

Anthropomorphism and Its Value Dimensions in Algerian Children's Stories: Salima Mellizi's Stories as a Model

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Abstract

This article aims to examine the theme of anthropomorphism in children's literature through the stories of the Algerian writer Salima Mellizi, whose narrative experience is marked by a strong and prominent presence of anthropomorphism. Through this technique, the author demonstrates remarkable creativity and artistic mastery by attributing human characteristics to animals, birds, plants, and inanimate objects. She also assigns them central heroic roles, making them vibrant and lifelike beings that move, speak, think, and act wisely in situations they encounter, much like human beings.

By doing so, these characters become closer to children's hearts and minds, corresponding to the way children love and imagine them within their imaginative worlds. Embedded within a purposeful intellectual framework, the stories seek to achieve moral, educational, and pedagogical objectives. Through them, the writer endeavors to instill noble ideals and virtuous values in children, nurture them according to ethical principles, and encourage adherence to such values through a simple yet engaging artistic style enriched with entertainment, suspense, and wisdom. Drawing upon the supernatural, the extraordinary, and symbolic representation as fundamental elements in constructing her fascinating narrative worlds, Mellizi aims to capture children's attention, stimulate their curiosity, and encourage them to reflect and exercise their cognitive abilities.

Keywords: Story, Child, Anthropomorphism, Values, Salima Mellizi.

Introduction

Anthropomorphism is considered one of the most prominent narrative patterns in human literature since the dawn of history. Its emergence was not associated with a particular historical period or literary genre; rather, it appeared as one of the earliest forms of oral expression through which human beings conveyed their thoughts, imagination, and experiences to others. It also served as a means of

moral refinement and cultural education, intended to cultivate ethical behavior and disseminate wisdom in an attractive and suggestive manner.

Throughout the evolution of artistic creativity, anthropomorphism gained widespread prominence in world literatures and became a symbolic medium employed by major writers to express their intellectual visions and critical stances toward political and social realities. It also functioned as a vehicle for conveying purposeful messages while avoiding direct confrontation with authority and censorship. Consequently, it provided writers with a broad space to question political and social realities and to cultivate individual and collective consciousness through a mode of expression that transcends directness and explicit declaration, relying instead on symbolism and suggestion. Anthropomorphism thus evolved into an expressive strategy and a conscious creative practice that embodies profound intellectual perspectives while concealing behind its apparent simplicity a sharp critique of political structures and social value distortions. This made it an effective symbolic tool for writing in times of repression and in societies where freedom of direct expression is restricted.

In the modern era, anthropomorphism has no longer been confined to adult literature; it has also extended into children's literature, where it has become widely prevalent and a central component of narrative writing for young readers. It has attracted considerable attention from creative writers who recognized its importance and effectiveness as both an artistic and educational technique aimed at shaping children's personalities on sound foundations and fostering their moral awareness. This is achieved by presenting positive behavioral models that reflect reality through a simple style free from direct preaching or explicit instruction. Such narratives attribute human qualities to animals, birds, plants, and inanimate objects, granting them the ability to speak, think, feel, and engage in social interaction. In doing so, they create worlds that are close to children's experiences, express their concerns and aspirations, stimulate their capacity for reflection and empathy, and encourage them to reconsider their behaviors and attitudes.

The use of anthropomorphism has become particularly evident in the works of numerous contemporary Algerian storytellers who strive to offer entertaining stories with symbolic dimensions that reflect human situations familiar to children's everyday experiences. Among them, Salima Mellizi stands out as one of the most prominent Algerian writers dedicated to children's literature. Her narrative experience represents a distinguished model through the creation of stories narrated by birds and animals, where anthropomorphism occupies a remarkable and powerful presence. Through these stories, Mellizi demonstrates her creativity and artistic excellence in employing anthropomorphism as a purposeful artistic and educational technique. By attributing human characteristics to her fictional characters, she transforms them into living beings that speak, feel, think, and behave like humans in the situations they encounter. This approach brings them closer to

children's hearts and minds within a purposeful intellectual structure and a carefully designed educational strategy.

Through her stories, the author seeks to instill noble values in children, educate them according to virtuous moral principles, and guide them toward appropriate patterns of behavior through a simple artistic style characterized by enjoyment, suspense, and wisdom, while remaining suitable to children's developmental stages and cognitive capacities.

The significance of this study lies in its attempt to address the theme of anthropomorphism in the stories of Salima Mellizi, with the aim of identifying the features of creativity and distinction in her use of anthropomorphism as both an artistic and educational tool. The study seeks to reveal its manifestations and forms of presence, as well as to clarify the value dimensions embedded within it. It is based on the following central research question:

How is anthropomorphism manifested in Salima Mellizi's stories intended for children?

This main question gives rise to several subsidiary questions, including: To what extent has the author succeeded in treating anthropomorphism in her narrative texts? What meanings and implications does anthropomorphism convey in these stories? What value dimensions does it seek to promote?

These questions, among others, will be addressed through an in-depth analysis and interpretation of the selected narrative models, employing the tools of the narrative approach, given that anthropomorphism is primarily manifested through characterization, which constitutes a fundamental narrative component in children's stories.

First: The Concept of Humanization and Its Origins in Literature

The concept of humanization occupies a significant place in the field of contemporary humanistic and literary studies, where linguistic, philosophical, and literary dimensions intersect. Its complex terminological implications cannot be fully understood without returning to its linguistic roots and tracing the evolution of its meaning, from the level of the individual lexical item to that of a comprehensive philosophical and literary concept.

1. The Concept of Humanization

The Arabic term *al-ansanah* (humanization) is derived from the verb *ansana*, a modern linguistic formation that does not appear in classical Arabic dictionaries. It is therefore considered a contemporary term coined to express modern concepts. The semantic core of this verb revolves around the notion of the “human being” (*insān*). Linguists have differed regarding its etymological origin, some tracing it to the root (*anisa*), while others relate it to (*nasiya*) (“to forget”).¹ Nevertheless, there is consensus that the final letter *nūn* is an additional element, which lends the term a degree of estrangement from the traditional system of Classical Arabic.

¹ See: Saeed Nasser Al-Aishi, *Morphological Disagreement in Arabic*, Master's Thesis, Faculty of Arts, Al-Mustansiriyah University, 1998, p. 105

Modern Arabic dictionaries, however, have incorporated the term and granted it lexical legitimacy by defining its meaning. In *The Dictionary of Contemporary Arabic Language*, the entry states: “*Ansana, yu’ansinu, ansanatan...* To humanize a person means to elevate and refine his intellect through cultivation and education, or to treat him as a human being endowed with reason that distinguishes him from other creatures. To humanize an animal means to liken it to a human being.”² Such a comparison entails attributing to the animal certain human qualities that it does not inherently possess.

A similar definition is found in *Al-Munhal Dictionary*, where the verb humanize (Humanizer) is defined as: “to confer a human characteristic upon something or to assume a human quality.”³ Humanization, in this sense, may involve the attribution of a single characteristic or a set of characteristics that elevate the humanized entity to a level that renders it comparable to human beings. Terminologically, however, the concept of humanization extends far beyond its direct linguistic meaning. It encompasses a variety of definitions that differ according to intellectual orientations, philosophical frameworks, and contextual applications. Since its emergence in modern Western thought, the concept of Humanism (Humanizm) has been closely associated with the philosophical sphere. It is often used “to express humanistic or rationalistic tendencies, or a universal worldview.”⁴ This perspective advocates focusing on the human being and positioning humanity as the center of the universe and the primary source of knowledge. Such a vision constituted the philosophical foundation of Western modernity, which elevated the status of human beings as the center of existence and the ultimate reference for knowledge by promoting their liberation, enhancing their dignity, and making human experience, consciousness, and worth the central framework for interpreting the world and organizing life.

Accordingly, within modern Western thought, humanization signifies the shift of philosophical inquiry from preoccupation with absolutes and metaphysical concerns toward a focus on the human being as the source of knowledge, the criterion of truth, and the domain of creative action. In this sense, it embodies the spirit of modernity, which established the values of freedom, rationality, human dignity, and universal rights.

As for the concept of humanization in modern Arab thought, it is closely associated with the Algerian thinker Mohammed Arkoun, who examined the humanistic tendency in contemporary Arab culture from a critical perspective. He offered a philosophical and hermeneutical reading of the concept

² Ahmad Mukhtar Umar, *Dictionary of Contemporary Arabic Language*, Vol. 1, Alam Al-Kutub, Cairo, 2008, p. 129.

³ Suhail Idris, *Al-Munhal: French–Arabic Dictionary*, Dar Al-Adab, Beirut, 5th ed., 2013, p. 624.

⁴ Ahmad Ismail Al-Nuaimi, “Humanizing Nature: A Creative Poetic Vision,” *Al-Mu’tamar Newspaper*, No. 276, January 21, 2014, p. 176.

through his study of the Qur'anic text, calling for the revival of the philosophical attitude within Islamic thought in general and Arab thought in particular.⁵

As for humanization in its literary sense, it underwent a qualitative transformation when it entered the literary field. It became detached from the perspectives of intellectual movements and their philosophical frameworks, evolving into a literary technique employed by writers to express their vision of tangible, perceptible, and abstract entities from a human perspective. In this sense, humanization is no longer merely an intellectual concept; rather, it has become an expressive artistic device that focuses on the individual and places human experience at the center of meaning-making within literary works.

To clarify the concept of humanization in its literary context, it is necessary to examine some of the definitions proposed by scholars and critics, as they help elucidate the literary significance embedded in the term within its semantic field.

Ahmed Ismail Al-Nuaimi defines humanization as: “the attribution of human characteristics to non-rational beings, whether animals, plants, inanimate objects, or abstract concepts, thereby endowing them with human life and treating them as human beings.”⁶

Dr. Ahmed Murshid offers a closely related definition but adds that humanization consists of attributing specific human qualities to animals, birds, places, objects, and natural phenomena by reshaping them in a human form and making them capable of speaking, thinking, and expressing emotions according to the context in which they are humanized.⁷

The preceding definitions of humanization in literature reveal a clear convergence and agreement among scholars regarding the concept. Most definitions remain confined within its general semantic framework and largely rely on the theoretical foundations established by earlier researchers. Consequently, they have contributed more to conceptual stability than to expanding the scope of inquiry or deepening the concept's semantic dimensions.

It is worth noting that the concept of humanization in children's literature has acquired a distinct and specialized significance due to the cognitive and psychological characteristics of the target age group—children—as well as the educational objectives associated with this literary genre.

The researcher Nasser Youssef defines humanization as an artistic and educational technique through which human qualities—such as emotions, thoughts, and behaviors—are attributed to animals, plants, or inanimate objects. Its purpose is to capture children's attention, stimulate their imagination, and

⁵See: Mohammed Arkoun, *Battles for Humanism in Islamic Contexts*, translated by Hisham Salih, Dar Al-Saqi, Beirut, 2nd ed., 2001, p. 58.

⁶ Ahmed Ismail Al-Nuaimi, *Humanizing Nature: A Creative Poetic Vision*, p. 180.

⁷ See: Ahmed Murshid Saleh, *The Humanization of Place in the Novels of Abdulrahman Munif*, Dar Al-Wafaa for Printing and Publishing, Alexandria, 1st ed., 2003, p. 7.

instill moral and educational values in them through a narrative framework that combines simplicity with suspense.⁸

While Najib Al-Kayali considers anthropomorphism to be “an artistic technique that attracts children to stories because it presents non-rational beings—such as animals, inanimate objects, and natural phenomena—as thinking, speaking, and expressing their feelings, thereby bringing them closer to children's minds in the way they enjoy and imagine them in their fantasy.”⁹

From the preceding definitions, it can be concluded that anthropomorphism in children's literature is not merely an artistic technique through which the writer endows non-human entities—such as animals, plants, inanimate objects, and natural phenomena—with human characteristics, including the ability to speak, think logically, and experience emotions. Rather, it transcends this function to become an effective educational medium that contributes to the development of children's awareness and the enhancement of their cognitive and emotional capacities. Furthermore, it plays a significant role in instilling moral and educational values and promoting positive behavior through symbolic representations that are closely aligned with the child's intellectual and emotional world.

1. Origins of Anthropomorphism in Literature

Anthropomorphism is regarded as one of the oldest narrative forms, with roots deeply embedded in the heritage of human storytelling. It emerged as a symbolic device employed by peoples since ancient times within their narrative traditions, serving as a means of reflecting on existential questions or expressing intellectual, political, and social attitudes through an indirect symbolic style rich in multiple layers of meaning.

In its earliest manifestations, anthropomorphism constituted an integral part of popular folklore and mythological traditions, functioning as one of the oldest symbolic means through which human beings expressed their aspirations, fears, and existential inquiries. With the development of creative consciousness, anthropomorphism gradually moved beyond its spontaneous and instinctive origins into the literary sphere, where it became closely associated with the allegorical tale, or what came to be known as the fable—referred to in Latin as *Fabula* and in French as *fable*. A fable is “a short narrative containing sayings and actions attributed to animals, plants, or inanimate objects, intended to refine morals, correct behavior, promote noble values, and disseminate wisdom in an appealing and influential manner.”¹⁰ Thus, anthropomorphism evolved beyond its primitive level and became established within literature as a conscious humanistic vision that employs narrative as a tool for

⁸ See: Nasser Youssef Ahmed, *Palestinian Stories Written for Children (1975–1984)*, Department of Culture, Palestine Liberation Organization, 1st ed., 2000, p. 235.

⁹ Muhammad Qaraniya, *Manifestations of Children's Stories: The Syrian Experience—An Applied Study*, Publications of the Arab Writers Union, Damascus, Studies Series (05), 2010, p. 73.

¹⁰ Ahmad Hashim Muhammad Al-Umda, *Children's Culture and Literary Appreciation*, Dar Al-Zahra, Riyadh, 1st ed., 2010, p. 118.

criticizing reality, contemplating existence, and redefining the relationship between humanity and the world.

Anthropomorphism became widespread in most world literatures, and numerous ancient civilizations have claimed precedence in its creation. Scholars have differed regarding its original origins and early development, particularly during its oral phase prior to written documentation. Some maintain that it originated in India, citing ancient tales involving animals and birds that date back many centuries before the Common Era and are found in the Jataka (Jātaka) stories.¹¹

Others argue that anthropomorphism is of Greek origin, pointing to the tales of the Greek poet Hesiod, who lived during the eighth century BCE, followed by the fables of Aesop in the sixth century BCE. Meanwhile, another group of scholars traces anthropomorphism to ancient Pharaonic Egypt, citing ancient Egyptian animal tales recorded on papyrus manuscripts dating back to the twelfth century BCE. This evidence has encouraged the view that Egyptian narratives preceded and influenced both Indian and Greek literature, whose contributions were ultimately decisive in the development of anthropomorphism and its transition into the literary domain.¹²

Nevertheless, it is difficult to reach a definitive conclusion on this matter. As previously noted, anthropomorphism initially emerged as a popular and folkloric phenomenon before gradually evolving into a refined literary form. Throughout this process, it interacted with various literary traditions in ways that are difficult to trace with certainty. In order to clarify the stages of its development—from its instinctive beginnings to its establishment as a literary device—it is necessary to return to its origins as manifested in both world and Arabic literature. Such an approach enables a clearer understanding of the foundations upon which anthropomorphism was built and facilitates an examination of its representations across diverse cultural contexts.

1.2. Anthropomorphism in World Literature

Most historical studies that have traced the origins of animal literature agree that the roots and emergence of anthropomorphism in world literature can be attributed to Aesop in Greek literature. He was regarded as the first philosopher to compose fables in prose through the voices of animals and birds. His collection comprised approximately two hundred and fifty fables, which were later compiled and arranged in a manuscript by the monk Maximus Planudes during the thirteenth century. These fables subsequently gained widespread popularity among the general public.¹³

¹¹See: Sidi Muhammad Ben Malik, *The Semiotics of Animals in Shawqiyat: Symbolism and the Cultural System*, Dar Al-Fikr Publishing, Syria, 1st ed., 2015, p. 22.

¹² See: Sidi Muhammad Ben Malik, *The Semiotics of Animals in Shawqiyat: Symbolism and the Cultural System*, p. 23.

¹³ Qadriyyah Al-Bushri & Samah Khalidi, *Children's Literature and Their Culture*, Dar Al-Khaleej Publishing, Amman, Jordan, 1st ed., 2011, p. 206.

Aesop's fables are characterized by a clear moral content that elevates them beyond mere simple narratives. They embody an educational vision aimed at refining human behavior and guiding it toward virtue. His stories rely on brevity and symbolism, attributing speech and actions to animals and birds that think, speak, and behave like human beings, thereby enabling readers to relate them to human reality. "Most of these fables conclude with a lesson that conveys a moral message either explicitly or implicitly, thus reinforcing ethical values through an effective educational approach that is easily accepted by the audience."¹⁴

Accordingly, Aesop's fables cannot be regarded merely as entertaining stories told for amusement. Rather, they represent an early model of purposeful educational literature in which anthropomorphism was employed to convey moral messages and instill educational values indirectly. This technique enabled the author to transcend the limitations of time and place, offering veiled social criticism and addressing fundamental human issues through a style that appears simple on the surface yet carries profound significance at its core.

Anthropomorphism later found its way into Latin literature. Among its most notable practitioners was the poet Horace, particularly in his poetic epistles (*Epistolae*), which contain philosophical and ethical reflections expressing the poet's views and contemplations on life and society.¹⁵

He was followed by the Latin poet Phaedrus, who composed one hundred and twenty-one verse fables narrated by animals, inspired by the Greek Aesopian tradition. Through these works, he expressed the social and political injustices of his time while also demonstrating remarkable artistic creativity and literary craftsmanship.¹⁶

In the seventeenth century, however, the animal fable experienced a revival and underwent remarkable development at the hands of the French writer and poet Jean de La Fontaine. He elevated this literary genre to its highest level of artistic perfection, successfully establishing the artistic foundations of the classical fable. His creative project drew heavily on ancient narrative traditions, particularly the fables of the Greek Aesop and the Latin Phaedrus, as well as the works of prominent French fabulists of the sixteenth century, such as Claude Muret, François Rabelais, and Pierre de Vigny.¹⁷

Jean de La Fontaine demonstrated exceptional artistic talent and creativity in composing his poetic tales. He skillfully employed anthropomorphism as a symbolic device through which he conveyed his social and political criticism during an era characterized by strict censorship and limitations on

¹⁴ Seth Lerer, *Children's Literature: From Aesop to Harry Potter*, trans. Malakah Abyad, Syrian General Book Authority Publications, Damascus, 2010, p. 96.

¹⁵ Muhammad Ghunaymi Hilal, *The Role of Comparative Literature in Guiding Contemporary Arabic Literature*, Dar Al-Nahda, Cairo, 1974, p. 70.

¹⁶ See: *Ibid.*, p. 70.

¹⁷ Qadriyyah Al-Bishri and Samah Al-Khalidi, *Children's Literature and Their Culture*, p. 208.

freedom of expression. By giving voice to animals, plants, and inanimate objects, endowing them with human characteristics, and transforming them into literary masks, he concealed behind them a sharp critique of human reality.¹⁸ Consequently, his mastery in employing anthropomorphism granted his fables enduring literary significance and rendered them open to interpretation and rereading across generations.

With the evolution of Western literature, anthropomorphism underwent a new transformation in the modern era. It was no longer confined to political and social criticism but became an educational and pedagogical tool directed toward children. This shift was a natural outcome of the changing perception of childhood in Western society, where the child came to be regarded as an individual possessing a distinct world and deserving a literature suited to his or her cognitive and emotional capacities. In this context, a number of writers distinguished themselves through their creative use of anthropomorphism in children's stories, most notably the French writer Charles Perrault in the seventeenth century, the Danish author Hans Christian Andersen, and the English writer Lewis Carroll, author of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, among others.¹⁹

These works represent a continuation of an ancient literary tradition that dates back to the fables of Aesop. However, these writers further developed the art of storytelling in ways that corresponded to modern intellectual and educational transformations. As a result, anthropomorphism became an artistic technique that combines entertainment with instruction and contributes to instilling moral, educational, and ethical values in children.

2.2. Anthropomorphism in Arabic Literature

The Arabs were well acquainted with anthropomorphism since the pre-Islamic era. Classical Arabic literature abounds with stories narrated through the voices of animals and birds, which are scattered throughout books of literature, proverbs, anecdotes, fables, and accounts of the Arabs and their historical narratives.²⁰

As a result of the extensive cultural and social interaction that characterized the early Abbasid era, the Arabs became acquainted with the literatures and narratives of other nations. Among the most prominent narrative forms they adopted were animal tales. In Arabic literature, Ibn al-Muqaffa' is regarded as the pioneer and leading figure of this genre. His translation of *Kalila wa Dimna*—a work of Indian origin—gave rise to this new narrative art in the Arabic language. He was the first to transfer it from its oral form among the Arabs to written literature, marking an unprecedented step in the history of classical Arabic literature in general and narrative creativity in particular. This achievement gains even greater significance when one considers that *Kalila wa Dimna* was the first prose narrative

¹⁸ Seth Lerer, *Children's Literature: From Aesop to Harry Potter*, p. 104.

¹⁹ Taysir Jabbar Mu'aydi, *Anthropomorphism in Children's Stories: Shafiq Mahdi as a Model*, p. 37

²⁰ Qahtan Salih Al-Fallah, "Literature and Politics: A Reading of the Story of the Tiger and the Fox by Sahl ibn Harun (215 AH)," *Damascus Journal*, University of Aleppo, Issue 01, 2011, p. 79.

work, after poetry, to occupy such a distinguished place in the Arabic literary heritage. Through this work, Ibn al-Muqaffa' employed anthropomorphism and infused it with moral lessons and wisdom, conveying them through entertainment, suspense, and instruction. Consequently, he opened a new path for subsequent writers to follow, while also providing educators and moral guides with an appealing approach that resonates with every reader and attracts every soul.

Many writers followed in Ibn al-Muqaffa's footsteps, composing works modeled on his example after recognizing the importance of his book and its profound influence on readers. Among these works are *Tha'labah wa 'Afra* by Sahl ibn Harun, *Al-Nimr wa al-Tha'lab* (The Tiger and the Fox) by Ali ibn Dawud, and *Al-Salih al-Balgham* by al-Sharif ibn al-Habbariyya, in addition to numerous other works whose complete enumeration lies beyond the scope of this discussion.

In modern Arabic literature, anthropomorphism emerged as a prominent artistic technique employed by many writers and literary figures as an expressive means of addressing human, social, and political issues within a symbolic framework. It became a powerful tool for intensifying meaning, generating symbolism, and constructing an indirect critical discourse. Furthermore, it enabled many authors to express the concerns and aspirations of the Arab individual by projecting emotions and ideas onto non-human beings, thereby endowing literary texts with a distinctive suggestive and aesthetic character.

In modern Arabic children's literature, anthropomorphism was introduced primarily through translation, particularly during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, when Arab countries became increasingly open to Western culture. Numerous writers translated the fables of La Fontaine and Aesop into Arabic in a simplified and refined style suited to children's cognitive abilities and cultural environment. These translations became among the earliest texts read by Arab children through school curricula and magazines intended for young readers.

Among the pioneers of this endeavor was Uthman Jalal, who translated a collection of La Fontaine's fables into Arabic in his book *Al-'Uyun al-Yawaqiz fi al-Amthal wa al-Mawa'iz* (The Vigilant Eyes in Proverbs and Admonitions). Later, the Syrian writer Elias Qudsi translated a number of La Fontaine's fables into the Damascene vernacular under the title *Nawadir wa Fukahat min Ahadith al-Hayawanat* (Anecdotes and Humorous Tales from Animal Conversations), which was published in Damascus in 1913. Meanwhile, Ahmad Shawqi is considered one of the most prominent poets to employ anthropomorphism in poetry, particularly in his famous poetic fables narrated through animal characters. Although influenced by La Fontaine's fables, Shawqi endowed them with an authentic Arab character that combined artistic imagination with educational purposes. He utilized this technique to convey wisdom, social criticism, and moral guidance in an artistic form that successfully blended entertainment with persuasion.

Based on the foregoing, it can be argued that the introduction of anthropomorphism into modern

Arabic children's literature through translation was not merely an imitation of the Western model; rather, it represented a form of cultural interaction that gave rise to an Arab educational literature with a universal humanistic character. This literature combines artistic enjoyment with educational purpose and contributes to the development of children's personalities and awareness.

In Algeria, anthropomorphism has emerged in contemporary children's stories as both an artistic and educational technique. Numerous creative writers have employed it to instill moral and educational values in children through engaging and entertaining narratives. Among these writers are, but are not limited to, Ahmed Dougan, Mohamed Chenoufi, Djamila Yahiaoui, Toufik Saber, Seham Zaoui, Fatima Naaman, Basma Boudis, and Salima Mellizi. Through the use of anthropomorphism in their stories, these authors have succeeded in conveying educational concepts to children in an indirect and effective manner.

1. Manifestations of Anthropomorphism in Salima Mellizi's Children's Stories

Salima Mellizi is regarded as one of the most prominent female voices in the Algerian literary scene. Since the beginning of her literary career in the 1980s, she has established a distinguished presence through a diverse body of work encompassing poetry, short stories, travel literature, and journalistic writing. Nevertheless, children's literature has remained the most prominent and distinctive field within her creative experience.

Mellizi devoted particular attention to the art of children's storytelling, motivated by her belief in its educational and pedagogical role in shaping young readers' awareness, stimulating their imagination, and building their value systems. She enriched the Algerian children's library with a collection of meaningful social and symbolic stories, crafted with remarkable awareness and professionalism, both in terms of their intellectual content and the values they convey. An examination of the selected narrative models reveals that anthropomorphism manifests itself in three principal forms: the anthropomorphism of animals, plants, and inanimate objects.

1.3. Animal Anthropomorphism

Despite the diversity of anthropomorphic patterns found in the stories under study, animal anthropomorphism constitutes the dominant form in Salima Mellizi's narratives. It enjoys a particularly strong and recurrent presence within the narrative structure when compared to other forms. This predominance can be attributed to the rich symbolic and imaginative potential of animals, which makes them especially capable of embodying educational and moral themes. Through anthropomorphism, animals are transformed into speaking and thinking characters endowed with emotions and social roles that mirror human reality while remaining closely connected to the child's world and interests.

The anthropomorphization of animals in the selected texts is manifested through a variety of animal characters, including domestic and predatory animals, as well as birds and insects. The author assigns

these characters central heroic roles and makes them active agents within the narrative structure. Domestic animals symbolize gentleness, familiarity, and peace, such as the sparrow, the hen, the rabbit, and the cat, whereas predatory animals represent power, dominance, and oppression, together with associated traits of arrogance and superiority, such as the lion, the bear, and the elephant. Through these characters, the author emphasizes the conflict between good and evil, and between the strong and the weak.

Our analysis begins with the story *The Sparrow and the Frog*, which is considered one of the earliest narrative texts in Salima Mellizi's creative experience. The story revolves around a little sparrow that was accustomed to visiting a beautiful lake to drink water and sing with its sweet and melodious voice. One day, however, the frog, which lived alone in the lake, treated the sparrow harshly, drove it away, and refused to let it drink. Without arguing, the sparrow left in search of another place. When summer arrived, the lake dried up, and the frog suffered from thirst and loneliness until the sparrow happened to pass by and found it in that condition. Feeling compassion for the frog, the sparrow engaged in the following dialogue:

The sparrow said: "Come with me, dear frog. I will take you to another lake near this place, because if you remain here, you will die of thirst."

The frog looked at him in astonishment and replied: "Is what you are saying really true? Did you not hate me because of what I did to you during the spring days?"

The sparrow answered kindly: "I do not know hatred. Forgiveness and kindness toward those in need are better than persisting in enmity and conflict."

At that moment, the frog felt remorseful and asked for forgiveness after the sparrow had taken it to another safe lake."²¹

This dialogic text reveals the presence of anthropomorphism as a fundamental artistic technique in character construction. The author transcends the natural characteristics of both the sparrow and the frog and endows them with distinctly human dimensions, enabling them to perform symbolic roles that reflect familiar human behaviors and moral attitudes. The frog is portrayed as a selfish and domineering character, whereas the sparrow embodies the image of a forgiving individual who responds to wrongdoing with mercy and benevolence. Moreover, the author grants her characters the ability to speak, think, and express their emotions, which lends the story a profound human dimension and brings it closer to human reality despite its animal framework.

Similarly, the story *The Arrogant Butterfly and the Wise Caterpillar* conveys a clear message about pride and its negative consequences. The author artistically encapsulates this idea in the character of the butterfly, which fluttered above the flowers, proud of the beautiful and dazzling colors of its

²¹ Salima Mellizi, *The Sparrow and the Frog*, Dar Al-Mustaqbal Publishing House, Algeria, 2004, 1st ed., pp. 8–9.

wings, dancing lightly with the breeze and moving happily among the fields. Meanwhile, the caterpillar crawled slowly near the roots of the plants, silently observing from a small opening in the ground.

“The butterfly approached the caterpillar, looked at it with astonishment, and said boastfully: ‘How ugly you are, dear caterpillar! Look at me—I possess beautiful colors, and everyone rejoices when they see me, whereas no one pays any attention to you.’

The caterpillar sighed calmly and replied: ‘True beauty does not lie merely in appearance, but in the benefit we provide to others. I help keep the soil fertile so that these flowers you love may continue to grow.’”²²

The caterpillar continued, saying: “We should never mock anyone because of their appearance, for every creature has its own value, even if we cannot always perceive it with our eyes.”

The butterfly lowered its wings shyly and said, “I was arrogant. Please forgive me, dear caterpillar. Today, you have taught me an important lesson in humility.”²³

The storyteller anthropomorphized the two characters of the story, portraying the butterfly as a vain and conceited character who takes pride in and boasts about her beauty, while the caterpillar is depicted as wise and calm, defending the values of humility and respect for others. A rational dialogue is established between them, serving an educational function despite its brevity and realistic, explanatory nature that remains consistent with the characteristics of their environment. The crawling caterpillar, which lives beneath the soil despite its unattractive appearance, confronts this arrogance with wisdom and composure, explaining that the value of a creature lies not in its outward appearance but in its role and usefulness.

Anthropomorphism is manifested in the ability of both characters to engage in dialogue, think, and express emotions such as pride, embarrassment, and forgiveness—qualities that are inherently human yet attributed to non-human creatures. This artistic use of anthropomorphism transforms the story into an indirect educational discourse that promotes the value of humility and discourages judging others based solely on their external appearance.

In the story “The Cleverness of Arnoub,” the title itself suggests that the intellectual message the story seeks to convey is the importance of intelligence and good judgment in dealing with the problems one may encounter. This educational message is embodied in a dramatic conflict between a group of oppressed rabbits and a tyrannical, domineering elephant who monopolized the lake's water and oppressed the rabbits through his strength and arrogance. “As their suffering intensified,

²² Salima Mellizi, *The Arrogant Butterfly and the Wise Caterpillar*, Dar Al-Mustaqbal Publishing House, Algeria, 2004, 1st ed., p. 11.

²³ Salima Mellizi, *The Arrogant Butterfly and the Wise Caterpillar*, p. 12.

the rabbits gathered to consult one another and search for a solution that would put an end to this problem.

At that moment, the little rabbit stepped forward confidently and said, ‘Do not despair, my friends. Reason and wisdom can defeat those who believe themselves to be the strongest.’ He then headed toward the lake, where the elephant stood guarding it, and addressed him, saying: ‘Great Elephant, why do you monopolize the forest lake and prevent others from using it?’²⁴

The elephant replied loudly: “Because I am the strongest in this forest. This lake has become my property, and no one shall drink from it without my permission. Whoever dares to stop me, I will crush.”

The little rabbit then cleverly responded: “If you truly believe yourself to be the strongest, know that there is another elephant in the lake who claims to be stronger than you and has challenged you before all the animals.”

The elephant became furious and approached the edge of the lake. Looking into the water, he saw his own reflection and believed that another elephant was confronting him. Enraged, he rushed forward to attack it, fell into the water, and his arrogance vanished. Smiling, Arnoub then said: “Remember, my friends, that intelligence can be stronger than physical power and that arrogance leads its owner only to defeat.”²⁵

The dialogue between the elephant and the rabbit contributes significantly to highlighting the technique of anthropomorphism, as it allows the author to endow the story’s characters with human dimensions, including thoughts, psychological attitudes, and moral values that transcend their animal nature. The elephant embodies the figure of the tyrannical and selfish human being who monopolizes resources and oppresses others through power, whereas the little rabbit represents the wise and intelligent individual who uses his intellect to confront tyranny and defend the interests of the community.

Among the educational values to which the author devoted notable attention is the encouragement of friendship, as clearly illustrated in the story *The Two Ducks and Their Turtle Friend*. The narrator states:

“When the pond dried up, the two ducks decided to leave the place and move to another pond that still had water. But what about their friend, the turtle? She was talkative and lamented sadly, saying: ‘What shall I do now? The pond has dried up, and I can no longer live here.’

One of the ducks said: ‘We will help you, our friend, but you must remain silent during the journey.’²⁶

²⁴ Salima Mellizi, *The Cleverness of Arnoub*, Future Publishing House, Algeria, 2004, 1st ed., p. 3.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

²⁶ Salima Mellizi, *The Two Ducks and Their Turtle Friend*, Dar Al-Saehi Publishing House, Algeria, 1st ed., 2008, p. 3.

The narrator continues:

“The two ducks carried a wooden stick, and the turtle held onto its middle with her mouth. They then flew into the sky. However, the turtle cried out, ‘Look at me, how I am flying!’ The moment she opened her mouth, she fell toward the ground. The two ducks then thought of a solution and brought their friend, the swan, to help them carry the turtle in a pouch held in her beak, so that she could reach her destination safely. The turtle felt ashamed and said: ‘I have learned that excessive talkativeness may lead its owner into trouble.’”²⁷

Anthropomorphism in this story is manifested through the attribution of human characteristics and roles to animal characters, namely the two ducks, the turtle, and the swan. The author grants them the ability to converse, think, and make appropriate decisions in difficult circumstances. When the pond dried up and the ducks decided to leave in search of a new water source, they were not solely concerned with their own well-being; rather, they demonstrated a sense of responsibility toward their friend, the turtle, and consulted one another on the best way to assist her. The turtle is portrayed as a talkative character who speaks excessively, whereas the swan embodies the image of a cooperative friend who responds to a call for help and contributes to solving the problem.

2.3. Plant Anthropomorphism

Although animal anthropomorphism constitutes the most prominent form of anthropomorphism in the stories of Salima Mellizi, this does not imply the absence of other forms, foremost among them plant anthropomorphism, which represents a significant artistic feature in several of her narratives. The author anthropomorphizes elements of plant life and nature, such as trees, flowers, various plants, and fruits, endowing them with human characteristics that enable them to engage in dialogue, think, and express their feelings and viewpoints. Through this artistic transformation, plants cease to be merely silent organisms and instead become active characters that participate in shaping events and directing their symbolic significance.²⁸

The analyzed narrative models reveal that the author employs plant anthropomorphism to convey a range of educational and pedagogical values through symbolic forms that appeal to children. This approach enriches the narratives with vitality and attractiveness, fostering a stronger connection between young readers and the natural world. Furthermore, such a technique contributes to the development of environmental awareness among children by deepening their understanding of the importance of plants and their role in sustaining life.

Consequently, plant anthropomorphism in the works of Salima Mellizi should not be viewed merely as an artistic technique; rather, it represents a conscious creative choice aimed at expanding children’s

²⁷ Ibid., p. 4.

²⁸ Taysir Jabbar Muaydi, *Anthropomorphism in Children's Stories: Shafiq Mahdi as a Model*, p. 72.

imaginative horizons and conveying educational and moral messages within an artistic framework that combines suspense, enjoyment, and aesthetic value.

The author employed the anthropomorphization of elements of plant nature as a mechanism for conveying educational and moral lessons. In the story “Thank You, Clouds”, the events begin in an orchard overflowing with life and beauty, adorned by spring with vibrant colors, blossoms, and lush greenery. However, a sudden dust storm swept across the area, covering the trees, plants, and flowers with layers of dust and concealing the freshness and splendor they once enjoyed. At that moment, a dialogue took place among them:

The apple and fig trees said: “The dust has hidden the beauty of our leaves and fruits.”

The flowers added: “We can no longer take pride in our bright colors as we used to.”

Meanwhile, the green plants sighed and said: “How we wish to regain our freshness and vitality.”²⁹

“The clouds passing across the sky heard the complaints of the trees and flowers. Feeling compassion for them, they quickly gathered together and sent heavy rain that washed the dust from the branches and leaves. As a result, the trees, flowers, and plants regained their brilliance and beauty. Joy spread throughout the orchard, and the trees exclaimed: ‘Thank you, clouds, for restoring our beauty and vitality.’

The clouds replied: ‘Standing by others and helping them in times of need is among the finest things a person can offer.’³⁰

Anthropomorphism is manifested in this story through the portrayal of the clouds as a helpful character that sympathizes with the trees, flowers, and plants, hastening to assist them and restore happiness and delight to the orchard. In this way, the clouds symbolically embody the value of benevolence and helping others.

The author also sought to address a noteworthy aspect of human behavior by making mockery of others and their aspirations the central theme of the story “The Dream of the Bindweed.” The narrative revolves around the dream of a small bindweed plant to rise to the level of the towering trees. It aspires to become as strong and tall as they are. “One day, it decided to reveal its wish to the trees and shyly said: ‘How I wish to become a great tree like you, with branches stretching high into the sky.’

Some of the trees laughed mockingly, and one of them said: ‘How can a weak plant that depends on climbing others become a magnificent tree?’

Another added:

‘Every plant has its own nature, so do not dream beyond your abilities.’³¹

²⁹ Salima Mellizi, *Thank You, Clouds*, Dar Al-Afaq, Algeria, 1st ed., 2011, p. 4.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

³¹ Salima Mellizi, *The Dream of the Bindweed*, Dar Al-Afaq, Algeria, 1st ed., 2011, p. 6.

“The bindweed felt saddened by their words, but it did not lose hope. Confidently, it replied: ‘I may never become a tree, but I will continue to grow and achieve all the dreams I wish to realize.’ As the days passed, the bindweed continued to spread and climb, beautifying the surroundings with its leaves and lovely flowers. Eventually, the trees realized that every living being possesses its own unique value and distinctive qualities. They regretted their mockery and ridicule and hastened to apologize to the bindweed in appreciation of its ambition and perseverance.”³²

Anthropomorphism is evident in this story through granting the bindweed and the trees the ability to speak, engage in dialogue, think, and express diverse emotions and feelings. The bindweed appears as an ambitious character striving for self-realization and personal growth, while the trees initially embody the negative behavior of ridiculing and belittling others. Later, however, they recognize their mistake, express remorse, and offer an apology. Thus, these plant characters transcend their silent natural state to assume human roles that reflect educational values and familiar social behaviors.

3.3. Personification of Inanimate Objects

In Salima Mellizi’s stories, personification is not limited to animals and plants; it also extends to inanimate objects and various natural phenomena that derive their presence from the child’s surrounding environment and perceptual world. Within an artistic vision, the author seeks to portray these elements as human-like characters capable of expressing themselves, engaging in dialogue, acting in different situations, participating in narrative events, and influencing their development. This approach facilitates children’s identification with these characters and enhances their interaction with the roles they play in their lives. Consequently, inanimate objects and natural phenomena are transformed from static elements into active beings that contribute to the construction of the narrative and shape its meanings. This use of personification reflects the author’s awareness of the educational, pedagogical, and aesthetic potential of this technique and its role in bringing concepts closer to the child’s understanding through an imaginative world full of life and movement.

The story *The Sad Mirror* illustrates the author’s commitment to employing personification in the service of cognitive development. Rather than merely entertaining the child, she seeks to simplify and explain certain scientific facts within an engaging narrative framework. This is evident in her treatment of the phenomenon of image reflection on the surface of water, where the sad mirror serves as the protagonist of the story:

“The mirror felt sad and distressed because it could not see itself as other creatures did. It would lament: ‘I see everyone else’s image, but I can never see my own.’”

A feather noticed its sadness and asked about the reason. When the mirror revealed its wish, the feather took it to a clear stream in the forest and said:

³² Ibid., p. 7.

“Look at the surface of the water and tell me what you see, my dear.”³³

The mirror contemplated its reflection and then exclaimed joyfully:

“I see a beautiful, delicate girl, silver and shining.”

The feather smiled and replied:

“That is you. You have always been beautiful, but you never realized it.”

At that moment, the mirror’s sadness disappeared and was replaced by feelings of satisfaction and self-esteem.³⁴

In this story, the author attributes human characteristics to both the mirror and the feather, granting them the ability to speak, think, feel sadness, show empathy, and experience joy. As a result, they become active characters embodying a range of educational values, such as self-confidence, self-discovery, and self-appreciation.

The author continues to reinforce educational ideas throughout her stories by encouraging cleanliness and emphasizing its importance in a child’s life. She presents this theme through an engaging narrative style, as clearly demonstrated in the story *The Runaway Shoe*. The events revolve around Ayman’s shoe, which ran away when he attempted to wear it before going to school. The shoe hid under the bed, and Ayman searched for it unsuccessfully, unable to catch it. Surprised by this behavior, he said to the shoe:

“I am going to be late for school.”

The shoe replied:

“I will not allow you to wear me while I am this dirty. I am covered in mud, and no one has cared to clean me.”

At that moment, Ayman realized his mistake. He took out the polish and the brush and carefully cleaned his shoes until they became clean and shiny.”³⁵

In this passage, the author employs personification by attributing human qualities to an inanimate object (the shoe), making it speak, object, and justify its position. These human-like characteristics contribute to the development of an engaging narrative event. At the same time, the story highlights a positive educational value by encouraging cleanliness and raising children's awareness of the importance of taking care of their personal belongings and preserving them.

In conclusion, personification constitutes a central artistic technique in the narrative models examined in this study. Salima Mellizi skillfully and consciously employed this device to construct a vibrant and dynamic fictional world in which animals, plants, and inanimate objects are endowed with human attributes. Animals are made to speak, feel, and express their emotions, while elements of nature,

³³Salima Mellizi, *The Sad Mirror*, Dar Al-Afaq, Algeria, 1st ed., 2011, p. 4.

³⁴*Ibid.*, p. 5.

³⁵ Salima Mellizi, *The Runaway Shoe*, Dar Al-Afaq, Algeria, 1st ed., 2011, p. 6.

including plants and inanimate objects, are granted the ability to engage in dialogue, interact, and make decisions, thereby becoming active characters within the narrative. The use of personification is not limited to its aesthetic function; it also conveys moral values and positive behavioral patterns in a simple and appealing manner suited to the child's world. This aspect will be further explored in the following section of the study.

4. Value Dimensions of Personification in Salima Mellizi's Children's Stories

Value dimensions represent one of the most significant functions performed by personification in Salima Mellizi's stories. The author adopts personification as both an artistic and educational tool to instill a range of educational, moral, and social values in children. Through this technique, she constructs a narrative world that resonates with children's experiences and interests, stimulating their emotional engagement with events and characters. This enables the effective presentation of positive values worthy of adoption and emulation, while also exposing negative behaviors in order to make children aware of their harmful consequences and guide them toward avoiding them. These values are conveyed through engaging narrative situations and lively dialogues rather than direct moral preaching, allowing children to internalize the ethical messages embedded in the stories. Among the most prominent of these values are the following:

4.1. Moral Values

In the texts under study, personification serves as an effective artistic means of promoting and reinforcing moral values in children. Through personified characters that embody human behaviors in forms close to the child's cognitive and emotional world, Salima Mellizi succeeds in presenting a variety of moral values, including:

Tolerance

Tolerance is one of the most important moral values that the author seeks to instill through diverse narrative situations. The stories emphasize the importance of forgiveness and overlooking mistakes as essential foundations for healthy human relationships. This value is often associated with warnings against negative behaviors such as arrogance, offending others, and mocking them. A clear example appears in the story *The Bird and the Frog*, where the bird forgives the frog despite the latter's mistreatment and does not hesitate to help her when she finds herself in a difficult situation. Through this episode, Salima Mellizi highlights the value of tolerance as a means of overcoming conflicts and fostering empathy and cooperation among individuals.

Respect for Others and Rejection of Mockery and Ridicule

The value dimension of respecting others and rejecting mockery and ridicule is evident in the story *The Dream of the Creeper*. In this story, the creeper plant was mocked and ridiculed by the trees when it revealed its dream of becoming a tall and majestic tree. However, it did not surrender to these

discouraging attitudes; instead, it continued striving toward its ambition with confidence and determination until it ultimately achieved its goal.

2.4. Educational Values

Educational values constitute one of the fundamental pillars upon which Salima Mellizi's stories are built. The author carefully employs these values to serve her educational objectives. Through the use of anthropomorphism, she seeks to instill a range of positive values in children, guide them toward desirable behaviors, and contribute to the development of their personalities and educational awareness. Among the most prominent of these values are:

Humility and the Rejection of Arrogance

The value of humility and the rejection of arrogance emerges as one of the most significant values that the storyteller seeks to instill in children, particularly in the story *The Arrogant Butterfly and the Wise Caterpillar*. The butterfly is portrayed as an arrogant and conceited character, fascinated by her beauty and looking down on others with superiority. In contrast, the caterpillar represents a wise character who advocates humility and respect for others, free from pride and vanity. Through this contrast, the author employs anthropomorphism to warn against arrogance and the socially unacceptable behaviors that stem from it, while emphasizing the importance of humility in building relationships based on respect and appreciation. Consequently, the storyteller succeeds in delivering an educational message that encourages children to embrace humility and reject arrogance.

The value of humility is also reflected in the story *Arnoub's Cleverness* through the character of the arrogant elephant, who exploits his strength to dominate the small rabbits and monopolize the lake. However, his arrogance ultimately leads to his downfall, as he falls victim to Arnoub's clever trick. This highlights the negative consequences of pride and promotes the values of humility and respect for others.

3.4. Social Values

Anthropomorphism plays a significant role in highlighting social values in Salima Mellizi's stories. It enables the author to embody these values through anthropomorphic characters who experience situations that mirror human reality. This contributes to reinforcing values such as cooperation, solidarity, helping others, and friendship, thereby enhancing children's social awareness and encouraging them to adopt positive behaviors in their relationships with others. Among the most important social values reflected in the studied stories are:

Cooperation in Facing Difficult Situations

The story *Thank You, Clouds* clearly illustrates the values of cooperation and solidarity through anthropomorphic characters who empathize with the suffering of others and respond to it. When the clouds learned about the damage inflicted on the trees, plants, and flowers by a dust storm, they rushed to their aid by sending heavy rain that washed away the dust and restored their vitality and beauty.

Through this situation, the author embodies the values of solidarity and mutual support in overcoming crises.

Enhancing the Importance of Friendship

The author highlights the value of friendship and emphasizes its importance in the story "The Two Ducks and the Turtle" through the close relationship that binds the characters together. Feelings of loyalty, affection, and cooperation are clearly manifested in the ducks' determination to help the turtle and their refusal to abandon her during difficult times. Through this situation, anthropomorphism contributes to underscoring the value of friendship as a social virtue based on mutual support and standing by friends in times of need.

From the foregoing, it is evident that anthropomorphism in Salima Mellizi's stories was not merely an artistic technique; rather, it constituted an effective educational tool that contributed to instilling a range of moral, educational, and social values in children. It also played a role in guiding them toward positive behaviors and fostering their awareness of the importance of these values in shaping their personalities and relationships with others within an artistic framework that combines enjoyment with educational benefit.

Conclusion

The main findings of the study can be summarized as follows:

Anthropomorphism constituted a prominent artistic technique in Salima Mellizi's stories, which she employed consciously and skillfully to construct a vibrant narrative world that resonates with children's emotions and experiences.

Anthropomorphism contributed to simplifying the themes and ideas presented to children, making them more appealing and more capable of influencing young readers.

In the stories examined, anthropomorphism appeared in three principal forms: the anthropomorphism of animals, the anthropomorphism of inanimate objects, and the anthropomorphism of plants. However, the anthropomorphism of animals was the most prevalent and extensively employed due to its rich symbolic and imaginative connotations.

The use of anthropomorphism was not limited to its aesthetic dimension; it also conveyed values and positive behavioral patterns in a simple and engaging manner.

Anthropomorphism contributed to reinforcing a set of moral, educational, and social values, enabling the author to present them indirectly, away from preaching and didactic instruction, thereby enhancing the effectiveness of the narrative discourse and its impact on the child reader.

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