meters, rendering it inaccessible for any vessel to anchor upon its surface or for any anchor, no matter its length, to reach its abyss [...] Nestled within the sea's profound depths stood a palace, its walls fashioned from coral" (Ghaḍbān 1997: 27). This introductory depiction underscores the maritime backdrop of the tale.

Following this, the author delineates the monarch's circumstances, detailing his bereavement following the loss of his wife and the upbringing of his daughters under their mother's care. Notably, the youngest daughter harbors a fervent curiosity regarding human affairs and eagerly seeks narratives about them. Nonetheless, maritime law and the kingdom's edicts proscribe denizens from ascending to the sea's surface until they reach the age of fifteen. Upon reaching this milestone, the princesses ascend, recounting her observations to her siblings. Subsequently, when the youngest princess reaches fifteen, she ascends, rescues a prince from drowning, develops an affection for him, and aspires to join him in his palace. Her grandmother imparts wisdom regarding the perpetuity of the human soul even after corporeal dissolution, fostering the Sea Bride's (Ghaḍbān 1997: 3-4) desire for an immortal essence akin to humans. Exploring a miraculous avenue, the grandmother remarks: "There exists but one method, albeit nearly unattainable, wherein a man loves you ardently and profoundly [...] his soul blending with yours" (Ghaḍbān 1997: 46), thereby allowing you to partake in the felicity of humankind....

Facilitated by a sorceress, the Sea Bride undergoes a metamorphosis, shedding her fish tail and emerging onto the shore, cognizant that her emancipation from the aquatic realm is contingent upon abstaining from a return to the sea. Encountering the prince, she captivates him with her beauty, prompting him to escort her to his palace. However, her elation is short-lived upon learning of the prince's forthcoming nuptials to another. This revelation shatters her aspirations for an immortal soul, hastening her demise. Despite her sisters' entreaties to exact vengeance upon the prince to reclaim her status as a sea bride, she declines, instead plunging into

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the waters, transmuting into foam akin to her aquatic counterparts upon death, engaging in virtuous deeds for three centuries before finding repose.

The narrative concludes with a poignant denouement: "The Sea Bride hovered nearby (the prince and his betrothed), yet human eyes are impervious to transparent spirits; hence, she bestowed a smile upon the prince, planted a kiss upon his wife's cheek, then ascended upon a rosy cloud, accompanied by a retinue of aerial nymphs, soaring into the..." (Şābir 1993)

The role of the sea in this maritime narrative was profound, serving as the natural habitat of the Sea Bride. It determined the course of her life and enforced a period of seclusion from the prince, compelling her to abide by its laws upon venturing onto the shore. Despite her aspirations, the Sea Bride could not actualize her longing to detach from the oceanic realm and assimilate into human society. Hence, the sea assumed a pivotal role in shaping the storyline's progression, character evolution, and subsequent actions.

### **The Silver Sea Prince**

The narrative line centers on Shams al-Din, a venturesome Persian knight, approached by an older woman seeking his aid to reach the shore of the Silver Sea (Şābir 1993: 34).

She hopes the jewel jar she proffers will rightfully earn her favor from the sea prince. Shams al-Din assists her, enduring numerous trials until they reach the shore, venturing aboard a maritime vessel amidst the heart of the Silver Sea, their ship founders leading Shams al-Din to a magnificent palace. He encounters beautiful maidens clad in fish-like attire there, providing sustenance and comfort. Subsequently, a captivating maiden unveils herself as the Silver Sea Prince and reveals her identity as the woman he assisted. She elucidates that she sought a deserving recipient, as the reward had been obtained by those lacking benevolence. She grants Shams al-Din a potion enabling underwater navigation without suffocation, reminiscent of the tale of 'Abd Allāh al-barrī wa-'Abd Allāh al-bahrī in *One Thousand and One Night* (Kīlānī 2007).

The narrative line centers on Shams al-Din, a valiant Persian knight, who is approached by an older woman seeking his assistance in reaching the shores of the Silver Sea. She hopes that the jewel jar she presents as a gift will secure her favor with the princess of this sea. Shams al-Din willingly aids her, enduring numerous challenges until he safely escorts her to the desired shoreline. Embarking on a maritime voyage amidst the heart of the Silver Sea, their vessel encounters misfortune and sinks, leading Shams al-Din to find refuge in a majestic palace. Here, Shams al-Din is attended to by graceful maidens adorned in fish-like attire, who offer him sustenance and medicinal remedies.

Subsequently, Shams al-Din is approached by a captivating maiden who reveals herself as the Silver Sea Princess, expressing gratitude for his assistance to the older woman. She elucidates that her act of seeking assistance stemmed from a desire to bestow rewards upon those who exhibit kindness, contrasting with the prevalent trend of rewarding those who do not. She grants Shams al-Din a potion enabling him to navigate underwater without the constraint of suffocation. This potion parallels the tale of Abdullah the Sailor and Abdullah the Fisherman in *One Thousand and One Nights*, wherein a similar substance facilitates underwater exploration.

Upon departing from the palace, Shams al-Din is greeted by the sight of "magnificent palaces in the heart of the water, their golden domes and minarets rising as though they were magical palaces, from which or into which the kingdom's inhabitants emerge or enter" (Şābir

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1993: 41). This depiction of the sea's realms resonates with motifs encountered in the aforementioned tale from One Thousand and One Nights. However, unlike Abdullah the Sailor's limited encounters with sea wonders, Shams al-Din's narrative unfolds as he confronts the adversary of the Silver Sea Princess's queen, the Black Sea Prince. He ultimately rescues the princess and extends an offer of marriage and a life above the surface. Nonetheless, she informs him that their kind cannot dwell above water for extended periods, necessitating his return to land to avoid suffocation, regardless of medicinal aid. This exchange highlights the thematic significance of the sea in dictating the parameters of social interactions and individual destinies within the narrative (Ghaḍbān 1997).

However, the prince insists on marrying her, prompting her to request that he procure the black lily, which flourishes in a distant sea cave. Shams al-Din faced numerous perils in his endeavor to fulfill her request. He ultimately succeeded in his task, as assigned by the princess, and took up residence near the sea until her companions could behold her. This circumstance underscores the influence of the sea in determining the marriage protocol and the location of the couple's abode. The sea's turbulence facilitated the fateful encounter between the princess and the prince in its depths, influencing the conduct of the characters. The princess adhered to the laws of the sea, while the prince, captivated by her, recognized her as a custodian of maritime wisdom, compelling him to undertake perilous exploits in pursuit of matrimony.

### **In the Island of Light**

A picturesque narrative unfolds on one of the coral islands, where a beautiful child enters the world. Prophesied by one of the sorceresses to wed the daughter of the island's king, his fate takes a treacherous turn when the monarch, upon learning of the prophecy, endeavors to end the child's life by casting him into the tumultuous sea. Yet, fate intervenes as a compassionate fisherman rescue and subsequently adopts the imperiled infant. As the child matures, the king, driven by fear and ambition, seeks once more to extinguish his life. However, destiny weaves its intricate design, leading to the eventual betrothal of the king's daughter to the golden-haired youth. In a desperate bid to rid himself of the perceived threat, the king demands the young man procure three golden hairs from a giant dwelling in the caverns of the Island of Light (Ghaḍbān 1997: 3). Remarkably, the youth accomplish this Herculean task, ultimately wedding the princess, while the king meets his demise, consumed by his insatiable greed for gold.

The narrative's maritime essence prompts inquiry: can it be classified as a maritime tale?

Drawing parallels to the narrative complexity of One Thousand and One Nights, the story's setting and thematic elements align with this esteemed literary tradition.

"In the ethereal embrace of a blue sky, amidst the solitary expanse of a remote dwelling nestled within the enigmatic coral island known as Coral Island, the arrival of a comely child, adorned with captivating countenance and luxuriant tresses, heralds a tale yet untold." (Ghaḍbān 1997: 4) This evocative passage firmly establishes the maritime backdrop of the narrative. A subsequent scene unfolds where "Amidst the revelry and merriment, a resplendent avian entity graces the island's firmament, eavesdropping on the conversations of its inhabitants before alighting upon the king to relay the foreboding prophecy of the aged sorceress." (Ghaḍbān 1997: 10) This fantastical avian presence, reminiscent of One Thousand and One Nights, serves as a harbinger of events to come.

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The intervention of pearl fishermen proves pivotal as they pluck the imperiled child from the relentless clutches of the sea: "Buffeted by the relentless waves, the child, after enduring an arduous ordeal, is ensnared in the net of a pearl fisherman, who, awestruck by the child's resplendence, bears him to the sanctuary of his humble abode." (Ghaḍbān 1997: 10-11) Here, the elemental force of the sea, embodied by the fishermen, emerges as a savior amidst impending peril.

Subsequently, the narrative depicts the king's maritime sojourns: "With customary diligence, the king undertakes the oversight of his dominions, traversing the azure expanse in a diminutive vessel. Yet, vanquished by the tempestuous waves, he is compelled to seek refuge upon the nearest isle that beckons." (Barāniq 1995) On this isle, the king encounters the youth, now a man he had once condemned to the sea. Tasking him with a message bearing ill intent, the king unwittingly sets in motion a sequence of events that culminate in the young man's salvation at the hands of benevolent island maidens. The ensuing narrative arc, wherein the king demands the young man retrieve three hairs from a giant, evokes the thematic resonance of One Thousand and One Nights. The young man confronts three enigmatic figures who pose profound inquiries akin to the narrative style characteristic of the legendary tales. As he embarks on his quest for the golden hairs, the narrative expands to encompass many characters and settings, echoing the intricacies of nested narratives within One Thousand and One Nights.

Notably, encounters with figures such as the Sheikh, plagued by a dearth of silverfish and another in need of the elusive sea sponge juice, infuse the narrative with maritime ambiance. In summation, the narrative's maritime milieu, interwoven with thematic motifs reminiscent of One Thousand and One Nights, underscores its literary lineage and enduring resonance within the canon of literary tradition.

### **The Lake Bride**

The maritime narratives of One Thousand and One Nights have catalyzed numerous children's authors to craft tales immersed in the depths of the sea, catering not only to the middle and later stages of childhood but also to early childhood. The tale of The Lake Bride (al-Shārūnī 1997) exemplifies this inclination. The storyline centers around a diminutive fish named 'The Lake Bride,' who exults in the fishermen's capture of a perilous shark and joyfully traverses the ocean depths. Upon discovering a splendid pearl necklace aboard a ship, she perceives herself as the most resplendent fish in the sea, thus abstaining from playing with her peers.

Subsequently, she experiences a sense of solitude, prompting her to seek solace in a sea star, beseeching humility and cessation of pride. Consequently, the fish reconciles with her companions, fostering a bond of affectionate camaraderie. The sea assumes a pivotal role in this narrative, embodying themes of life and mortality. The shark's predatory actions symbolize the smaller fish's impending demise, with salvation being contingent upon the intervention of fishermen and divers. Following the fish's recuperation from the savage shark, tranquility and harmony are restored to the lake's depths, allowing the fish to revel in newfound freedom, uninhibitedly exploring and frolicking without fear.

The maritime ambiance permeates the narrative, notably evident in the fifth paragraph, where the text is structured into discrete paragraphs rather than pages, a stylistic choice reminiscent of certain early childhood narratives. The passage recounts how 'The Lake Bride' encounters a sunken ship on the lake bed, evoking reminiscences of her grandmother's anecdotes

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regarding divers venturing into submerged vessels in pursuit of jewels, treasures, and other precious artifacts. The term 'The Lake Bride' employed in this passage evokes parallels with the sea brides depicted in *One Thousand and One Nights*.

The grandmother's maritime tales imbue the text with rich allusions, prompting readers to envision narratives they may have encountered or read, steeped in themes of the sea, treasures, and precious objects. This evocative imagery harks back to the opulent jewels depicted in *One Thousand and One Nights*, unparalleled in their brilliance within literary discourse.

### **The Extraordinary Voyage of the Nile Bride**

This narrative amalgamates elements of fantasy and reality. The plot centers on a cohort of children who chance upon the Nile Bride (al-Shārūnī 1997: 22), a maiden adorned with a fishtail reclining upon the verdant grass, prompting them to come to her aid. Wafaa, the Nile Bride, regales them with tales of the vast bubble in which she dwells in the depths of the Nile, elucidating her melancholy regarding the sea brides' lack of acceptance, expounding upon her interactions with them, and recounting the Sea Queen's response. Midway through her discourse, she interjects with a supplication, declaring: "And so I entered a world as if from the Arabian Nights." (Muṭlaq 1995). This luminous allusion to the *Nights* beckons the reader to pause for contemplation, transcending a mere nod to the author; it offers myriad interpretations. It could imply that the mention of the *Arabian Nights* suggests that the depiction of the sea brides and the aquatic ecosystem in the text is inspired by the *Arabian Nights*. Alternatively, it might suggest that the author sought to convey children's fascination with the *Arabian Nights*, whereby upon hearing the tale of the Nile Bride, they swiftly conjured images from the *Arabian Nights*. Perhaps the author endeavored to heighten the enchanting aura of the underwater depths in his narrative by inciting the reader's imagination with the invocation of the captivating phrase "Arabian Nights" and its fantastical connotations.

The tale unfolds further as another Nile Bride joins the fold and enlightens the children about the Nile brides' dissatisfaction regarding the Nile's pollution. The children perceive the new Nile Bride as a harbinger of evil emanating from the polluted world. The original Nile Bride then leads the children on an expedition into the Nile's depths, where they witness the pollution plaguing its waters. In a subsequent narrative stage, King Nile decrees that Wafaa must venture into the outside world to deliver a crucial message: to cease polluting the Nile. Wafaa's fishtail vanishes, and she acquires legs. The author employs tales from the *Arabian Nights* concerning the sea brides to tackle the issue of Nile pollution, employing fantasy enacted and embraced by the young protagonists. The allure of this narrative lies in its fusion of an Egyptian legend with the *Arabian Nights*, juxtaposed with the tangible reality of pollution, to underscore the importance of environmental preservation.

### **Conclusion**

The article delves into *One Thousand- and One-Nights* maritime narratives, focusing on tales such as *The Lake Bride* and *The Extraordinary Voyage of the Nile Bride*. These narratives seamlessly intertwine elements of fantasy and reality, transporting readers to captivating underwater realms inhabited by sea brides and mystical beings. Through masterful storytelling and evocative imagery, authors delve into themes of adventure, companionship, and environmental stewardship, drawing inspiration from the rich tapestry of the *Arabian Nights*.

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These narratives serve as allegorical reflections of intricate societal issues, including environmental degradation, while simultaneously captivating young audiences and addressing pressing ecological concerns.

**While One Thousand and One Nights** Serves as the primary focal point, it is imperative to recognize the contributions of other literary luminaries, such as Hans Christian Andersen. Andersen's timeless tales, notably *The Little Mermaid*, have exerted a profound influence on maritime storytelling, with the enduring legend of the mermaid captivating global audiences and symbolizing profound themes of yearning and transformation. Through an exhaustive examination of various literary oeuvres and folklore traditions, a deeper understanding of the enduring allure of maritime literature emerges.

Despite the central emphasis on *One Thousand and One Nights*, the article underscores the broader literary milieu that enriches maritime storytelling. The seamless integration of cultural heritage with contemporary motifs underscores the genre's adaptability and continued relevance in modern society. These narratives offer invaluable insights into the human condition, transcending temporal and cultural boundaries to resonate with audiences across generations. By deftly interweaving elements of fantasy and reality, authors construct immersive narrative worlds that resonate with readers of all ages, reaffirming the timeless power of storytelling to inform, engage, and inspire. In essence, maritime literature, drawing inspiration from diverse sources, continues to captivate global audiences, showcasing narrative art's enduring potency to entertain and enlighten.

A crucial question remains that must be addressed at the end of this research: Are mermaids still diving into the depths of the sea? This question, as posed in the title, whether metaphorical or literal, is of utmost importance because mermaids symbolize soaring imagination, impactful fantasy, and enchantment. Has children's literature dispensed with this type of delightful imagination? Unfortunately, we are witnessing a continued marginalization of this kind of fantasy. Mermaids are rarely encountered in children's stories nowadays, indicating a shift in the direction of fantasy in children's literature. In conclusion, mermaids have left a deep imprint on children's literature and their imagination.

Mermaids are not mere entities; they embody an idea that can evolve through cinematic or literary techniques. However, predicting the disappearance of mermaids is exceedingly challenging because they transcend both imagination and reality. They represent an attempt to create a sixth dimension, a striving for liberation from the authority of reality, and the construction of a utopian world free from the complexities that abound in the contemporary world. This is a refined academic translation.

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