The Folktale as a Site of Framing Palestinian Memory and Identity in *Speak, Bird, Speak Again* and *Qul Ya Tayer*

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Abstract

Following the trauma of the Nakba (Catastrophe) of 1948, Palestinians still suffer from constant violations of their rights, land and culture. To fight forgetfulness and denial, some Palestinian folklorists have sought to collect, document, analyse and translate pre-1948 Palestinian folktales. One major example is Speak, Bird, Speak Again (1989), a selection edited by Ibrahim Muhawi and Sharif Kanaana, and its Arabic version قول يا طير (2001). The folktales, told mainly by women, are divided by the compilers into five main groups, following the individual’s life cycle from childhood to old age: Individuals, Family, Society, Environment and Universe. This thesis analyses the folktales in the English and Arabic compilations along with their paratextual elements (introduction, footnotes, afterwords etc) in order to explore the importance of orality and folktales in framing and preserving Palestinian memory and identity.

Structured into four chapters, the thesis starts by highlighting the cultural and social roles of storytellers in Palestine, followed by an overview of the religious, social and psychological functions of folktales. It then describes the paratextual elements in the Arabic and English compilations, shedding light on the need to carry out scientifically and academically based documentation of Palestinian folktales. The compilers’ contribution, the thesis argues, reinforces the discourse of cultural resistance and cultural identity affirmation. The thesis takes memory studies as its main theoretical framework. Synthesising various concepts within memory studies, Chapter Two explains relevant ideas for analysing the folktales, such as collective memory, post-memory, cultural/communicative memory and prosthetic memory. The discussion connects memory to a number of generations across time and space, creating a narrative of continuity. This chapter also explores the components of Palestinian collective memory - oral history, language, nationalism and the Nakba; the latter the thesis attempts to situate within the field of memory and trauma studies.

The thesis then probes the essential role played by Palestinian women in transmitting and preserving Palestinian memory and cultural identity, and explores their agency both as storytellers and protagonists. Through their roles as mothers, sisters, wives and daughters, and through their narrative skills and humour, women, the thesis argues, engender and gender Palestinian memory and identity. To understand the interconnection between language, cultural and collective identity, Chapter Four highlights the significance of peasantry discourse in the folktales’ pre-1948 setting, creating a site of memory and homeland while triggering nostalgia and collectivity. Folk religion and food culture are important markers of Palestinian cultural identity and memory; hence, religious expressions, folktale characters and food references in the folktales and tellings are also investigated. The thesis highlights the agency of Palestinian women via food culture, and thus their power in promoting long established cultural and social values as well as regenerating cultural memory.

This research sheds new light on the role of the Palestinian folklorist, folktales and storytellers, adopting a novel approach that combines memory, trauma, and food studies among others.
Declaration

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To all Palestinian children in the hope to have a better future

&

To Emile Habiby, Patrick Seale and my beloved mother
Note on Transliteration

For the transcription of Arabic, this study follows the style used by *ALA-LC* (American Library Association - Library of Congress). For Arab authors with publications in a language other than Arabic, their names are kept in the form used with their publications. Moreover, Arabic words or titles taken from authors’ quotations are kept in the form transcribed by them. The symbols used to transcribe Arabic sounds are as follows:

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Introduction

1. **Background: Palestinian Popular Culture and Folktales**

The adjective ‘popular’ implies the agency of people, either ‘for’ or ‘by’ the people. Having become an increasingly important medium of expression, popular culture reinforces people’s cultural attitudes and ways of life by strengthening the notion of togetherness (Stein & Swedenburg, 2005). It has the power to safeguard the cultural identity of a nation and is hence essential for supporting and preserving heritage. In their definition of popular culture, both Toby Miller and Alec McHoul summarise the importance of the discourse of popular culture:

   Elevating us above the diurnal, transcending body, time, and place. Conversely, a discourse about folk-life expects culture to settle us into a sedimented collectivity through the wellsprings of community. The second discourse situates culture as part of daily existence. (italics added for emphasis ibid: 1998: 3)

Through folklore, art, music, oral literature and other forms, popular culture encompasses and manifests a collective effort to mediate people’s responses be they desires, fears or anger. For Palestinians, as this research will highlight, popular culture, in this case folklore, paves the way for ‘a narrative of continuity’ which is at the heart of the discourse of Palestinian memory. As I discuss in the following chapters, Palestinian memory, both cultural and collective, derives its force from Palestinians’ collective effort of preservation across generations. Apart from being a means of expression, popular culture, in this case oral literature and folklore, can also act as forms of cultural resistance for Palestinians, a zone for affirming their identity against oblivion. Popular culture can be “an arena of consent and resistance” (Hall, 1998:45) through which different artistic forms of expression have the power to engender all forms of nation’s identity, whether cultural, national or historical.

Under the discipline of popular culture, folklore has the power to reveal much about a nation’s cultural identity and heritage. Folklore is “the collective names applied to verbal materials and social rituals that have been handed down solely, or at least primarily, by word of mouth and by example, rather than in written form” (Abramas, 1981: 66). It includes proverbs, legends, folktales, folk songs and dances among other forms of expression. Within folklore, the focus of this research concentrates on a specific genre, the folktale. The latter
has been generally defined as an output of imagination and fantasy: “The folktale is a fabled poetry, a product of fantasy which does not require belief” (Bach cited in Dorson, 1972: 16). In *Einfache Formen (Simple Forms)* (1929), Jolles offers a humanist approach of genres, which treats folklore, legend, myth and riddle as “primary verbal formulations of the basic mental concerns that preoccupy the human mind” (Jolles cited in Ashliman, 2004: 20). In contrast, Rohrich constructs his own system of genres, predicated not upon the human mind but upon human reality. According to him, “folklore genres are verbal formulations of reality that encompass social life, religious beliefs, and natural laws” (Rohrich, 1991:38). In Rohrich’s usage, the term ‘reality’ has four different meanings, which can be distinguished as *fictive reality, historical reality, and projected reality*, each of which holds a particular relation to *the reality of the narrator’s world* (ibid: 40). According to him, “Fictive reality” does not belong to the narrator’s world, but is part of his or her imagination. However, far from being purely imaginative, fictive reality can be part of transformed “historical reality”. Rohrich talks about instances of transformation where customs, beliefs, social organization, and material goods that were an integral part of a given historical reality “have been eliminated, through a process of change from the narrators’ world, and transformed into the fictive reality of folk narratives, where they survived” (ibid: 60). In other words, the components of a culture may undergo a transformation from history into fiction, from reality into fantasy, and thereby be preserved as part of the cultural record. The present, as well as the past, can become part of fictive reality; Rohrich refers to the outcome as “projected reality”. He examines aspects of culture, technology, social class, and personal psychology as they are projected by narrators into the fictive realities of the different genres of folk narratives. The narrative variations that occur in the same tale type told by different people, he explains, are not “necessarily a consequence of faulty oral transmissions, forgetfulness, and narrative improvisation that seeks to amend the story through invention or synthesis of different versions, but a projection of the personal and cultural realities of the narrators” (ibid: 66).

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2 Andres Jolles (1929) *Einfache Formen*, Halle: Max Niemeyer Verlag.
Rohrich’s discussion of different realities within the folktale can help us to understand that the folktale is a social outcome, combining the narrator’s world and the historical under the imaginary plotting of events. Folktales are universal and the Palestinian folktale is no exception, hence the interconnection between the Palestinian storyteller’s environment, society and history, which are all projected in some way in the Palestinian folktale. Indeed, the environment in which the storyteller lives has a major influence on the folktale itself. The storyteller, as this research will show, can control the flow of the inherited folktale as he/she omits details which do not correspond to society, or add what suits prevalent norms. This is because the storyteller, explains Nimr Sirhān, “cannot start telling his story without including his environment; moreover, his/her oral material is the inherited outcome of the group he/she belongs to” (my translation, Sirhān, 1974: 15). According to some folklorists, such as Al-Ḥasan (1988), Sirhān (1974) and Bettelheim (1981), the folktale is characterised by two main features: Inheritance and renewal. The former is one of the most important elements in the disclosure and the preservation of Palestinian heritage and culture. The folktale “is not the invention of a moment or a particular incident”; it is passed on from one person to the other thanks to the orality of storytelling, “nor can we associate it to one particular person” (Sirhān, 1974: 18). The second important characteristic of the folktale is renewal and flexibility, turning storytelling to a vivid site of popular art. The storyteller, as I will discuss in the coming chapters, has the ability to highlight the cultural essence of the folktales while adapting highly developed stylistic and linguistic storytelling manners. The folk-telling tradition, unlike other forms of popular art, has the power to transcend time and space, revealing the characters and society interactively and showing how rooted are their language, identity and culture. According to Nimr’ Abdel-Ḥāmān (2000: 45):

The folktale reveals the hero’s survival across events. It also reflects human beings’ struggle and interaction with their realities. This knowledge helps social, economic and anthropological studies in understanding the historical phases in which the hero was living [...] The folktale is endowed with highly communicative and expressive skills. It is a unique constructive and creative work of art, able at forming a visual as well as an imaginary image.

Storytelling and folktales, as I will argue in more depth, are distinctive popular forms of art and literature for Palestinians, as they trigger a sense of collective national duty to protect Palestinian heritage. The folktale has the power to keep the Palestinian connected to his past, land, dreams, aspirations and roots, boosting his/her sense of belonging and memory.

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3 All translations of Arabic quotations are my own unless otherwise indicated.
Given the strong connection between folktales and personal imagination, history, society and culture, various disciplines, such as sociology, psychology and anthropology, have elaborated different approaches to studying folktales. The structural approach, for example, focuses on the diachronic perspective, which explores the genesis and development of folktales (see for example, Dundes, 1975), whereas the synchronic approach is more concerned with analysing the structure of the text (see for example, Propp, 1968; Degh, 1981 and Tatar, 1981). The contextual approach, by contrast, favours a socio-historical perspective. Folktales are analysed in the light of their ideological meanings and functions within the socialisation process of a particular society (see for example, Zipes, 1983a; 1983b; 1988). Psychologists, from Wundt to the present, have also shown interest in folktales. During the twentieth century, a number of psychoanalytic studies of the folktale appeared, of which the best known is perhaps Rank’s *Myth of the Birth of the Hero* (1959). The psychoanalytic approach investigates folktales as a means of understanding the inner problems of human beings (Bettelheim, 1976; 1981). Adopting a different approach again, functionalists attempt to analyse the roles that folktales play in society, whether as transmitters of the past, as a form of entertainment, as a means of sanctioning and reinforcing established beliefs, attitudes and institutions, or as a form of psychological escape from a repressive society (Hartland, 1900). Finally, some folktale analysts adopt a thematic approach. This involves focusing on specific themes, examining how they are represented in the plot, and analysing their social significance (see for example, Jennings, 1981; McGlathery, 1981 and Nollendorf, 1981).

2. **Palestinian Folk Narratives & Speak, Bird, Speak Again** (1989) and *Qul Ya Tayer* (2001)

Because of Israeli occupation and the dispossession of Palestinians from their homelands, forms of Palestinian heritage, history and cultural identity are threatened with fabrication, denial and forgetting. When many anthropologists believe that folklore is dying out, that it has “gradually been eroded by outside forces” (Dundes, 1969: 170), Palestinian folklore and popular culture are increasingly felt to be an important national resource. With the ongoing

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4 Wilhelm Maximilian Wundt (August 16, 1832 - August 31, 1920) was a German medical doctor, psychologist, physiologist, and professor, known today as one of the founding figures of modern psychology. He is widely regarded as the father of experimental psychology.

5 Hereafter the title *Speak, Bird, Speak Again* (1989) is abbreviated to SBSA.
instability of Palestinian political and social structures and the constant threats to Palestinian cultural identity, it is incumbent upon Palestinians, as Kanaana says, to have “a unified heritage and to have shared symbols, which will preserve their union like one cohesive nation more than any time before” (Kanaana, 2000, 163). This is why the study of folklore, particularly folktales, is perceived as a necessary tool of resistance. Palestinian folklorists thus feel the need to document oral folktales as a record of the cultural identity of Palestinians. The collection and study of folktales has witnessed various phases and was carried out by different categories of Palestinian as well as non Palestinian folklorists.

Traditional Palestinian narratives can be defined as narratives “told by Palestinians who lived in the period of time leading up to 1948, the beginning of the Nakba or ‘Catastrophe’ in a more or less stable, homogeneous and settled peasant agricultural society” (Kanaana, 2007)\(^6\). According to Kanaana, traditional Palestinian folk narratives come from three main sources. One source is “the folklore literature published by a large number of European orientalists who did their research in the Holy Land, especially during the last quarter of the nineteenth century and the first quarter of the twentieth century” (Kanaana, 2007). The collection by Schmidt and Khale, *Volkserszählugen aus Palästina* (1930), for example, is one of the most important and most frequently cited in Muhawi & Kanaana’s compilation. Schmidt and Khale compiled their material in the village of Birzeit during 1910-1911. This collection consists of 132 transliterated items in Palestinian rural dialect. The authors were mainly interested in the religious and linguistic aspects of the tales. Their introduction to the collection includes a fairly complete grammar of the Palestinian dialect and the footnotes to the tales tend to emphasise biblical parallels. The importance of this work lies in the fact that it makes “the Arabic tales accessible to Western readers through facing-page translations into German” (M&K, 1989: 328). During the same period, a second important collection appeared, by J.E Hanauer, entitled *Folklore of the Holy Land* (1935). The tales in this collection revolve around beliefs about cosmology, the Jinn, plants, and animals, and include saints’ folktales, Juha tales, and proverbs. *Folklore of the Holy Land* is a rich descriptive record of Palestinian and Jewish traditions, but it tends, according to Muhawi & Kanaana, to “embellish content for effect” (M&K, 1989: 328).

A second source for traditional Palestinian folk narratives is “the oral history recorded during

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the last fifty years and, in particular, during the last twenty years, as told by Palestinian men and women who were old enough in 1984 to know much of the traditional folklore” (Kanaana, 2007). This includes collections by Palestinian and Jewish or Israeli compilers such as Dr. ‘Abd L M Al-Barghuthī (1979), Raphael Patai (1998) and others. Al-Barghuthī, for example, focused in his book Ḥīkāyāt Jān min Banī Zāid (Jinn Tales from Bani Zeid, 1979) on tales from Birzeit, more specifically its rural area, namely the villages of Bani Zeid. The book is divided into two chapters; one is about personal experiences with the Jinn as recounted by Palestinians, including incidents related to the experience of being possessed by the Jinn and ways to get him or her out of the human body. The second chapter includes popular Jinn folktales in Bani Zeid, accompanied by folkloristic analysis. Al-Barghuthī analyses the tales from a religious perspective, foregrounding the interpretation of the Jinn in Islam. Farīṭ al-Rumān: Al-mar ʿa fī al-ḥīkāya al-shaʿ biya al-Falāṣṭīniya (Seeds of Pomegranate: The Woman in the Palestinian Folktale, 1997) is another collection produced by Israeli and Palestinian compilers, namely Yoram Mirun, Nimr Masarwa, Yahail Kara and Karmala Shhada. Using both Palestinian Arabic and Hebrew, the compilers present a selection of folktales from the West Bank and Israel, most of which feature the woman as the heroine. The collection mainly addresses an Israeli audience, as can be seen in the fact that the footnotes are written in Hebrew.

The third source for Palestinian folk narratives is “the folklore record collected by native Palestinian folklorists who were trained by and worked with, European orientalists and whose work is preserved in several books and a large number of articles published mainly in English, German and French” (Kanaana, 2007). Native Palestinian folklorists’ interest in analysing the religious and social aspects of Palestinian folktales started mainly after the founding of two journals: Al-turāth wa al-mujtamaʿ (Heritage and Society, 1974) and Al-turāth al-shaʿ bī (Folk Heritage, 1969). Both journals cover topics related to Palestinian culture, heritage and history. A number of Palestinian Arab scholars and writers, most notably Al-Sarīṣī, Sirḥān, and Al- Khālīfī, published important studies in the 1970s. In Al-ḥīkāya al-shaʿ biya fī al-mujtamaʿ al-Falāṣṭīnī (The Palestinian Folktale in Palestinian Society: texts and analysis, 2004), Al-Sarīṣī devoted much attention to the social context of folktales in Palestine. He provides an insight into the nature, types and origins of folktales in Palestinian society, followed by an account of the methods adopted to analyse them, drawing on the functions as well as characteristics of folktales in Palestinian society. Al-Sarīṣī includes seven groups of folktales: Stories from Social Reality, Legendary Stories, Humorous
or Amusing Stories, Animal Stories, Stories about Beliefs, Stories about Personal Experiences and Stories about ‘The Clever One’ (Al-shaṭir).

Along the same lines, Nimr Sirhān’s Al-hikāya al-shaʿ biya fi al-falasṭīnīa (The Palestinian Folktale, 1974) “focuses on the Palestinian customs and beliefs that underlie the tales” (Muhawi & Kanaana, 1989: 329). Sirhān analyses the role of the hero and women in the tales and explains the importance of social relations in understanding Palestinian folktales in general. According to Muhawi & Kanaana, Sirhān has not only shown that Palestinian social reality shapes the fictional aspect of the tales, but also explains the importance of dialect in the Palestinian folktale. Finally, Al-Khalīlī published two important books: Al-baṭal al-Falasṭīni fī al-hikāya al-shaʿ biya al-Falasṭīnīa (The Palestinian Hero in the Palestinian Folktale, 1979) and Al-turāth al- Falasṭīnī w al-ṭabaqāt (Palestinian Folklore and Social Classes, 1977). In The Palestinian Hero in the Palestinian Folktale (1979), Al-Khalīlī analyses the symbolism of heroism in universal folktales in general and Palestinian folktales in particular. In the second work, Palestinian Folklore and Social Classes (1977), the approach he adopts in analyzing folktales is based on class struggle, which can yield useful insights, although the analysis focuses on one aspect of the culture. Al-Sarīsī, Sirhān and Al-Khalīlī all offer folkloristic analysis from a largely social perspective, yet the three authors “suffer from too much analysis, with the tales receiving relatively little space in the books” (M&K, 1989: 329). In 2001, Rushdī Ashhab published Kān yā makān: hikāyāt shaʿ biya min madīnat al-Quds (Once Upon a Time: Folktales from Jerusalem), in which he presents and analyses proverbs, legends, folktales, anecdotes, Bedouin and animal tales from Jerusalem. Ashhab adopts a scholarly analysis while maintaining the storytellers’ dialect. He does not, however, explain the criteria for his selection or the logic behind his classification. Moreover, some tales do not have any explanation while others do not mention the names of their storytellers.

Most of the abovementioned works have paved the way for the preservation of the essential cultural markers of Palestinian heritage and folklore. Nonetheless, they suffer from some gaps, such as: not balancing content with analysis, focusing on one aspect only, or addressing one specific audience. Unlike most Palestinian folktale compilations, SBSA (1989) and its corresponding Arabic collection Qul Ya Tayer (2001) (compiled by Ibrahim Muhawi & Sharif Kanaana) are not just a disinterested record of Palestinian culture, society and folklore, but rather an active scholarly – potentially subversive and timely – attempt to
safeguard and give voice to Palestinian cultural identity and memory before Western, Arab and Palestinian readers. Thus, this research will examine the ways in which SBSA (1989) and Qul Ya Tayer (2001) frame Palestinian memory and cultural identity.

Ibrahim Muhawi and Sharif Kanaana are Palestinian anthropologists and folklorists who have published numerous scholarly articles and studies on the oral performance and translation of Palestinian folklore, much of it contemporary and political. These include Palestinian children’s folklore; folktales of Jerusalem; legends of martyrs; Palestinian political humour, language, nation and identity; and irony in Palestinian drama. The pre-Nakba stories in SBSA (1989) and Qul Ya Tayer (2001) are not political in nature; rather are “a self-contained chunk of Palestinian culture” (Kanaana, 2012: 2) and society. Divided into such major groupings as Individuals, Family, Society, Environment and Universe, the folktales reflect the individual’s passage through life and his or her relationship to society and the environment. Muhawi and Kanaana set out “to ground the tales in the culture from which they arise” (M&K, 1989: 11), by examining for instance the role of women in strengthening the social fabric as well as the tradition of storytelling. The compilers give a voice to Palestinian storytellers, unlike other compilations, who are given prominence and identity throughout the process of storytelling while maintaining their Palestinian dialect, setting and narration skills. Both collections provide readers with extensive social, cultural and anthropological annotations (paratextual materials): substantial introductions, cultural footnotes, analytical endnotes, indexes to tale-types and motifs, and a bibliography of Palestinian folk narrative.

3. Rationale and Aims
Apart from being a means of entertainment and a source of education (Edwin, 1984), folktalees are instrumental in strengthening communal bonds and ensuring the survival of a people’s oral traditions; the stories – and the actual process of storytelling – help to define a community’s social, cultural and political identity. Under Israeli occupation, Palestinian folktales and oral literature are increasingly felt to be an important national resource, raising concerns about their preservation, at a time when folklore culture appears also to be dying out in various parts of the world. It is, therefore, all the more urgent to protect this component of the nation’s heritage and culture. Highlighting Palestinian folklore and heritage as well as encouraging research in the field has become increasingly important for Palestinian academics and folklorist, among whom are Muhawi & Kanaana. According to Mun’im
Hadād (1986: 76-77): “From a national aspect, the study of folklore and heritage reinforce one’s sense of belonging and consolidates peoples’ authenticity”. Thus, the main two leading broad research questions are:

- What do folktales achieve for a people who have experienced national trauma that other forms of literature cannot achieve?
- How do *Speak, Bird, Speak Again* (1989) and *Qul Ya Tayer* (2001) frame Palestinian memory and identity?

To understand how folklore, mainly folktales, contribute in framing Palestinian memory and identity, the argument of this research will concentrate on three main aspects: the compilers, the folktales and the storytellers, conceptualised under the sphere of memory studies. In order to do so, the following research-sub questions will lead the discussion:

- What are the devices used by Muhawi & Kanaana to frame Palestinian memory in *SBSA* and *Qul Ya Tayer*?
- What are the main constituents of Palestinian identity and memory?
- How can women engender Palestinian memory and identity in *SBSA* and *Qul Ya Tayer*?
- How can peasantry, food and religion narratives in *SBSA* and *Qul Ya Tayer* activate Palestinian memory?

Taking memory studies as the core of my analysis, I aim at looking at the contribution of the Palestinian folklorist in creating a discourse of cultural resistance. As Palestinian compilers, folklorists, translators and scholars, Muhawi & Kanaana, did not compile the folktales and present them first to an Arab audience. Instead, they first published the English translation, *SBSA* (1989), along with comprehensive annotations. This followed the outbreak of the first *Intifada* in 1987. In an interview with Sharif Kanaana in 2012, I asked him if this timing was deliberate. He denied the direct link but admitted that the main aim was to address Western audiences “who do not know Palestinians” (Kanaana, 2012: 4). According to Kanaana, both

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7 I take *SBSA* (1989) as the main point of reference since it was published first. *Qul Ya Tayer* (2001) contains the same paratextual materials and folktales as the English collection, with the exception of the compilers’ and editor’s introduction to the Arabic collection.
8 The whole interview appears in Appendix 1.
he and Muhawi were driven by their desire to advocate the Palestinian cause, not politicise it, through a transparent presentation of Palestinian culture and society (Kanaana, 2012). The role of the folklorist is not to be ignored, particularly in the Palestinian case, where knowing and sharing knowledge helps to put forward a more accurate image of Palestinian cultural identity:

Heritage and Folklore disclose people’s identity and Arab folklore represents the national identity, in which we see ourselves and others can see us through. We need to now ourselves, our people’s emotions, pains and hopes; we need to get to know our people’s strengths and weaknesses, knowledge and ignorance. We have also to help the others to get to know our true image without falsifying who we are or our heritage. (’Lqam, 1993: 41)

Since the English publication SBSA (1989) has become a reference for teaching anthropology of the Middle East – its folklore, society and literature - in both the Arab world and English speaking countries (M&K, 2001), Muhawi & Kanaana sought to extend the national dimension of their project through the publication of an Arabic version Qul Ya Tayer in 2001, targeting Arab audiences in general and Arab students, scholars and universities in particular (ibid). Understanding the national and scholarly contexts, together with the compilers’ choice of extensive folkloric, anthropological, historical and literary scientific apparatus around and within the folktales, is important in appreciating the necessity of documenting folktales as they disclose Palestinians’ rooted culture across time. The fact that the compilers of the collections under study chose the Palestinian folktale rather than the novel or short story is also significant in understanding their strategy.

Being popular Palestinian folktales, the 45 folktales in Muhawi & Kanaana’s compilations are divided into Individuals, Family, Society, Environment and Universe. Unlike other compilations, the compilers ordered the tales thematically, reflecting the individual’s life cycle within Palestinian society. The folktales in SBSA (1989) reveal the rural Palestinian extended family as “patrilineal, patrilateral, polygynous, endogamous and patrilocal” ⁹ (M&K, 1989: 13). In spite of the imaginary plotting, the folktales portray Palestinian society

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⁹ More elaboration by Muhawi & Kanaana (1989, 13-14): “The extended Palestinian family has traditionally had three or more generations living in close proximity as one economic unit, sharing all income and expenses, with ultimate authority lying in the hands of the patriarch who heads it. It is patrilineal because descent is traced through the father, patrilateral because only the relatives on the father's side are considered relatives in the formal system of relationship, and patrilocal because the wife leaves her own family to live with that of her husband. The criterion of endogamy permits a male to marry his (patrilateral parallel) first cousin, while that of polygyny allows him, under certain conditions, to marry more than one wife.”
at its best and worst, highlighting the role of authority, age and gender in shaping family and societal relationships. Because the core argument of this research addresses how folktales frame Palestinian memory and identity, it is important to understand the dynamics of Palestinian society, culture, and religious beliefs within the folktales. To do so I will highlight the importance of language, particularly Palestinian dialect, in preserving and affirming Palestinian identity. The conscious decision not to standardise Palestinian rural dialect in the folktales into either Modern Standard Arabic or Levantine Arabic has national significance:

The study of the Palestinian dialect is essential not only for its academic importance, but also because of its national value. The Palestinian dialect represents an important constituent of Palestinians’ identity, being an Arab Palestinian identity. (Al-Barghūthī, 1986: 9)

The title of Muhawi & Kanaana’s compilation, for example, is taken from a popular folktale in the compilation, entitled “The Green Bird”, in which the bird sings in Palestinian at a wedding. Astonished, people at the wedding ask the bird not to stop but ‘to speak again’. According to Kanaana, the bird’s singing stands for Palestinians’ love for life, regeneration and resistance against denial. Through language we can examine how religious expressions, for instance, reveal the power of Palestinian folk religion, which is part and parcel of Palestinian cultural identity. Analysing language highlights the way collective memory and identity are manifested throughout the folktales, seen for instance in *Environment* tales, which are formulaic. Pre-1948 society is depicted as stable, collective and with a long established heritage. Moreover, the presence of strong references to rural settings and peasantry can be seen as markers of national resistance against oblivion and fabrication imposed by Israelis since the 1948 Nakba (*Catastrophe*). It is worth looking at how the folktales turn peasantry and pre-Nakba places into sites of active memory. Food culture, whether through symbolism or as social marker of collectivity, affirms in its turn Palestinian social and cultural identity, led by Palestinian women who have an essential role in engendering and gendering Palestinian memory.

Efforts to safeguard heritage have become essential because its loss means losing cultural identity as well as disconnecting the transition of cultural memory between younger and older generations. The role of older generations, mainly women storytellers, is significant as they can act as credible witnesses to a well established cultural institution:

Heritage is well preserved in Palestinian older generation’s memory. Elderly Palestinians have the capacity to store irreplaceable information and
Unlike the majority of Palestinian folktale compilations, where little attention was given to the identity of storytellers let alone their roles, in *SBSA* (1989) we are not only informed about the storytellers’ age, names and residence, but most importantly we know that out of seventeen storytellers only three were men. The Palestinian folktale genre is attributed to Palestinian women within their domestic spheres, amongst their neighbours and family. According to Muhawi & Kanaana, “Palestinian women are largely responsible for developing this style, and they carry on the tradition” (*M&K*, 1989: 3). Men’s storytelling, meanwhile, features epic stories and happens in a more public sphere known as *Al-dīwān*\(^{10}\). The fact that Palestinian women characterise this genre is important to highlight, since their narrative, whether as storytellers or protagonists, transforms the political discourse of Palestinian collective memory into a social one. As the backbone of a culturally rich and established society, Palestinian women extend pre-*Nakba* cultural memory and identity to younger generations, bridging past, present and future. Palestinian women’s credibility as reliable observers of society is also projected in their roles as female protagonists in *SBSA* (1989), establishing immediate connection with their own lives, the patriarchal world and the overall social structure. Analysing their roles as daughters, mothers, sisters and wives in the folktales empowers Palestinian narrative of memory transmission, preservation as well as cultural resistance.

Finally, little research has been conducted on Palestinian folktales in the field of memory studies. Unlike the Holocaust, the traumatic phase of the *Nakba* and its repercussions for Palestinian folk narratives and orality has received little attention and research. One of the aims of the present research is also to situate the *Nakba* within memory studies. Furthermore, little attention is given to the role of Palestinian women storytellers, who possess power and credibility through their roles as mediators of Palestinian cultural memory, and who also lack representation within Palestinian oral literature and memory studies. There is little research also on Palestinian food in relation to memory or identity. Combining notions from food studies and memory studies, I will try to address the gap, as food culture and the agency of Palestinian women in representing and transmitting it is at the heart of memory preservation.

\(^{10}\) For every Palestinian extended family there is *Al- dīwān*, which is a place for social gatherings, usually for men only.
4. Methodology & Thesis Organisation

This research will analyse the folktales and their paratextual elements in both *SBSA* (1989) and *Qul Ya Tayer* (2001) in the framework of memory studies. In order to understand the significance of Palestinian folk narratives in framing memory and identity, I start in Chapter One by explaining the social and cultural roles of storytellers in Palestine. This is followed by a discussion of the religious, psychological and social functions of folktales in Palestine. I then focus on the compilers, Muhawi & Kanaana, and their scholarly context, which helps in contextualising their compilations. The last part of the first chapter provides a detailed description of the structure of both compilations, mainly their paratextual elements. The discussion draws on the notion of “framing” (Goffman, 1974; Tannen and Wallet, 1993; Snow, 2007; Baker, 2006; Entman, 1993) as found in paratextual sites (Genette, 1997), realized in peritexts such as: the foreword, preface, introduction, footnotes and afterwords around the folktales.

In Chapter Two, I examine the notion of memory, mainly collective memory, developed by Halbwachs (1992) and Nora (1989) among other scholars in the field of memory studies. I focus also on understanding the concept of narrative identity and the dialectical relationship between history, memory and narrative within space, time and self (Ricoeur 1981, 1984, 1990, 1991; White, 1989 among others). The way meaning is formed and transmitted is controlled by powerful tools of representation, such as narratives (Ricoeur, 1981; Baker, 2006, 2008) and framing, where their overlap is useful to understand when analysing these compilations. These concepts pave the way for a more elaborate discussion of Palestinian collective memory, under the discipline of popular culture, and its major components, namely: oral history, language, nationalism and the *Nakba* in 1948. As a major element of Palestinian collective memory, the *Nakba* is reviewed within the framework of trauma studies. It is important also to shed light on the role of nostalgia within the structure of Palestinian memory and identity. Since the compilations portray Palestinian society before 1948 but address post-1948 generations, attention should be given to those who “grow up dominated by narratives that preceded their birth” (Hirsch, 1999: 8). For this, the concepts of postmemory, prosthetic memory and cultural memory (Assmann, 1996, 2005; Hirsch, 1999, 1997, 2008; Landsberg, 2004; Suleiman, 2006) help us to understand how folktales, storytellers and compilers create a ‘narrative of continuity’ across generations.
In light of the concepts in Chapter Two, Chapter Three looks at the role of folklorists, Muhawi & Kanaana, and mainly women storytellers in preserving and transmitting Palestinian memory. Analysing women storytellers’ family and social identity helps in establishing a connection between their roles in reality and in the folktales. In order to understand how women engender as well as gender Palestinian cultural identity and memory, the chapter looks at daughter-mother-son and siblings’ narratives, then courtship and marriage narratives in SBSA (1989) and Qul Ya Tayer (2001). The discussion sheds light on women’s roles, character development, conflicts, desires and power within the dynamics of authority, respect and collective identity in Palestinian society. Through the power of language, humour and plotting, Palestinian women’s narrative strengthens, revives and demonstrates power, turning them into cultural mediators across generations.

Building on these arguments, Chapter Four highlights the interconnection between Palestinian cultural identity and memory. The first part of the chapter looks at the occurrence of peasant and pre-1948 rural settings in the folktales which, I argue, aims at mobilising memory work and social collective identity via the recreation of the concept of homeland among both readers and listeners, while reinforcing the national significance of peasantry. The second part of the chapter concentrates on analysing two prominent markers of Palestinian cultural identity: Palestinian folk religion and food culture. The former features the use of religious expressions by storytellers and characters, alluding to a versatile interpretive folk culture and society. Analysing Palestinian religious expressions draw also on the importance of language in highlighting the strong connection between collective and cultural identity. Like peasantry and religion, the discourse of food can be also a rich site for memory work. Discussing food culture in the tales aims at disclosing the rootedness and longevity of cultural values, which can be seen as a generator of social unity and a marker of a distinctive cultural identity. The discussion touches upon concepts such as prospective memory (Sutton, 2008), sensuous memory (Holtzman, 2006), gustatory nostalgia (Sutton, 2000; 2001) and transactive memory (Smith, 2007). Within the discourse of food, the chapter looks also at the role of women as agents of memory manifested in, for example, folkloric references to beauty, sexuality, conceiving children, craving and folktale titles.

Across time and space, many nations have expressed their culture and history through the medium of art and folklore. For some nations, the voice of folklore, popular culture and oral literature mobilise people’s sense of belonging and trigger cultural and national regeneration. Among those nations, we have the case of Palestine, which for more than six decades has been in constant struggle with Israel in order to affirm and safeguard Palestinian human rights, heritage and history. The constant political, social and cultural threats made many Palestinians, particularly folklorists, aware of the importance as well as sensitivity of Palestinian cultural identity. Among those folklorists, we have Ibrahim Muhawi & Sharif Kanaana, who through the compilation *Speak, Bird, Speak Again* (1989) and its Arabic version *Qul Ya Tayer* (2001) attempt to document and highlight the importance of Palestinian oral culture amidst Israeli occupation and denial of Palestinianhood.

In order to understand the value of folklore and orality in Palestinian society, I will start by offering a brief overview of the society or community of storytellers in Palestine, highlighting the different regional influences on storytelling and describing storytelling frequency and performance over time. Remaining within the social sphere of folktales, I then discuss the various functions of folktales in terms of belief, psychology and social roles that they play, based on Al-Sarisi’s (2004) categorisation. Understanding the functions of Palestinian folktales will pave the way for a more detailed discussion of the tales in *SBSA* and *Qul Ya Tayer* in the following chapters. In this chapter, I aim to describe and contextualize Muhawi and Kanaana’s work as an essential backdrop to the data analysis I will carry out in Chapters Three and Four. To do so I will first provide background information about the compilers, who also act as translators and folklorists. By unfolding their scholarly context, I intend to highlight their national agenda.

Because both the Arabic and English compilations contain extensive prefatorial and supporting annotations relating to the tales, I deem it necessary to provide a short overview of “Paratexts” (Genette, 1997). Defining paratexts and their function within the field of social science and translation studies paves the way for understanding the structure as well as the extensive paratextual elements of the tales in both *SBSA* and *Qul Ya Tayer*. I thus offer an
account of the paratextual elements in the English and Arabic collections, taking the English collection as my point of reference. The contextualisation and description of both compilations will be divided into four major parts: Pre-Introduction Paratextual Elements, The Introduction, Paratextual Elements within the Tales and Post-Tales Paratextual Elements. This is followed by a description of the tales themselves, which are divided into five groups in the two collections: Individuals, Family, Society, Environment and Universe.

1.1 The Society of Storytellers in Palestine

The study of folktales usually requires an in-depth analysis of the conditions surrounding them, the tellers and the different social categories involved. As I discuss in the forthcoming chapters, identity is strongly communicated in Palestinian oral literature, mainly in the way it discloses settings, conditions and customs which are directly related to the formation of a Palestinian collective sense of belonging. In his research on Palestinian folktales, Al-Sarīsī, notes that Palestinian folktales describe the social sphere and setting of both villages and cities before 1948 or before the Nakba:

> The folktales represent different forms of Palestinian environment and social strata before being expelled in 1948. They [the folktales] represent our villages at that time, cities and Bedouin life since every Palestinian cannot be detached from his/her inherited knowledge, followed traditions, or literary arts. (Al-Sarīsī, 2004: 59)

The pre-1948 stories, as I will analyse in more detail in the next chapters, are not only a manifestation of a nostalgic past, but are also the cornerstone for a nation’s collective memory and identity: a collective Palestinian memory to be safeguarded and passed on from one generation to the next thanks to the role played by social groups of various ages, affiliations and backgrounds. As the focus of this thesis is pre-Nakba folktales and analysis, it is useful to look in more detail at the role Palestinian oral literature carriers\(^\text{11}\) and tellers adopt in the development of Palestinian folk telling tradition, which can contribute to consolidating Palestinian memory and identity.

The first category of tellers belongs to Palestinian rural areas/countryside, and, according to Al-Sarīsī, this group has been very keen on preserving the folkloric features of Palestinian culture. Their contribution in safeguarding Palestinian cultural identity, he explains, is

\(^{11}\) By “carrier” or “active carrier”, I refer to those who “show an intense personal interest in preserving and transmitting the practice” (M&K, 1989: 9-10).
apparent in the decorations of their houses, clothes, customs, songs and folktales. Following the *Nakba*, the harmonious social unity of rural areas was disrupted by dislocation and political instability, which led this social category to become more concerned and aware of the threat of losing one’s collective cultural identity. As such, the agricultural/rural social class has made an effort to maintain a cultural continuum among Palestinians in spite of past and present difficulties. In Al-Sarīṣī’s words, “when talking about Palestinian countryside, we refer to pre-*Nakba* society and settings” (ibid: 60). The main participants in storytelling in rural families are usually elderly women, who would group everyone from the same extended family, mainly children, in circles, and then start telling folktales in Palestinian rural dialect. The role played by storytellers and the audience in this context, particularly young generations, is perceived as fundamental for the transmission of Palestinian collective memory, as I will discuss in the following chapter. Moreover, the folktales under study mainly in *SBSA* and its Arabic version fall under the category of rural society, mainly rural extended families, which as we will see later are very keen on carrying on the tradition of storytelling and preserving the pillars of Palestinian cultural and folkloric representations.

The second category of storytellers belongs to the city or to urban society which, according to Al-Sarīṣī, has been affected by modernization and has therefore undergone changes in lifestyle and customs in comparison to rural society. People, however, still circulate the storytelling tradition and tell folktales. However, some differences can be seen in a number of aspects, such as the accent. The Urban dialect tends to be softer as some sounds are modified, making strong sounds less difficult to say. Another difference is seen in the context itself. According to Professor Ahmad Roshdī Şaleḥ, “The content of the folktale within Palestinian urban society is less demonstrative of supernatural themes or subjects in comparison to the rural folktale style” (Şaleḥ, 1955: 19). Both types of folktales, rural and urban, belong to literary nationalism, according to Al-Sarīṣī, since rural oral literature is related to the significance of the land and peasants’ direct contact with an agricultural way of life. In fact, the theme of the land and its strong symbolic relation to Palestinian identity and resistance is relevant to our analysis of the compilations under study, which I will discuss later in this chapter. Urban oral literature also bears the sense of nationalism and patriotism, according to Al-Sarīṣī, since it discusses Palestinians’ lifestyle in the cities, as well as the role of both domestic and international Palestinian trade in consolidating the union of Greater Syria (*Bilād al-Shām*) during the British mandate era (Al-Sarīṣī, ibid).

Bedouin and refugees, among other social classes, play a role in perpetuating the storytelling
tradition, as well as being active carriers of folktales in Palestine and in the Diaspora. In the case of Bedouin society in Palestine, some Palestinian folklorists have observed that Bedouins are very keen on preserving all the elements of the folktales since many refer to old traditional Palestinian Bedouin rituals when it comes to themes of love and chivalry (Al-Jawahīrī, 1972). Bedouin folktales do not depict supernatural elements since, according to Al-Sarīsī, Bedouins were more interested in telling heroic accounts of tribal victories, fighting over land, honour and reputation. Finally, refugees have had a major influence on younger generations’ awareness of the existence of a rich Palestinian oral cultural heritage. Their nostalgia for and memory of their homes and lands back in Palestine acts against forgetfulness, a motivator to safeguard refugees’ collective memory and embody the hope of return in the near future.

The transmission of folktales within Palestinian society progresses from older to younger generations, as is the case in most societies. Elderly people usually have first-hand experience and more knowledge when telling stories. Moreover, there is an educational motive behind pushing parents to tell stories to their children, offering the chance to nurture their imagination, language and knowledge. In the Palestinian case, folktales are directly related to Palestinian identity and cultural representation, which pre-Nakba generations are trying to disclose and preserve. As I will discuss in more depth in the following chapter, collective memory or post-memory in the Palestinian context is realised by the efforts made by first generations to maintain the passing on of past events and unconsciously the pains of trauma to coming generations and to encourage the continuum of shared values, experiences and memories. While doing his research, Al-Sarīsī observed a concrete phenomenon of transmission over three Palestinian generations. He recorded the separate telling of the same folktale by the grandmother, the mother and the daughter. He noticed the following:

The grandmother was better at remembering minute details and was very good at telling the story in the Palestinian dialect, maintaining a strong accent of the area she comes from. She was also very smooth and innovative in the plotting of the story. Most importantly, she was closer to describing the village setting and spirit before the expulsion in 1948 or Nakba. The mother, however, had some problems remembering the sequence of events and was mixing different stories. This is due to the fact that the mother’s generation underwent displacement after 1948 and experienced the upheavals of the aftermath of the Nakba. The daughter, unlike the mother, was very good at maintaining storytelling rules and rituals. She only used more common and modern words. (Al-Sarīsī, 2004: 70)
Based on Al-Sarīsī’s small experiment, we can deduce the importance of passing on stories from one generation to another. I think that the daughter was more successful than her mother in remembering the events and in preserving the storytelling rituals due to the need to be associated to a history, a culture and a collective identity that her generation is missing. The lack of a concrete harmonised Palestinian setting and the prevalence of the themes of ‘resistance’ and ‘dream of return’ have nurtured and intensified the daughter’s desire to be faithful to the rules of telling a story, since storytelling tradition symbolises her cultural and national belongings.

The power of transmitting folktales lies in “the creative power of people” Al-qūwa al-îbdā’ iya lilsh ’b as Al-Sarīsī explains. Folktales are not just circulated among individuals but are the product of a social endeavour, whether involving members of the same family, friends or professional storytellers, who all contribute to consolidating Palestinian belonging to both universal and Arab heritage and culture. Al-Sarīsī explains how the folktale usually starts its journey from the professional storyteller who enjoys telling his folktales to the public in groups, which impact will remain in the public’s mind. Reproducing and passing on folktales from one person to another will involve some changes and additions, or even omissions, depending on the new storyteller’s capacity to remember or depending on his/her own circumstances. The folktale will be passed on to new storytellers, who will keep modifying the words, style, and even sometimes the ending. According to Al-Sarīsī (2004) and Al-Jawahīrī (1972), this renewal process is enriching and more relevant to people’s current conditions. The folktale in its new form is in harmony with popular experience and can trigger people’s dreams and inspirations in their new cultural and social environments. Thus, people’s effort is part of a unified collective preservation of the storytelling tradition and creation of its new forms. As the soul of cultural Palestinian life, the folktale plays different roles and has a number of social and educational functions in Palestinian society.

1.2 The Functions of Folktales in Palestinian Society

The folktale, as discussed, exists within different social classes and backgrounds. As this research will examine, it can represent the collective voice of a society, its culture and inspirations. According to some folklorists in the field of oral literature, the folktale plays an important role in shaping the identity of both the individual and society. The question raised here is how the folktale can affect societies. Why does it play an important role in some
societies, particularly the Palestinian one? To be able to answer this question, one has to start by looking at the different functions of the folktale. The meaning of function here, as defined by Rod Clif Brown, and mentioned in Dr `iz Al- Din Ismāʾ il’s *Folk Telling in Sudan*, is “what is presented by the partial colour of the colours of the activity or of the whole activity” (Ismāʾ il, 1971: 174). The partial colour can refer to proverbs, folktale or popular song. The whole activity here means the civilization under which the individual practises different activities. The function is also “a study of all the social stages in life and their interactions; it is also the study of the individual, his/her lifestyle in a society, his/her adaptation and his/her development in it” (Granqvist, 1939: 14-15). Based on this, one can link the function to two major components: the individual or the subject, and the society to which the individual belongs. The task of a folklorist in this sense is to pause and analyse the text and its components, and classify those components according to the text’s social frame and nature. Then, the folklorist has to try and combine his/her observations into an overall picture of the society, which will give an idea about the kind of society the folktale is depicting. As the central unit, understanding the individual will help in understanding the social apparatus of a collective group. Most folklorists believe that the role of folktale is to consolidate people’s cultural and belief values, and to educate at the individual ethical level and the collective social one. In this regard, I will describe the functions of folktale in Palestinian society following Al-Sarīṣi’s classification: belief function, psychological function and social function. In the next section, I briefly explain the abovementioned functions, which will become relevant to my discussion in the third and fourth chapters. Understanding the functions of folktale in general and Palestinian in particular will help us understand Palestinian culture and beliefs hence will help analysing Palestinian cultural identity and memory when looking at some folktale in the present compilation or when explaining the compilers’ annotations.

**1.2.1 The Belief Function**

In folklore studies, some folklorists, such as Alexander Krappe (1930), believe that folktale do not have any religious inspiration or spiritual philosophy. However, krappe’s idea should be questioned. Through the transmission of folktale from one culture to another and from one society to another, folktale will inevitably carry the social and religious beliefs of the original society, especially if the tales record the daily activities of a society. One cannot deny the existence of beliefs or religious allusions within the layers of Arabic folktale in
general and Palestinian ones in particular, which either aim at entertaining and educating the audience.

The presence of Islamic references can be seen, for example, in the style of narration, particularly in the opening and concluding expressions. Storytellers would usually start the folktale by saying “in the name of Allah…” and end it by saying “may Allah bless you and keep you healthy…”. Al-Sarīsī suggests that religion is present not only in the style of narration but also in the content. He is of the opinion that people’s beliefs are part of their everyday lives and existence, which are both present in the style and content of storytelling. Hence, folktales can project an existing reality of a particular society’s religious beliefs and practices (Al-Sarīsī, 2004). Folktales can also play the role of educating younger generations about significant practices in Islam, for instance, the importance of charity, fasting, pilgrimage and praying. More importantly, Palestinian folktales refer to the existence of the three monotheistic religions: Islam, Christianity and Judaism. Fawzī Al- ’Nīl (1965) claims that the constant reference to the three religions is mainly related to the religious history of Palestine, as the sacred land and the cradle of religions. Palestinian folktales can reveal popular and cultural religious practices, which can be very specific and different from one society to another, such as visiting shrines, asking pious sheikhs for forgiveness and believing in talking to supernatural creatures, such as Jinni. In fact, the occurrence of the geographical location of the most popular shrines in Palestinian folktales aims, according to Al-Sarīsī, to highlight the historical background and richness of the history of Palestine which is manifest in the Canaanite era and folklore. I will elaborate on the belief function in greater detail when analysing the folktales under study in the subsequent chapters.

1.2.2 The Psychological Function

Telling and hearing folktales can be a source of enjoyment. Human beings apparently seek to indulge in the duality of telling and/or listening to folktales, which affords them an opportunity to transgress the level of reality, while nonetheless subconsciously representing what they stand for. According to Friedrich Von der Leyen in The Fairy Tale (1911), translated by Nabīla Ibrahīm (1990), there are two reasons why people enjoy telling and listening. Firstly, people are intuitively attracted to the pleasure, excitement and suspense of being a teller or a listener since the culture of narrating has long been established within families and educational institutions. Secondly, the style of narration or the artistic aspect is a very important motive for listening. The enchainment of events, characters’ developments
and a sense of humour can create diversified psychological dimensions for both listener and teller.

The folktale’s psychological function lies in its power to trigger one’s imagination and desires. Al-Sarīsī points out that “folktales highlight individuals’ and collective’s hopes and wishes, which find room for expression in the world of imagination” (Al-Sarīsī, 2004: 311). Similar to dreams, telling folktales can release hidden desires and wishes, which meet the audience’s satisfaction and wish fulfilment. Moreover, the storyteller, as Al-Sarīsī explains, has the ability to shape the plot of his/her story so as to motivate the audience to follow their natural instincts, to believe in the power of change and to be good human beings since many moral messages can be embedded in a folktale. In other words, the folktale is not only a source of enjoyment and wish fulfilment but can also be a motivator for changing negative social or ethical behaviours, hence making it instructive, constructive and educational. Here the role of Palestinian women storytellers is key. As I will elaborate in the third and fourth chapters women are endowed with strong narrative skills, allowing them to reinforce Palestinian identity among younger generations. Folktales can also reveal the dark side of human beings, such as jealousy and rivalry, or they can give freedom of expression when it comes to social taboos, such as sex outside marriage.

1.2.3 The Social Function

Folktales express the voice of a group, community and society in different ways. Palestinian folktales can be a revealing source for understanding social traditions, structures, and interactions among Palestinians. The frequency and insistence of perpetuating Palestinian folktales, according to Al-Sarīsī, is meant to expose the specificity of Palestinian social rituals among younger generations as a means of educating them about their history and culture. Among the most important social roles highlighted in most Palestinian folktales is the role of women. Women have leading roles in Palestinian society as mothers, wives, daughters and sisters. The majority of Palestinian folklorists, such as Al-Khalīlī (1979), Sirhān (1974) and Al-Ghūl (1966), agree on the fact that Palestinian women are represented in the tales as strong partners, who are supportive and loving towards their husbands and families. As mothers, for example, Palestinian women are very devoted and charismatic; they can overcome their needs in order to sustain their sons or husbands. Both rural and urban Palestinian women are seen in the folktales as strong willed, determined and free to pursue their objectives and dreams. The role of women in Palestinian folktales can be perceived as
the cornerstone for Palestinian community building, as well as safeguarders of national collective identity, which I will highlight in the coming chapters.

Following the role of women in Palestinian folktales, the importance of family and marriage institutions comes second, according to Al-Sarīsī. Hilma Granqvist explains that analysing the marriage institution in the Palestinian context shows “the historical development of the village and its families, from which we can understand the social structure and family principles” (Granqvist, 1942: 25). In this sense, folktales reveal first the rituals and traditions of marriage ceremonies in both the countryside and the city. The storytellers are very faithful in describing marriage rituals in detail, mainly in the countryside, as those details are missing nowadays due to the diasporic situation or displacement. “The full presentation of marriage rituals in the countryside around Jerusalem, as seen in the folktales, is meant to document those rituals as practised before the Nakba” (Al-Sarīsī, 2004: 191). Following marriage, the social function of Palestinian folktales is seen in the exploration of family relationships, in particular within the Palestinian extended family: husband and wife, parents and children, mother and children, father and children, brothers and sisters. The mechanism and division of roles is revealing, as once again it informs both the reader and the folklorist about the origin of many traditions and beliefs, Palestinian family rules and desires, and most importantly the disclosure of cultural habits or rituals among family members which seem to have faded away because of political upheavals (Al-Sarīsī, ibid). Family interaction is well discussed and explored by Muhawi & Kanaana, hence additional discussion will be provided about the theme of family when analysing the folktales in SBSA.

Another feature in folktales that folklorists analyse is Palestinian work, wage labour and environment. Before the Nakba, social life in Palestine was harmonious and stable, which Al-Sarīsī believes is very important to highlight when analysing Palestinian folktales (ibid, 112). For instance, the reader gets to know more about village social life and the importance of agriculture and the land, which are crucial means for earning a living for Palestinian peasants. In fact, the folktale “is a live descriptive movie of peasants’ houses, activities in the fields, typical food and clothing” (Al-Sarīsī, 2004: 215). Moreover, there are minute descriptions of the land or fields where peasants plough and harvest, the most popular crops and fruit, and even musical instruments played by peasants or shepherds. The peasant and land have a significant association with Palestinian national belonging and resistance, which will be examined further in the following section. A number of professions and jobs are also described, including wood cutting (logging), fishing, carpentry and blacksmithing. According
to Al-Sarîsî, the reason for mentioning these professions in folktales is to highlight the beauty and richness of Palestinian landscapes before 1948. In other words, Palestinians were enjoying different professions across many forests and coastal areas, which after 1948 were minimised and restricted to Palestinians. Other folktales discuss the lives of traders or merchants, mainly in the cities, which reveal important aspects of Palestinian international and national trade and trading routes during the British mandate when Palestine belonged to Greater Syria (Al-Sarîsî, ibid).

Folktales are not only descriptive of social life in Palestine, but they can also be critical of social practices and norms. Under the guise of humour and entertainment, the role of Palestinian folktales is seen as both drawing attention to and rectifying some unaccepted behaviours by either the individual or the group in Palestinian society. According to Al-Sarîsî, at the end of every folktale, there is a lesson to learn or moral to follow in real life. The most prominent examples found in many Palestinian folktales, as Al-Sarîsî explains deal, with tackling issues related to gender favouritism in Palestinian society, as males are considered by the family and society to be better and more gifted than females. Racial and social favouritisms have also been considered to be unacceptable existing social behaviour among many Palestinians, which folktales try to prevent. Furthermore, Palestinian folktales aim at valorising and promoting humanitarian values among people by encouraging them to be fair, just, honest, respectful to each other, helpful, generous and friendly. In fact, there is an urge to be critical and to promote important humanitarian values since after the Nakba “people’s humanitarian and Arab values were shaken by trauma as well as modernization” (Al-Sarîsî, ibid: 239).

Given the importance of portraying the family and social interaction, the reader is also exposed to important political rules and features in Palestinian society. The ruling system is symbolised by the king or Sultan and ministers in the urban areas and by Al-mukhtâr, the leader of a tribe, in the rural areas. Those ruling figures extend their authority and power from people’s love and support; indeed, they are considered national patriotic figures whose sole aim is to protect the country and nation. While conducting his research on Palestinian folktales, Al Sarisi noticed that some storytellers deliberately mention the names of real kings or leaders, who happened to rule Palestine in the past. For instance, The King of Al-Sukarîya is a folktale that tells the story of a leader in the village of Al-Sukarîya, a village which existed geographically before the Nakba between Gaza and Jaffâ. In many instances, the folktales also refer to historical achievements and victories, such as the defeat of Napoleon
when he tried to conquer the city of Acre. The reader would notice a historical chronological account of battles of resistance from the Ottoman Empire up to the British mandate era. “Positive resistance is marked in the memory of people; heroic victories by particular individuals or groups are essential materials for Palestinian folktales” (Al-Sarīsī, ibid: 255). Hilma Granqvist (1939) also believes that following 1920 there was an urge among Palestinian storytellers to raise national awareness about secretive Zionist plans of immigration to Palestine. In Al-Sarīsī’s opinion, there are no Palestinian folktales about Israeli occupation (after 1948) since Palestinian folktales are the result of years of history, in addition to the fact that the Israeli occupation is still ongoing, meaning that people do not have to make the effort of remembering or/and retrieving it from their memories (Al-Sarīsī, ibid).

In relation to political representation in Palestinian folktales, one has to highlight the symbolic significance of the land in Palestinian society. For years, there has been a strong connection between Palestinians and their lands. This is due to popular cultural and religious beliefs, maintaining the belief that one will always return to his/her land both in the denotative sense, being buried, and in the connotative figurative meaning, symbolised in the dream of returning to the homeland. Palestinian folklorists have observed Palestinians’ strong physical and emotional attachment to their land. This powerful link, Al-Sarīsī explains, is seen in their connection to social practices related to farming, ploughing or harvesting, as discussed earlier, and also in the belief that protecting your land equals the protection of honour and dignity. The most important manifestation of attachment and love of land are seen, according to Al-Sarīsī, in the descriptions of landscapes, caves, forests, trees, valleys, rivers and fruits in Palestinian folktales. There is a passionate desire to concretise the descriptions in Palestinian folktales so as to connect the reader to the existence of the physical land, as well as to nurture the sense of nostalgia and memory among older generations, and activate younger generations’ passion for a land some of them have never seen. In the third and fourth chapters, the abovementioned functions will become more apparent when analysing the folktales in SBSA (1989) and Qul ya Tayer (2001). In the following section, I will provide a description of the scholarly context of the folktale compilation, introducing briefly the compilers. I will then describe the content of SBSA and Qul ya Tayer, highlighting their correspondent para-textual elements or framing devices.
1.3 Compilers/Translators and Scholarly Context

This section situates both Ibrahim Muhawi and Sharif Kanaana by offering a brief overview of their individual backgrounds, paving the way for an in-depth discussion of the compilation which is the focus of this study. Both Muhawi and Kanaana are prominent experts in folklore, orality, translation and Palestinian folktales. In comparison to the majority of Palestinian folk narratives, Muhawi & Kanaana’s research and scholarly contributions stand out within the field of Palestinian Oral Literature. Setting out their scholarly background is important, in my view, as it will shed some light on the role of Palestinian scholars in fighting Israeli fabrication, realised within an academic framework. Having lived in the Diaspora, both compilers understand the ambivalent and hybrid Palestinian identity and hence are aware of the importance of orality and folklore as a means of safeguarding Palestinian heritage.

Sharif Kanaana is a Palestinian anthropologist, folklorist, researcher, educator and ethnologist born in the village of A’rrabeh, in the hills of the Galilee just north of Nazareth, and based at the Birzeit University in Ramallah. He specialises in Palestinian oral history:

Kanaana received his Bachelor’s degree in Economics and Psychology from Yankton College in South Dakota. He studied Anthropology at the University of Hawaii in Honolulu and became the first person from Arrabeh to receive a PhD. He taught at the University of Hawaii and the University of Wisconsin in Oshkosh before returning to Palestine with his family.12

Throughout a career dedicated to researching issues relating to Palestinian society, heritage, and recent history, he has published some twenty books and fifty scholarly essays and presented approximately fifty papers at conferences around the world. It was largely due to Kanaana’s efforts that UNESCO recognised the Palestinian Arab folktale, in 2005, as one of the “Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity”.13

Kanaana’s books in the fields of folklore, anthropology, and recent history include Al-dār dār abūna (The House is Our Father’s, 1992), a collection of papers on Palestinian folklore, Al-shatāt al-falasṯīnī (Palestinian Diaspora, 1992), Folk Heritage of Palestine (1994), and Palestinian Political Humor (2001). His research and writing focus on folklore, much of it contemporary and political, including Palestinian children’s folklore, folktales of Jerusalem, Jerusalem, Jerusalem, Jerusalem, Jerusalem.

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See also http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0014/001473/147344e.pdf [accessed on 02/04/2014].
and legends of martyrs, in addition to Palestinian political humour. He also edits Society and Heritage, a quarterly periodical of Social Science and folklore published by the Society of In ’āsh al-Uṣra (Reconstructing or Animating the Family) in Al-Bireh, Palestine.¹⁴

Ibrahim Muhawi was born in 1937 in Ramallah, Palestine. “After completing high school at the Friends Boys’ School in Ramallah, he went to the United States where, in 1959, he earned a B.Sc. in Electrical Engineering at Herald Engineering College in San Francisco” (M&K, 1989: xi). His intellectual development took a different turn when he decided to pursue “a B.A in English Literature at California State University at Hayward, which he completed in 1964, followed quickly by an M.A. (1966) and a Ph.D. (1969), both in English Literature” (ibid). He taught English literature at universities in Canada and the Middle East (Jordan and Palestine), translation and stylistics at the University of Tunis and Arabic literature and the practice and theory of translation at Berkeley and Edinburgh. In addition to the translation of SBSA, Muhawi translated many literary works, including Memory for Forgetfulness by Mahmoud Darwish (1995), Breaking Knees by Zakariya Tamer (2008) and various pieces of poetry and prose by Mahmoud Darwish, Ibrahim Nasrallah, Amjad Nasser, Nasri Hajjaj and Rashad Abu Shawar. Muhawi has also published many scholarly articles on oral performance and translation, Palestinian folklore, language, nation and identity, and irony in Palestinian drama, among other topics.

Muhawi met Kanaana, the co-compiler/translator of both SBSA and Qul Ya Tayer, while he was serving as department chairman at Birzeit University from 1978 to 1980. He discovered that Kanaana had already collected a substantial sample of Palestinian folktales, and the two decided to carry out their project. Muhawi & Kanaana are among a number of Palestinian folklorists who have actively sought to protect Palestinian storytelling tradition and folklore and highlight their importance. Like the UN recognition of a Palestinian state, the compilers’ efforts to document Palestinian orality and heritage is seen as an effort to attribute Palestinians with national affirmation and recognition.

1.4 Muhawi & Kanaana’s Collections: *Speak, Bird, Speak Again* and *Qul ya Tayer* قول يا طير

*Qul Ya Tayer* and *SBSA* consist of forty-five of the most popular and well narrated Palestinian folktales. The idea of compiling these tales emerged when Ibrahim Muhawi met with Sharif Kanaana at the University of Birzeit, as mentioned above. In the foreword of *SBSA*, Alan Dundes describes how both folklorists discovered their common interest in Palestinian history and folklore, and decided to carry out this national project. “The two scholars decided to pool their talents and collect, from throughout Palestine, as many types of tales from a wide a range of raconteurs as possible” (M&K, 1989: Xii). To do so, they recorded on cassette tapes 200 folktales from different parts of Palestine, mainly Gaza, The Galilee, and the West Bank, from 1978 to 1980; forty-five of these tales were selected for inclusion in the collections. The first collection, an English translation of the forty-five transcribed oral tales, was published in 1989 by the University of California Press. Muhawi and Kanaana then produced an Arabic collection of the same forty-five tales, in Palestinian dialect, with the contribution of Jābir Sulaymān as editor and translator; this was published by the Institution of Palestine Studies in 2001. Both collections provide their respective readers with substantial introductions, brief cultural footnotes, analytical endnotes, indexes to tale-types and motifs, and a bibliography of Palestinian folk narrative. In order to understand the significance of their annotations, otherwise known as framing devices or para-texts, I will briefly explain the notion of paratext within the field of social sciences and translation studies.

1.4.1 Paratexts: Brief Overview

As I discuss in the second chapter, framing can be an active process of signification “by means of which we consciously participate in the construction of reality” (Baker 2006: 167). Hence, framing is an interpretive power to grant agency to the individual for a conscious intervention “to organize experience and guide action” (Benford and Snow, 2000:614). The interactant, in this case Muhawi & Kanaana, will use specific devices to influence other

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15 Alan Dundes is professor of anthropology and folklore at the University of California, Berkeley.
16 Ranging from Goffman’s notion of frames, realized in “schemata of interpretation” that allow communicators “to locate, perceive, identify, and label events and occurrences” (1974:21) to Tannen and Wallet’s understanding of frames as being “knowledge structures” (Tannen and Wallet, 1993:59), framing is the lens through which we establish meaningfulness of structured events. For more discussion on framing see (Goffman, 1974; Tannen and Wallet, 1993; Benford and Snow, 2000; Gamson and Modigliani, 1987).
interactants’ or readers’ understanding, of what is going on. One of the main framing devices worth reviewing briefly is the notion of paratext\textsuperscript{17}:

The verbal frame, or *paratext*, may enhance the text, it may define it, it may contrast with it, it may distance it, or it may be so disguised as to seem to form part of it. In fact, the frame by necessity defines a relationship different in quality to that between the text itself and its audience. (Maclean, 1991: 274)

Paratexts refer to those elements which surround a literary text and which help “a text to become a book and to be offered as such to its readers and, more generally, to the public” (Genette, 1997: 2). In other words, a text is “a long sequence of verbal statements” and paratexts are perceived as certain “productions” that decorate, reinforce and promulgate it (ibid: 1). Genette describes paratexts as “zone[s] between text and off-text” and as “a fringe of the printed text which in reality controls one’s whole reading of the text” (ibid: 2) – in other words, as elements which ‘frame’ the main text. The use of paratexts, as we shall see in the current chapter, enables the text to be interpreted following a specific motive, ideology or agenda. The most important role of paratextuality is “to ensure for the text a destiny consistent with the author’s purpose”, which can also involve the decision of other agents\textsuperscript{18} (Genette, 1997: 407). Thus, paratexts can actively control and mobilize the audience’s understanding.

Paratexts, according to Genette, consist of all the extratextual material that immediately surrounds a text or is scattered throughout it, including titles, the author’s or translator’s name, introductions, footnotes, book covers, postfaces, glossaries, blurbs and images or illustrations. Genette extends the concept of paratext to include elements which are outside the immediate text in question, such as reviews, interviews and correspondence, referred to as *epitext*. The latter are not materially appended to the text but presented independently to comment on the work and its author and/or translator (Genette, 1997). Given the wide range of elements that fall under the category of *paratexts* and *epitexts*, it is clear that both categories inevitably play an important part in shaping the reader’s attitude towards the main text and help him or her to reach certain understandings as well as conclusions about the text

\textsuperscript{17} The work of the French critic Gérard Genette, *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation* (1997), offers a detailed and comprehensive model for the examination of paratexts.

\textsuperscript{18} Genette believes that a paratext is above all the responsibility of the author, but this is not necessarily the case. Paratexts are not simply the outcome of an author’s choices but instead are the end product of a series of decisions made by other agents involved in the process of text production, such as editors or publishers, who may control the choice of paratextual input according to their ideological or commercial interests, and of course translators, who often add paratextual material of their own, such as footnotes and glossaries.
in question. In fact, paratexts provide links between the text and everything else that surrounds it, constituting what Genette (1991: 261) calls “a zone not just of transition, but of transaction” (emphasis in original). Therefore, paratexts are powerful means by which “the text can gain legitimacy or denial from the readers” (Genette, 1991 in Al-Herthani, 2009: 60).

Given the significance of paratexts in framing the source or the target text, paratextual tools appear in different places around the text, performing specific functions. By defining the elements of paratexts, Genette focuses on determining each element’s “position (the question where?), its date of appearance, and eventually of disappearance (when?), its mode of existence, verbal or other (how?), the characteristics of its communicating instance, addressee and addressee (from whom? to whom?), and the functions which give purpose to its message (what is good for?)” (Genette, 1991: 261). In order to answer these questions, Genette divides paratexts into two major categories, related to their positioning around or within the text. The first category referred to as peritext consists of layout and the format of the book, type of front cover, title, preface and sometimes notes. This category of paratexts is considered informative, commercial and illustrative (Kovala, 1996); informative in the sense of describing the work itself and contextualizing it, realized in prefaces, blurbs and note sections. Moreover, it is commercial since the central aim of some agents, such as the publisher, is to advertise the book, using the back cover and the blurb. Finally, the illustrative paratext employs striking illustrations/images on the front and back covers, and sometimes illustrations within the text itself (Kovala, 1996).

The second category of paratexts is epitexts (Genette, 1997), usually produced during or after the publication of the book. They are all messages which are situated, at least originally, outside the book and “generally with the backing of the media (interviews, conversations), or under the cover of private communication (correspondence and private journals)” (ibid: 55). In other words, epitextual paratexts are not found within the covers of an individual work in book form. In most cases, peritexts tend to be the responsibility of the publisher, what Genette refers to also as editorial paratexts, especially when dealing with the choice of cover, blurb and sometimes the title. The author, however, can be in control of some peritextual elements, known also as authorial paratexts, like the introduction, dedication and notes, in addition to all kinds of epitexts. For the purposes of my analysis, I will focus on peritexts.

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19 In the current study, I will not be focusing on illustrations or images as there are none.
since they are physically part of the data under analysis, namely foreword, preface, footnotes and introduction.

1.4.2 Paratextual Material in *Speak, Bird, Speak Again* and *Qul ya Tayer* 

The two collections address different audiences, an English speaking audience (mainly in the US) and an Arabic speaking audience. The tales that feature in each collection are supplemented by extensive paratextual material, which help English and Arabic speaking readers, respectively, understand the relevant cultural as well as social context. I discuss here the paratextual material in the two collections, following the order in which this material is presented in the English collection, given that SBSA appeared first in 1989, and may therefore be used as a point of reference in the following description.

The paratextual material in the English collection consists of the following elements in this order: *The foreword, Acknowledgements, Note on Transliteration, Key to References*; I will refer to these three elements as **Pre-introduction Paratextual Material**. These are followed by an *Introduction* which consists of 50 pages and is divided into six parts. The Pre-introduction Paratextual Material and the Introduction together constitute the front matter of the volume. The main body of the text, i.e. the tales themselves, is separated from the front matter with a blank page and preceded by *Notes on Presentation and Translation*. The tales are also accompanied by *Afterwords* and *Footnotes*. Finally, **Post-tales Paratextual Material** consists of a section entitled *Folkloristic Analysis* and a number of *Appendices*. I will indicate below where relevant any differences in the content and order of paratextual material in the Arabic collection.

### 1.4.2.1 Pre-Introduction Paratextual Materials (Materials Before the Introduction)

Following the table of contents in SBSA, five pages are dedicated to Alan Dundes’ *Foreword*. Slightly different from the English collection, the translation of Alan Dundes’ foreword in *Qul Ya Tayer* follows *Taqdīm al-mū ’ līfīn lil ṭub ’a al- ’rabīā* (The Authors’ Introduction to the Arabic Edition) and *Taqdīm al- ṭab ’a al- ’rabīa* (The Introduction of the Arabic Edition).

**The Foreword**

Muhawi & Kanaana launched their compilation in 1989, giving the opening words to Alan
Dundes’ introduction for the Western reader. The choice of Dundes has significance since he was a well-known Jewish professor in anthropology and folklore at the University of California, Berkeley. Analysing the foreword represents a key point in the way SBSA was initially introduced. Being written by a prominent Jewish scholar like Alan Dundes, the foreword added credibility to Muhawi & Kanaana’s work and facilitated readers’ reception to what would be considered as a subversive narrative in the West, particularly in the U.S during the late eighties. In fact, the power of intellectuals, such as Dundes, lies in being “endowed with a faculty for representing, embodying, articulating a message, a view, an attitude, philosophy or opinion to, as well as for, a public” (Said, 1996: 11). The art of representing is articulated by the use of framing devices, such as paratexts (Genette, 1997). The power of framing and paratexts can alter the main text and mobilize readers (Baker, 2006; Gurcalagar, 2002).

Forewords, similarly like prefaces, expose the ‘why’ and the ‘how’ behind the writing of a work, except that the preface is written by the book’s author, translator, publisher or other agent. The foreword, however, must be written by a credible person in the field, but not the author. Genette (1997: 196-209) divides the functions of prefaces into themes of the why and themes of the how. The former aims to tell readers why they should read the book by emphasizing its importance and value. The latter aims to instruct readers about how they should read the book, in an attempt to ensure that the book is read as the preface writer wishes it to be read. As with the preface, Themes of the why and the how as described by Genette exist in my analysis of Muhawi & Kanaana’s foreword in SBSA, except that they are introduced by another agent but not the author. Forewords, like prefaces, can direct the reader to understand the text, especially a translation, from a specific angle. Gurcalagar (2002), unlike Genette, believes that a translator’s preface is not necessarily “allographic” (Genette, 1997:179), i.e merely presenting the aims of the translation of the work; a preface in her view can be part of an institutionalized ideology.

20 More elaboration on the differences between preface, foreword and introduction is found on: http://www.writersandeditors.com/preface_foreword_or_introduction_57375.htm

21 Gurcalagar shows that the translations of a number of Western canonical works of literature by The Translation Bureau, which was set up by the Ministry of Education in Turkey during the 1940s and 1960s had ”an educational function and were intended to transfer the ideas contained in the principal literary works of the West to Turkish readers and especially the young” (Gurcalagar, 2002: 48). These translations were preceded by prefaces written by significant political Turkish figures of the time or by translators working for the Translation Bureau (not in this case the original authors or translators). As explained by Gurcalagar, these prefaces went beyond the aim of informing or presenting the text they accompanied since they were introducing: “[a]n ideological angle, placing the text within the general project of modernization […] they (prefaces) guided the
Dundes starts his foreword by introducing Muhawi & Kanaana’s collection as a remarkable work that “offered a rare combination of ethnographic and literary glosses on details that afford a unique glimpse into the subtle nuances of Palestinian Arab culture” (Dundes in Muhawi & Kanaana, 1989: ix). He establishes the status of the work as pioneering, “destined to be a classic and will surely serve as a model for future researchers in folk narrative” (ibid).

He then compares SBSA to different works written mainly during the 18th and 19th centuries. According to Dundes, SBSA has a similar status, popular as well famous, to the brothers Grimm collections. It is even more distinctive in his opinion as it reflects “the efforts of the collectors to preserve unaltered the precious folkloristic art forms of the local peasantry” (ibid). The collection is non-elitist and not addressed to a special category of intellectuals. Dundes believes that in spite of 18th and 19th century Western folktale collections’ fame, they failed in being truthful to the cultures they raised from, since collections at the time were confined and conformed to “the higher canons of taste” (ibid, x):

They [18th and 19th folktale compilers] actually rewrote or otherwise manipulated the materials so assiduously gathered. One reason for this intrusiveness was the longstanding elitist notion that literate culture was infinitely superior to illiterate culture. Thus the oral tales were made to conform to the higher canons of taste found in written literature, and oral style was replaced by literary convention […] The Grimms and their imitators were trying to create a patrimony for purposes of national pride (long before Germany was to become a nation in the modern sense), and tampering with oral tradition suited their goals. Texts that are rewritten, censored, simplified for children, or otherwise modified may well be enjoyed by readers conditioned to the accepted literary stylistics of so-called high culture. (M&K, 1989: x)

Dundes, as an intellectual, “questions rather than just communicates” (Said, 1996: 37), which is essential when establishing the difference between elite culture and popular culture. The collection at hand is, in fact, suitable for all social and intellectual layers in the Arab world and the West. Moreover, the language, unlike world-renowned collections over recent centuries, is not beautified (Kanaana, 2012)23, changed or falsified. The language, mainly the

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22 “Brothers Jacob (1785–1863) and Wilhelm Grimm (1786–1859) were German academics and linguists who spent years collecting popular fairy tales and folk tales. Their resulting compilation of over 200 stories Kinder- und Hausmärchen (Children's and household tales) is one of the most famous collections of tales in the world, influencing generations of writers, artists, academics, composers, filmmakers, and animators.” Cited in [http://www.taschen.com/pages/en/catalogue/classics/all/06787/facts.the_fairy_tales_of_the_brothers_grimm.html](http://www.taschen.com/pages/en/catalogue/classics/all/06787/facts.the_fairy_tales_of_the_brothers_grimm.html) [accessed on 12-03-2014].

23 I conducted an interview with Sharif Kanaana (in English) in summer 2012 via audio visual communication (skype). I recorded the interview then transcribed it into a written script. With Kanaana’s permission, I have
Palestinian dialect, has been authentically represented and transmitted to the reader. The interconnection between language and national and cultural identity will be fully developed over the coming chapters.

Another important feature highlighted by Dundes in his foreword is the academic value and scientific weight of *SBSA*, arguing that the latter is distinctive for its scientific apparatus. Once again, he compares *SBSA* to the majority of 19th and 20th century folktales arguing their deficiency in “meeting the minimum criteria of scientific inquiry” (Dundes in Muhawi & Kanaana, 1989: x). They also lacked information about the tellers and there was “rarely concerted attempt made to compare a particular corpus of tales with other versions of the same tale types” (ibid). Most tales at the time were presented with no cultural context or analysis of their meaning, according to Dundes. By scientific inquiry or scholarly apparatus, Dundes refers to the extensive paratextual materials needed in the framing and grounding of the tales. Another reason for the inadequacy of 19th century folktales, mainly those representing non-European countries, according to Dundes, is the fact that the collectors/compilers were not originally from the place where the tales were told. Many compilers, who happened to be “colonialist administrators, missionaries and travellers” (ibid) recorded stories they liked or found amusing. However, the majority of the recorded tales underwent modifications and omissions of details those compilers found inappropriate. Dundes questions the authenticity and honesty of those tales as they had to be modified to suit the standards of the recipient culture. *SBSA* is a breakthrough in the sense it is written in the native language (Palestinian dialect) and by Palestinians, who are acquainted with their folk culture, representing a genuine effort to portray truthfully the culture of the tales.

Dundes goes on to discuss Muhawi & Kanaana’s background as compilers, translators and anthropologists, highlighting their academic expertise in the field of anthropology, translation and cultural studies. He then describes their encounter at Birzeit University and the roots of their project. The compilers not only collected but also got involved in efforts to transcribe, translate and contextualize the tales both linguistically and culturally:

Collecting the tales proved to be only the first step. Transcribing and translating the tales took many, many hours of arduous, meticulous work. Then, to make the tales intelligible to readers unfamiliar with Palestinian society, Muhawi and Kanaana elected to prepare a comprehensive yet made slight language and structure editing to the interview. The written script of the interview will be used in my analysis and will be also found as Appendix 1 at the end of the thesis.
succinct cultural overview with special emphasis on family dynamics. (ibid: xii)

Being a pivotal paratextual element in highlighting the intentions of Muhawi & Kanaana’s project, Dundes’s foreword praises and stresses the importance of the paratextual elements around the tales in SBSA:

The ethnographic portrait provided in the introductory essay is a remarkable achievement, and it certainly facilitates a better understanding of the tales that follow. […] The anthropological influence is also felt in the very organization and sequential order of the tales […] The anthropological bias, however, is always balanced by attention to literary topics; the poetics of opening and closing formulas, for example, are discussed in depth, and careful comparative annotations relate these tales to other Arabic folktales as well as to the international folktale scholarship in general […] It is precisely because such close attention was paid to the concerns of the humanist and the social scientist alike that this collection of folktales is so special. (ibid)

Resembling a double framing or one paratext within another, the abovementioned paragraph highlights the importance of reading the tales within their scholarly apparatus, namely introduction, afterwords and footnotes. In fact, the distinctiveness and originality of SBSA, as described by Dundes, are attributed mainly to the compilers’ anthropological and literary expertise in grounding the tales within Palestinian culture, identity and continuous memory, turning hence SBSA into “a landmark entree into Palestinian Arab ethos and worldview” (ibid).

The key point stressed by Dundes towards the end of his foreword is the political reason behind the collection. There is emphasis on the existence of a strong national Palestinian identity in spite of political dislocation. For Dundes, the establishment of Israel in 1948 cannot deny Palestinians’ voice and right to preserve their culture, expressed in this case with the telling of folktales. The notion of homeland, no matter how problematic it is to define, represents an unavoidable existential question for Palestinians, who were and are still suffering from occupation, displacement and uprooting. As I will elaborate in more depth in the coming chapters, Dundes’ statement reinforces the continuity of Palestinian collective memory on the one hand and post-memory (Hirsch 1996, 1997, 1999, 2002, 2008) on the other:

24 The notion of post-memory is a mediation between present and past; it “defines the present in relation to a troubled past rather than initiating new paradigms […] It is a structure of inter- and trans-generational
There was once an area of the world called Palestine, *where the Arab inhabitants had—and have*—a distinctive culture all their own. It is that culture that is preserved so beautifully in the magical stories contained in this volume. (M&K, 1989: xiii italics added for emphasis).

The notion of collective memory can be seen in his use of past then present tenses - *where the Arab inhabitants had and have* - as he words it. Dundes gives the reader the understanding that Palestinian culture has always been alive, is not dead because of the establishment of Israel and will never be. Dundes’ message stresses the importance of allowing Palestinians to revive the distinctiveness of their cultural and social identity, urging against forgetfulness. The foreword itself is a form of highlighting Muhawi & Kanaana’s intention in compiling, documenting and translating for Western, Arab and mainly Palestinian coming generations, with the aim of guaranteeing continuation and revival.

Not only is the collection a valuable scholarly work with a scientific apparatus of analysis, via the usage of comprehensive paratextual elements, it is also a source of enjoyment and pleasure. Dundes’ final point is to show that the collection is suitable for any kind of reader; both scholars and folktale lovers will enjoy reading it:

Some readers may choose not to refer to the scholarly apparatus, preferring instead to enjoy only the tales themselves, but scholars will surely be grateful for the thoughtful notes and “afterwords” the authors have provided. (M&K, 1989: xiii)

He also insists on the survival of folktales, in spite of the claims that folktales are limited to the past or that they are disappearing:

I have repeatedly heard literary folklorists claim that the fairy tale genre is dead. These misguided academics continue to pore over such purely literary collections as the *Arabian Nights* or the celebrated collections of Perrault and the Grimms, not realizing that the fairy tale is alive and well in the modern world. (ibid)

Dundes once again emphasizes the importance and survival of Palestinian tales, which “will be told as long as birds sing!”(ibid)

**Acknowledgments, Note on Transliteration and Key to References**

In the “Acknowledgments" of SBSA Muhawi & Kanaana express their gratitude to the
storytellers, whose tales they compiled, and to colleagues at the University of California, and acknowledge the support of organizations such as the American Palestine Educational Fund and the Ford Foundation, among others. The Arabic collection does not include an acknowledgments section. Instead, there is a note about the aims and profile of the Institute for Palestine Studies, which published *Qul Ya Tayer*. This is followed by a thank you note from the Institute to the Qattan Foundation, the main and only sponsor of this project. The fact that the volume was published by the Institute for Palestine Studies and funded by the Qattan Foundation is significant since it highlights the importance of the Arabic collection as a national project.

The Acknowledgments section is followed by the “Note on Transliteration” in the English collection, which explains the system adopted to transliterate the Palestinian dialect. The note on transliteration is of course only included in the English collection, and its use is largely confined to the transliteration of individual words and expressions in the English text of the tales. However, it is indispensable to deciphering one fully transcribed tale in Appendix A (Tale 10). Finally, the last section before the introduction is the “Key to References”, where explanations are given of abbreviations that appear in footnotes and tales; for example TM stands for the journal *Al-turāth w al-mujtam* ‘(Heritage and Society). The abovementioned sections, “Note on Transliteration” and “Key to References”, do not appear in the Arabic collection. Instead, the compilers introduce two sections on presentation in *Qul Ya Tayer* namely *Taqdīm al-mū ’līfīn lil ’ṭāb ’a al- ’rabīa* (The Authors’ Introduction to the Arabic Edition) and *Taqdīm al- ’ṭāb ’a al- ’rabīa* (The Introduction of the Arabic Edition). These are discussed under ‘Paratextual Material within the Tales’ later in this section.

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25 “The Institute of Palestine Studies (IPS) is the only institute in the world exclusively devoted to the documentation, research, analysis, and publication of material on Palestinian affairs and the Arab-Israeli conflict. It is an academic organization dedicated to protecting the integrity of the historical record. The Institute is completely independent: by statute, it cannot be affiliated with any government or political organization.” Cited in [http://www.palestine-studies.org/aboutus.aspx?href=mission](http://www.palestine-studies.org/aboutus.aspx?href=mission) [accessed on 01/03/2013]. IPS is generally considered the major source of accurate information and analysis on Palestinian affairs and the Arab-Israeli conflict.

26 Founded in 1994, The QATTAN FOUNDATION is a UK-registered charity with offices in London, Ramallah and Gaza City. It is named after its founder Abdel.Mohsin Qattan, who is a Palestinian business man deeply involved in Palestinian charitable and developmental projects. Through its work in Palestine and elsewhere, the foundation seeks to invest in people and to provide a fertile cultural soil upon which they can build their lives. “Al-Qattan supported many Palestinian and Arab students in their university studies, and provided support to many organizations such as the Centre for Arab Unity Studies, the Ahmad Bahaa Edin Foundation, the Institute for Palestine Studies, Birzeit University, and many other institutions” cited in [http://www.qattanfoundation.org/en/abdel-mohsin-al-qattan-en](http://www.qattanfoundation.org/en/abdel-mohsin-al-qattan-en) [accessed on 25-01-2010]
1.4.2 The Introduction

The English and Arabic collections both include a comprehensive *Introduction* by Muhawi and Kanaana. Both introductions address the same issues and offer readers background information about Palestinian society, culture and beliefs. In the English collection, the introduction extends for fifty pages, and in the Arabic collection for fifty-four pages. Both English and Arabic introductions are divided into six sections, in the following order: *The Tales, The Tellers, The Tales and the Culture, The Tales and Authority in Society, Food in Society and Tales,* and *Religion and the Supernatural.*

In the section on *Tales,* the compilers explain the criteria for selection, which are based on “popularity and excellence of narration” (M&K, 1989:7). In other words, forty-five tales were chosen out of 200 because, according to Muhawi & Kanaana, these tales were, in the opinion of their raconteurs, very popular. Excellence of narration is also a determining criterion when variant versions of the same tale were found by the compilers. Muhawi and Kanaana then explain the differences between the terminology of *ḥikāya* or *khurāfya* (both meaning ‘folktale’), as opposed to fable or fairy tale in English. *ḥikāya* puts the emphasis on the mimetic or artistic aspect of narration, whereas *khurāfya* stresses the fictitious aspect (ibid: 8). Muhawi & Kanaana argue that folktales are told mostly by women and are associated in Palestinian society with ‘old wives’ tales’. Men, on the other hand, prefer to listen to and tell epic stories in diwan gatherings. This distinction leads Muhawi & Kanaana to examine gender differences in the manner of delivery. Men’s performance, for example, relies more on physical movements, whereas “women rely on their voices and the power of the colloquial language to evoke a response” (ibid: 8). Muhawi & Kanaana give credit to women for developing the art form of the folktale in the Palestinian context and go so far as to argue that “men who tell folktales must adopt the narrative style of women” (ibid: 11). In addition to the different ways of delivery, the setting and the language distinguish the folktale from the epic story. To achieve effective narration, “the same conditions of past settings have been established while recording the present collection, which involves evening times, small audiences and dim light” (ibid: 12). The compilers believe that social gatherings were important in the past in Palestine and reflect the culture’s heavy emphasis on the oral tradition and verbal ability. The language used in the tales, mainly “the opening formula, creates an air of expectation as the session unfolds”; hence “the setting requires a special style and narrative attitude” (ibid: 12). Finally, in this first section on *Tales,* the compilers describe the difference between rural and urban dialects in Palestine, alluding to the context.
of the tales in the past, which was part of the social life of a stable peasant community:

The folktale tradition we have been describing falls within the context of the extended family and forms part of the social life of a settled and flourishing peasant community. With recent displacement of the Palestinian people, the social and geographic bases for the tradition have been severely disrupted. (ibid: 14)

Muhawi and Kanaana then move to a discussion of the Tellers, and give details of their gender, social status and age. The seventeen storytellers, who do not think of themselves as such, are mostly women. Fourteen are housewives who can neither read nor write, and only two out of the seventeen live in the cities of Gaza and Jerusalem; the others have lived in villages all their lives (ibid: 15). The most distinctive tellers, in the opinion of the compilers, are Fatema from Galilee (Tales 1, 9, 11, 23, 24, 26, 36, 38, 43), followed by Shafī’. Unlike Fatema, Shafī’ is one of four or five people in any village community who shows an intense personal interest in preserving and transmitting the practice. According to Muhawi & Kanaana, “His sense of plotting and double plotting is superb” (ibid: 16). Shafī’ contributed in telling tales 5, 8, 10, 15, 25, 44. There is also ‘Imāza, Shafī’’s wife, who uses rich language and whose stories come from a wide variety of sources. Im Nabīl (Tales 17, 19, 28, 30, 39) is the archetypal old woman. Finally, there is Im Darwīsh, who is “responsible for two of the best tales in the collection (Tales 21, 45)” (ibid: 17).

In the section entitled The Tales and the Culture, Muhawi and Kanaana set out to ground the tales in their culture, by examining the cultural pillars that constitute Palestinian society and that are reflected in the tales. The first cultural aspect referred to is the role of Palestinian women in structuring social institutions. Their gender does not mean that they have no power in Palestinian society. On the contrary, they are considered to be credible eyewitnesses of life and history. In fact, the power of women is realized in their role as storytellers in reality and as heroines in fiction: “These tales almost always concern, not heroes, but heroines: mothers, daughters, and wives” (ibid: 18). The discussion then moves to the household in which the tales are told, the setting being that of the extended family. This leads to explanations of polygamy, patrilineality, endogamy and patrilocality, which represent important social Palestinian themes in the tales, as when a polygamous situation signals conflict, or when endogamy is shown to disrupt family unity. Patrilocality can be problematic, because when a woman marries outside her family her in-laws will always consider her a stranger. Muhawi & Kanaana’s aim here is not to state that Palestinian society is polygamous or patrilineal, but mainly to show that these themes serve an educational function, especially given that children
constitute the majority of the audience. The final parts of this section are dedicated to an outline of family structure and relationships. The analysis focuses on the role individuals play within the context of the family; rather than the individuals themselves. This involves a discussion of father/son, mother/daughter, sister/brother, husband/wife, sister/brother’s wife, and wife/mother-in-law relationships.

The section entitled *The Tales and Authority in [the] Society* focuses on the interconnection between the teller and the tale itself from the perspective of authority. Three main elements of authority in Palestinian society are analysed by the compilers: age, gender and sexuality. Age and gender regulate individuals’ behaviour. For instance, age commands respect and should command obedience to parental authority (ibid: 31). In terms of gender, old women’s narration constitutes a form of authority; moreover, the social structure itself, which is the material for basic plot situations, provides models for the authority that regulates individual behaviour in tales. Through respect for tradition and age, individuals are brought up to harmonise their will with that of the family. At the same time, undertaking or initiating an individual action that involves breaking the rules of the family and social norms “is interpreted as an act of heroism” (ibid: 32). Finally, sexuality represents an important resource for power and authority in the tales. On one hand, the tales reflect prevailing moral standards; but on the other, they also articulate attitudes and practices which are in total contradiction to social norms. To explain the importance of sexuality as perceived in the tales, the compilers devote parts of this section to the role played by the Palestinian family and society in preserving what is considered as the foundation of a good reputation and honour. Within the domestic sphere, sexuality is closely connected to the family’s honour and reputation, and families “do restrict, channel, and control the sexual activity of their members” (ibid: 33). At the social level, “the preservation is witnessed through the separation of sexes, which starts early in schools and social gatherings” (ibid: 33). This does not mean that denial or discreetness is the prevailing ethic in many of the tales. On the contrary, the role women play in the tales is more complex, active and influential than those of men. Men’s portraits; however, “are usually restricted to their social roles as sons, brothers, fathers and authority figures, whereas the women’s are more complex” (ibid: 33).

Since most of the tales are told in villages, they portray a peasant society which relies heavily on agriculture. In the section *Food in Society and Tales*, Muhawi & Kanaana explain that “the cultivation, consumption, storage, sale and distribution of food are the family’s primary concerns. Therefore, food plays an important role in the tales” (ibid: 37). Food is considered,
for example, the basic motivator of action in all the *Environment tales*, and it figures prominently in several others (Tales 1, 9, 14, 15, 27, 29, 34, 36, 45). Goods are the patriarch’s belongings, and his permission must be sought before anything is given away. The patriarch’s wife, on the other hand, is responsible for the food’s distribution. Also food is associated in the tales with “the expression of love in all its forms” (ibid: 37); for instance, the rituals of love are always accompanied by rituals of food, as in weddings. However, it can sometimes lead to envy, jealousy and conflict when not distributed equally to members of the extended family. At the social level, the giving and sharing of food “symbolises hospitality and generosity” (ibid), though it can also trigger competition for social prestige among families, which take advantage of ceremonial occasions to earn recognition for their wealth. In fact, all stages of a person’s life and those of the family, whether involving joy or mourning, are celebrated with the sharing of food. Muhawi & Kanaana thus conclude that food can be part of one’s identity and sense of belonging.

To clarify the source of supernatural beliefs in the tales, the compilers explain in the section entitled *Religion and the Supernatural* how in reality “peasants in Palestine do not distinguish between official religion and its teaching on the one hand and the beliefs and superstitions of folk religion on the other” (ibid: 42). In fact, no clear distinction exists between the supernatural and that of everyday life. Supernatural forces take “specific shapes in the form of *Jinn*, ghouls, giants, or other supernatural beings (e.g. Tales 5, 6, 8, 16, 17, 18, 19, 22, 29, 30, 32, 34, 35, 36, 37, 40)” (ibid: 44). At other times, they remain as an abstract force, like chance or predestination. Muhawi & Kanaana then discuss the influence of supernatural forces on the characters’ actions in the tales. For example, there is the concept or motif of the journey, during which the characters have to go through many experiences until they achieve their goals. During this journey, “actions are carried out, by the concretization of the non-material, the interpretation of the physical and the supernatural, the distinction between good and evil, and the balance of forces between them” (ibid: 47). Moreover, the notions of reward and punishment as aspects of daily life and the doctrine of predestination, M&K explain, control the plot in most of the tales. Finally, the action is not necessarily physical, but can be carried out through the medium of language, which “becomes a silent ‘actor’ in the drama of the tales” (ibid: 48). As I will discuss in more depth in the coming chapters, the compilers’ *Introduction* is aimed at guiding the reader’s understanding of the social and cultural infrastructure of Palestinian identity. Being comprehensive in addressing detailed aspects of Palestinian rural society, the *Introduction*, I argue, highlights the scholarly endeavour carried
out by the compilers.

1.4.2.3 Paratextual Materials within the Tales

The Introduction is followed in the English collection by one and a half pages of Notes on Presentation and Translation. Here, Muhawi & Kanaana explain briefly the logic behind the strategic decisions they made when translating the tales, taking into consideration issues of register and style. They discuss linguistic and stylistic considerations for dealing with oral performance, for example, arguing that “literary oral narrative, when translated for print into another language, obviously undergoes in reality a process of double translation. The first is from one language to another, and the second is from one medium into another” (M&K, 1989: 51). Muhawi & Kanaana’s aim is to provide their target readers with natural texts, which nevertheless follow the original very closely. In other words, there is little room for “interpretive intrusions” since, according to them, the translation assumes that the tellers must tell their own tales. An attempt is made where possible to replicate the narrative rhythm and grammatical structure of the original, and also to avoid word for word translation (ibid: 52).

Unlike the English collection, where Notes on Presentation and Translation are included after the Introduction, in the Arabic collection the Introduction is preceded by two presentations, namely Taqdím al-mū ’lifil lil ŏl ŏl-’rabīa (The Authors’ Introduction to the Arabic Edition) and Taqdím al- ŏl ŏl-’rabīa (The Introduction of the Arabic Edition)

The Preface in the Arabic compilation Qul Ya Tayer قول يا طير

Following the foreword by Alan Dundes found in both Arabic and English collections, I now look at the prefaces, or presentations as referred to by Muhawi & Kanaana, which only exist in the Arabic edition, Qul Ya Tayer (2001). It is worth mentioning here that the latter was published twelve years after the publication of the English collection in 1989. Because SBSA (1989) achieved popular and academic success among western readers, scholars in anthropology and folklore studies, and among Arab and Palestinian natives in the Diaspora, the compilers thought of publishing the folktales in their original language. This is not common since works are usually first published in the source language then translated into target languages. In my interview with Sharif Kanaana in 2012, I was curious to know the motive behind such a decision. Kanaana stated that both he and Muhawi were driven initially by a national desire to carry out the project, addressing a Western audience. The purpose,  

27 The tales in the Arabic collection are presented in the Palestinian dialect, following, with slight modifications, the same scientific apparatus of analysis and structure of SBSA (Muhawi & Kanaana, 2001).
according to him, was to advocate the Palestinian cause, not politicise it, through a transparent reflection of Palestinian culture and society (Kanaana, 2012). The compilers might not contain explicit references to the political situation; however, the compilers are driven by political and national aims. When asked about the publication of the Arabic edition, Kanaana did not say if it was deliberately timed after the English one. However, following the publication of *Qul Ya Tayer* (2001), Kanaana was surprised by its popularity among Palestinians. “I did not think that Palestinians needed a book like our project. However, I found out that both Arabs and Palestinians need them too” (Kanaana, 2012: 5). The urge to “read and tell” Palestinian folktales, particularly among Palestinians in the Diaspora, is “like a compensation of what Palestinians lost, it is a form of retrieving some of what they lost” (ibid: 5). Since the Arabic edition addresses Arabs in general and Palestinians in particular, M&K devote two prefaces or presentations. The first preface is *Taqdīm al-mū ’lifīn lil ṭab ’a al- ‘rabīa* (The Authors’ Introduction to the Arabic Edition) by Muhawi & Kanaana, followed by *taqdīm al- ṭab ’a al- ‘rabīa* (The Introduction of the Arabic Edition) by Ibrahim Muhawi and Jābir Sulaymān 28.

**Taqdīm al-mū ’lifīn lil ṭab ’a al- ‘rabīa (The Authors’ Introduction to the Arabic Edition)**

Muhawi & Kanaana first offer an account of the previous two publications of the same collection, the first being the English collection under study (M&K, 1989) and the second a French translation published in 1997, based also on the English compilation. Both compilers then move to highlight the motives behind their project. They firstly discuss the importance of preserving the Palestinian dialect which “is one of the most important features of the identity of Palestinians” (M&K, 2001: xv). As I will discuss in Chapter Two, the fact that the tales in *Qul Ya Tayer* were not standardised but kept in Palestinian dialect is connected directly to the preservation of a distinct Palestinian identity. Many Palestinian folklorists,

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28 Jābir Sulaymān is credited with “translating and revising” (M&K, 2001: xix). His starting point of reference is *SBSA* (1989) and original oral tapes of the tales. He is the translator and language editor for the Modern Standard Arabic and Palestinian regional dialects for *Qul Ya Tayer* (2001). Sulayman was born in Al-Tarmas in Palestine in 1945. He studied in Egypt and Poland, where he obtained his masters degree. Sulayman worked for the Palestinian Planning Centre, run by the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO), from 1973 to 1979. From 1979 to 1982, he worked for the Palestine Information and Documentation Centre, and in 1982 became the head of the documentation department at the Institute for Palestine Studies. He was also the editor in chief of the ‘Wafa’ Palestinian news agency. Sulayman continues to write for various magazines and newspapers, such as *Shu ’in Falasifīna* (Palestinian Affairs) and *Al-kātib al-Falasīfīnī* (the Palestinian Writer). See [http://www.falestiny.com/word.php?did=166](http://www.falestiny.com/word.php?did=166) [accessed on 10-05-2009].
including Muhawi and Kanaana, aim to disprove Gerber’s claims since both have deliberately kept the tales in the Palestinian dialect, as orally told, then transcribed in their collection. According to both compilers, keeping the folktales in the Palestinian dialect has a national dimension by reconnecting the culture those tales come from with both the Arab world and the world at large. Asked whether it was a deliberate choice to have less Palestinian dialect in the latest edition of *Qul Ya Tayer* published for children in 2010 Kanaana (2012: 3) replied:

To be honest, I was not happy with the new Arabic edition. The agreement with The Institute of Palestine Studies was that one page should be in the original Palestinian colloquial facing or opposite a simplified version in Modern Standard Arabic. However, the new edition has only one page with simplified MSA. I was very disappointed since the whole point was to reinforce the cultural bond Palestinians have through the Palestinian dialect. My aim was to keep the spirit of Palestinian culture and its identity through the telling of Palestinian folktales in Palestinian dialect!

Clearly, the whole aim, particularly with the latest simplified children’s version of *Qul Ya Tayer* 30, is to preserve the cultural identity of Palestinians manifested in their dialect. It is even more important in this case as the audience of the latest edition is the younger generation, who more than the older generation is in urgent need of a detailed portrait of their culture, language and history, especially if never experienced in reality. The importance of Palestinian dialect for future generations will be highlighted more below, since it is a recurrent theme in M&K’s introduction.

Like Dundes, M&K explain in their introduction of the Arabic collection their aim of addressing two kinds of audience: ordinary and expert readers. Both categories, according to M&K, will enjoy the content of folktales, even more as the folktales are accompanied by detailed paratextual analysis. Each section of the analytical apparatus or paratextual element of the Arabic collection is then described in *The Authors’ Introduction to the Arabic Edition*, namely *Al-muqadima* (Introduction), *Al-ta ‘qīb* (Afterword), *Al-ḥawashī* (Footnotes) and

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29 Note taken from my discussion of language and identity in Chapter two, entitled “Collective Memory: The Palestinian Case”: “In his discussion of the emergence of Palestinian nationalism, Litvak (2009) compared Benedict Anderson’s description of the formation of European nationalism, following the transformation of European oral vernaculars into written languages, with that of the Middle East. According to him, the vernaculars in Europe are different from the various Arab vernaculars, which will never evolve into written languages. Litvak bases his analysis on that of Gerber (1990) who believes that “the central and sacred role of literary Arabic as the language of the Qur’an stands in the way of such a process, thereby slowing down the evolution of distinct identities within a broader Arab nationalism (Gerber in Litvak, 2009: 8)”.

30 *Qul Ya Tayer* (2010) is a selection of twelve folktales out of the 45 folktales in *Qul Ya Tayer* (2001). The newer collection is full of illustrations designed for a young audience with very few paratextual elements. The current research will not focus on the content or presentation of *Qul Ya Tayer* (2010) but will refer to it when needed.
Because they shed light on the stories from different angles, *The Folkloristic Analysis*, according to M&K:

Aims at contextualising the stories within their cultural and social frame. It connects the art of storytelling to the social environment they aroused from. Moreover, it helps the reader to understand the hidden meanings of the tales as well as to be able to enjoy the tales in a literary way. (ibid)

Footnotes have, according to M&K, ethnographic and linguistic purposes. By helping the reader to understand Palestinian culture, footnotes play the role of explaining to the reader the nuances of meaning of many Palestinian words related to particular popular and cultural beliefs and traditions. The scientific or scholarly role of footnotes, in their view, will help experts in different fields, such as ethnography and anthropology, to analyse the cultural references. The explanation will help in elaborating and expanding research on particular traditions and rituals mentioned in the tales. Hence, more room is provided for a more elaborate ethnographic study. The *Afterword*, the explanatory section following every group of tales, explains the logic adopted by the authors in dividing the tales into groups. For M&K, the *Afterwords* aim at treating the tales as literary texts, relating them again to the social environment.

The final paratextual and most important scientific apparatus, according to M&K, is *the Folkloristic Analysis*, as it has two essential dimensions: scientific and national. The scientific dimension is the adoption of the universal analysis of folktales in analyzing the 45 tales under study. The use of folkloristic analysis in *Qul Ya Tayer* (2001) is the first of its kind to be applied to Arabic folktale collections in general and Palestinian in particular. According to M&K, the use of the folkloristic analysis is a remarkable achievement in the field of folkloric studies in the Arab world. Since the current collection addresses “ordinary as well as expert readers” (ibid: xvii) both Arabic and English collections have specific national aims. The first national aim is to provide readers with a comprehensive picture of Palestinian society, its traditions and culture. Secondly, as the English publication has succeeded in becoming a reference for teaching anthropology of the Middle East – its folklore, society and literature - in both the Arab world and English speaking countries, M&K want to duplicate the exemplary image of the English publication into Arabic, targeting Arab students of anthropology.

The last national aim is seen in Muhawi & Kanaana’s contribution to folkloristic analysis and the classification of folktales. Both compilers have followed Aarne and Thompson’s Types of
the folktale, drawing on Thompson’s Motif-index of Folk-literature in order to produce a list of motifs relevant to the 45 tales. Their effort aims to reveal the link between Palestinian heritage and Arab heritage, and to link both to universal and human civilization. Being a positive and insightful model of analysis, M&K’s model has, a few years after the publication of SBSA, been adopted by Hasan El-Shamy’s Folktales of Egypt (1995). The latter, according to M&K, relied on the SBSA folkloristic analysis in documenting Palestinian folktales and linking it to the Arab heritage. Aarne and Thompson’s Types and El-Shamy’s research, however, have not yet been translated into Arabic. Thus, Qul Ya Tayer is the first collection in the Arab world launching scientific folkloristic analysis of tales in Arabic. In other words, M&K intend to see the Arabic publication become a reference for studying Palestinian folklore in Arabic and in Arab universities. The purpose in doing so is not only to preserve folktales for coming generations but also to reinforce and stress Arab self determination and cultural cohesion.

*Taqdīm al-ṭab’a al-’rabīa (Introduction of the Arabic Edition)*

_Taqdīm al-ṭab’a al-’rabīa (Introduction of the Arabic Edition)* is written by Muhawi & Jābir Sulaymān, credited with translating and revising the Arabic collection. The introduction offers the reader background information about the different regional dialects in Palestine, and the difference between MSA and the Palestinian dialect. The methods used to signal dialectal variation between, for instance, urban and rural accents in a number of tales are then explained. As in _The Authors’ Introduction to the Arabic Edition_, Sulaymān and Muhawi reiterate the scholarly achievement and originality of having the _Folkloristic Analysis_ for the first time available in Arabic. It is vital according to them to write in Arabic in order to ensure that _Qul Ya Tayer_ functions as an accessible scholarly reference that can be used by Arabs, whether students or scholars. More importantly, Sulaymān and Muhawi end their introduction of the Arabic edition by reinforcing the main objective of the project, the preservation of Palestinian collective memory and the highlighting of Palestinian cultural identity, particularly among future Palestinian generations, who endured occupation, Diaspora and arbitrary attempts at uprooting their traditional society (Muhawi & Kanaana, 2001). Reviving collective memory and ensuring a cultural continuation, otherwise known as post memory, as I will discuss in Chapter Two, is an aim pursued by both ordinary

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31 It is the most accepted standard method to catalogue and classify folktales and fairy tales. Aarne and Thompson’s Motif and tale type index “constitute two of the most valuable tools in the professional folklorist’s arsenal of aids for analysis” (Dundes, 1997: 195).
Palestinians and intellectuals. As folklorists and intellectuals, Muhawi & Kanaana and Sulaymān devote their efforts not only to documenting Palestinian oral literature but also to establishing a bridge, a continuum and reemergence of Palestinian cultural memory, particularly if the aim is to also turn future Palestinian generations into active carriers of Palestinian folk literature, as their introduction reveals.

Afterword

Each group or sub-group of tales is followed by an Afterword Al-t ʿqib in both collections. For example, the first group, Individuals, consists of eighteen tales divided into four sub-groups, namely Children and Parents, Siblings, Sexual Awakening and Courtship, and The Quest for the Spouse. Each of these sub-groups is followed by an Afterword. According to Muhawi & Kanaana, the afterwords, which are similar in both collections, aim to explain the logic behind the tales’ classification, drawing on literary criticism. The elaborate afterwords are used by the compilers to establish a link between the tales and social reality, the storytellers’ imagination and culture. Indeed, the role of afterwords is described as one of establishing a bridge between fiction and reality, which is assumed by the compilers to exist.

Footnotes

Footnotes ḥwāshī in both volumes offer detailed cultural, ethnographic and linguistic explanations of specific words or expressions. The English collection features 412 footnotes, most of them clarifying cultural references related to modes of life in Palestine, customs and beliefs that might be unknown to the target reader. Framing the tales with footnotes, as I will analyse in Chapter Three and Four, aims at reinforcing the narrative of Palestinian collective and cultural memory. For example, the tale Lady Tatar starts with the sentence: “There were three sisters, and each of them had a hen”. A detailed footnote explaining the cultural connotations of the word hen reads:

In Palestinian villages families ordinarily raised animals in the yard. The mothers would designate a hen or two for each of her marriageable daughters so that they could sell their eggs to buy beads, thread, and other embroidery items in preparation for marriage. Because the hens were left to roam freely in the fields, when one was lost the girls would first search the abandoned wells for them. The villagers searched the wells for other lost animals and children. (M&K, 1989: 178)
The Arabic collection features more footnotes than the English one: a total of 440. The discrepancy in the number of footnotes may be explained by the fact that the tales in the Arabic volume are written in a mostly rural Palestinian dialect; hence it is necessary to add cultural explanations and linguistic clarifications in Modern Standard Arabic. In ‘Ghazale’, tale 17 in the section entitled Individuals, the Palestinian colloquial word for the verb ‘to stare at’ is baḥara, which is quite different from am ḍ ana in MSA (M&K 2001: 141). Consequently, an Arab reader from Tunisia, for example, would need a linguistic explanation in MSA to be able to understand this verb. There are also discrepancies in the number of footnotes attached to individual tales. For instance, ‘The Golden Pail’ tale features seventeen footnotes in SBSA and twenty-six in Qul Ya Tayer.

1.4.2.4 The Tales and Post-Tales Paratextual Materials (Materials Appearing at the End of the Collections)

Both collections feature a post-tale section of extensive Folkloristic Analysis Tahli al-’nmāṭ al-fulklīrya, in which the English and Arabic titles of each tale are given, followed by the name and age of the teller and her or his place of residence. The tales are then identified according to type, following Thompson’s Types of the Folktale. Moreover, the compilers list Arabic parallels to the tales according to their geographic proximity to Palestine. As I mentioned when describing the preface in the Arabic compilation, the Folkloristic Analysis and Thompson’s Types are important in the sense that they link Palestinian heritage and folk tradition to a more universal heritage of orality within an academic frame. In the Appendices malāḥiq section, the English collection, unlike the Arabic one, includes a transliterated version of Tale 10 as the first appendix. Finally, both collections end with an Index of Folk Motifs Fahras al-waḥadāt al-sardya which, appears as Appendix B in the English collection and Appendix A in the Arabic.

The Tales

The two collections, as mentioned, each consist of forty-five tales, which are divided into five groups: Individuals, Family, Society, Environment and Universe. Unlike previous Palestinian compilations, the compilers of both collections group the tales thematically, ordering them according to a pattern that reflects an individual’s life cycle from childhood to old age.

The first and largest group of tales is included under Individuals. The eighteen tales in this

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32 See Appendix 2 for an elaboration on the number of footnotes in the Arabic and English compilations.
group are divided into four sub-categories: Children and Parents, Siblings, Sexual Awakening and Courtship, and The Quest for the Spouse. The first five tales in Children and Parents deal with different aspects of the relationship between parents and children, specifically highlighting “the theme of individual freedom” (M&K, 1989: 82). The tales in this group reflect mother-son/daughter and father-daughter/son relationships, drawing on the emotional bonds, challenges and authority narratives within Palestinian families. The five tales under Siblings focus on relationships among siblings in different contexts. Siblings of the same sex generally develop relationships characterised by conflict, competition, and jealousy, as in the tales ‘Half-a-Halfing’ and ‘Little Nightingale the Crier’. Other tales in the same category reveal the strong bond among siblings from the opposite sex, showing a prevailing relationship of love, tenderness and mutual cooperation (ibid: 110-112). In the Sexual Awakening and Courtship sub-category, the predominant theme conveyed in all five tales is the importance and development of sexual desire prior to formal arrangements for marriage (ibid: 144). In ‘The Little Bird’, ‘Sackcloth’ and ‘Jummez Bin Yazur, Chief of the Birds’, the power that women possess through their sexuality is revealed. The last sub-category under Individuals is The Quest for the Spouse. Unlike the previous set of tales, which deal with subjective emotions associated both with hidden and open desires towards the lover or the family, “the three tales of this category explore the quest for a bride interplayed with social forces” (ibid: 168). In all three tales, the initiation of the quest is constrained by the Palestinian social system. The authority figure, which aims in Palestinian culture to preserve traditions and customs, is highlighted in these tales.

The second group of tales is categorised under Family. Like Individuals, the fourteen tales in this section are divided into three sub-categories: Brides and Bridegrooms, Husbands and Wives, and Family Life. The whole group of tales “explores the existing interaction, way of living and challenges between newly married couples in the extended family” (ibid: 203). The Brides and Bridegrooms sub-category deals mainly with the marriage relationship, focusing on new couples and the pressures they experience with respect to their choice of mate and their sexuality. The five tales in this sub-category explore forms of successful marriages, especially in the initial phases of the relationship. The first two tales focus on the problems that women face, whereas the third and fourth deal with the pressure faced by men (ibid: 204-205). Similarly to Brides and Bridegrooms, Husbands and Wives, which consists of four tales, addresses issues revolving mainly around the theme of sexuality. The difference in this category, however, lies in Palestinian women being more open and explicit about their
feelings in comparison to men. Moreover, the category addresses the relationship between husband and wife at a certain stage in the marriage, highlighting the causes of stagnation in a relationship, which, according to the compilers, often lies with the absence of children. Solution to the conflict lies in fulfillment realized through children in ‘The Seven Leavenings’, finding the right partner in ‘The Golden Rod’, or in a change in character (ibid: 228). The last category in the Family group of tales is Family Life. The five tales in this category treat conflicting loyalties among the extended family. The conflict, as described by Muhawi & Kanaana, usually centers on the male, whose position as the head of his own household or extended family requires dedication and a sense of responsibility (ibid: 249). It reveals the challenges the man faces when trying to balance between “his conjugal and natal family” (ibid: 250).

The section entitled Society includes only five tales, which focus on the relationship between the individual and society. The tales feature a broader zone of interaction in which family bonds and obligations do not control the plot or actions. According to the compilers, “the notions of collectivity and harmonious unity are predominant themes, manifested in people’s values of helping those in distress and neighbors” (ibid: 277). But this group also shows how disorder can arise when individuals attract envy and negative forces because of their children or wealth, which are sources of envy in Palestinian society. The group entitled Environment consists of four tales, ‘The Little She-Goat’, ‘The Old Woman and Her Cat’, ‘Dunglet’ and ‘The Louse’. This group is quite different from the previous ones since it does not reflect Palestinian social reality in the same way the other tales do. Rather, the tales serve “an analogical function and as models of that reality” (ibid: 290). According to Muhawi & Kanaana, the tales are a “reflection of the existing harmonious interdependence and connection between the individuals and their environment, both animate and inanimate” (ibid: 290). Themes of collaboration and support prevail in these tales, symbolising and promoting values of collectivity, and solidarity among Palestinians. The last group is Universe, a theme that transcends the familial, societal and physical environment. The four tales in this group deal with “the relationship between the human and the divine; a relationship based on the acceptance of the will of God” (ibid: 324). The tales in the group address the way Palestinian society perceives folk religion and official religion. Moreover the tales highlight the notion of wisdom and its difference between Palestinian men and women. Wisdom is shown to be acquired through self-acceptance and understanding the forces of life and social constraints. Fate can be also a source of reward or punishment.
Conclusion

To sum up, the discussion in this first chapter has aimed to describe the structure and content of *Speak, Bird, Speak Again* (1989) and its Arabic version *Qul Ya Tayer* (2001). In order to understand the significance of such an endeavour by two prominent Palestinian folklorists, Ibrahim Muhawi & Sharif Kanaana, it was necessary to discuss the social role of storytellers in Palestine. The latter aimed at highlighting the importance of Palestinian popular culture in relation to oral literature and heritage at a time when Palestinians strive to reinforce their national and cultural memory and identity. To be able to grasp the strong connection between folktales and Palestinian society, I have discussed briefly their religious, psychological and social functions. I have then shed some light on the lives and scholarly backgrounds of both compilers, which again helps to contextualise their compilation. The second part of this chapter has focused mainly on describing the structure and extensive paratextual elements of both English and Arabic versions of Muhawi & Kanaana’s folktale compilation. The description of the tales and their paratextual elements has paved the way for a more detailed and analytical discussion in the coming chapters. For the reader to explore and understand the role of both the tales and their paratextual elements, the second chapter will focus on discussing major works on memory in general and collective, prosthetic, cultural and post-memory in particular. The discussion will provide a framework for analysing the tales as markers of cultural continuation and collective shared aspirations across time and place, highlighting the compilers’ and storytellers’ efforts in reinforcing cultural and national identity. To do so, I will discuss the main components of Palestinian collective memory, these being oral history, national identity, language and the *Nakba* in 1948 within trauma studies.
Chapter 2. Memory and Identity: The Palestinian Case

Go back where you started, or as far back as you can, examine all of it, travel your road again and tell the truth about it. Sing it or shout or testify or keep it to yourself: but know whence you came.

James Baldwin (1985: xix)

Subject to our past experiences and lives, memory is an active factor in moulding and shaping our daily existence, visions and expectations. Remembering an event can be a source of enjoyment and a longing for a beautiful past; or it can be an unforgettable scar of trauma, anxiety and loss. Expressing memory, especially collective memory, can take multiple forms, depending on our position in the present and our relation to the past. Memory in modernity has been a crucial element in the formation of nations and states; it has the capacity to regenerate or destroy the flow of individual narratives in the sphere of history and identity. Historians, philosophers, sociologists and anthropologists have paid much attention to the construction of memory, in particular collective memory, from different angles and they have focused on analysing its related components: identity, belonging, folklore, social and ethnic structures of a nation, and so on. Studies have involved looking at individual activities and group testimonies, they have examined documentaries and folklore, and there is a long tradition of work in oral history (Grodzinky, 2001: 1-2).

In this chapter, I intend to review some key works on memory of value to this discussion. To better understand the involvement of memory in a nation’s historical and identity formation, I will discuss the interconnectedness, ambivalence and multilayered nature of each of history, memory and narrative. This discussion will also help to lay the grounds for understanding and questioning the representation of Palestinian collective memory. Discussing Palestinian collective memory will lead me to explore the nature of Palestinian oral history, language and nationalism, which all play major roles in shaping it. It is also relevant to read the Nakba— a major Palestinian traumatic experience— through some concepts in trauma studies (Caruth, 1995; Lacapra, 2001). In fact, the Nakba suffers from a lack of analysis and representation within social science studies in general and its aftermath on literary production and folk narratives in particular, which I
will attempt to address in this chapter. Can Palestinians consider the *Nakba* as a dead past in their writings? How does nostalgia affect the understanding of the Palestinian *Nakba*? And what is its function? Finally, the last section of this chapter is devoted to discussing the relevance of newly developed concepts in the field of memory studies, namely post memory and prosthetic memory, to the development of Palestinian collective memory and identity. Thus, my aim is to explain and clarify the differences and similarities in understanding and interpreting memory and identity in general and the Palestinian case in particular and in relation to *Speak, Bird, Speak Again* (1989), *Qul Ya Tayer* (2001), to which chapter three and four will be devoted.

### 2.1 The definition of Memory and Collective Memory

Memory as a focus for study began in the age of Aristotle and Plato as a “dialectical study” (Rossington & Whitehead, 2007:21). The function of memory, ways of retrieving information and the interconnection between remembering and recollecting made memory an important area to analyse and explore. This early fascination with memory, which continued into the Middle Ages, was triggered by human capacities in performing the art of rhetoric or oratory, otherwise called rhetorical memory. In her essay, *The Book of Memory: A Study in Medieval Culture* (1990), Carruthers explores the early techniques of Memoria as an art of reading, copying, annotation and recitation. The tradition of Memoria was considered as a process of “rumination and digestion” (ibid; Carruthers, 2007) where the human being was trained to digest the knowledge acquired and represent it as the “self” vis-à-vis the “other” or society. During the Romantic era, memory was paired and contrasted with imagination (Hume, 2000). David Hume, for example, in *Treatise of Human Nature*, proposed that memory is more faithful and vivid in comparison to imagination or, in his words, its impressions are “more strong and lively than those of the fancy” (ibid: 11). John Locke also identified “the importance of memory for anchoring a sense of individual continuity over time” (Locke in Ferguson, 1996: 509). Locke believed that memory’s power lies in its flexibility and capacity to regenerate and renew ideas. Understanding the beginning of interest in memory and memory studies, ranging from Aristotle to John Locke at this level, is relevant to the current study since it shows that memory - both as a natural physical ability and a trained social practice - encourages the continuity and survival of the individual’s identity within time. Based on European accounts, these notions are also applicable when referring to Arab Palestinian memory, which I will analyse shortly.
Memory was then subjected to more critical analysis in the later phase of modernity. Henry Bergson (1955), for instance, proposed several types of memory, namely “habit memory” and “pure memory”. The former “consists in obtaining certain automatic behaviour by means of reception”, whereas the latter “refers to the survival of personal memories in the unconscious” (Rossington & Whitehead, 2007: 93). Bergson, in fact, introduced the concept of multiplicity and interconnectedness of memory. From a psychological perspective, Sigmund Freud introduced the notion of the “Mystic Writing Pad” (1925), in which he transcends the simplistic ideas of, first, memory leaving a permanent trace and, second, of memory being like a wax tablet where the inscription can be erased. Freud suggests instead the notion of the “Mystic Writing Pad”, combining metaphorically both the permanence and disappearance of record in the human mind. In other words, there are “two separate but interrelated layers or levels: the celluloid covering sheet from which the writing vanishes once it is lifted, and the wax slab beneath which retains the permanent trace of what was written, an inscription which is legible in certain lights” (ibid: 94). With the rise of the Durkheimian school of thought, the focus on memory shifted from the “cognitive preoccupation of philosophy and psychology to the cultural concerns of sociology and anthropology” (Rossington & Whitehead, 2007: 135), highlighting “social phenomena” as separate from and independent of individuals and their mental representations. In Durkheim’s theory ideas are socially manifested and are related to the collective representations of social life. In fact, Durkheim initiated the notion of collective memory as central to the reproduction of society.

Influenced by Durkheimian thought, the French sociologist Maurice Halbwachs developed the notion of collective memory as part of a discourse within a cultural framework rather than a simple physical process of remembering information. In Les cadres sociaux de la mémoire (1925),33 Halbwachs argued that, “The individual calls recollections to mind by relying on the frameworks of social memory” (Halbwachs, 1992: 182). The contribution made by Halbwachs was to show that collective memory is socially constructed rather than a given reality; moreover, memory can only be collective if it is marked by the remembrance of particular groups or individuals. In Collective Memory (1992), he explains, “While the collective memory endures and

33 Les cadres sociaux de la mémoire (1925) is the original work in French, translated into English in 1992 under the title of Collective Memory.
draws strength from its base in a coherent body of people, it is individuals as group members who remember” (ibid: 84).

Rejecting the Freudian belief which stresses the role of the individual’s unconscious in retrieving or repressing past experiences, Halbwachs argues that the act of remembering can happen coherently within the groups to which individuals belong. “There is [thus] no point”, he argues, “in seeking where…[memories] are preserved in my brain or in some nook of my mind to which I alone have access: for they are recalled by me externally, and the groups of which I am a part at any time give me the means to reconstruct them” (Halbwachs, 1992: 38). Halbwachs believes that there is no such thing as “individual memory”; the “real memory” is collective memory (Halbwachs, 1992). Paradoxically, collective memory finds its source in individuals’ pasts, thus it cannot exist without an individual’s own practices of memory recollection. In fact, collective memory is initiated by the individual, being the main unit, and then becomes part of a group’s aspiration.

Collective remembrance as it is conceptualised by Halbwachs can take different forms, realised mainly in group events, rituals and ceremonies which highlight the social solidarity of a group’s common past. In his book How Societies Remember (1989), Paul Connerton expands on Halbwachs’s idea of sharing and celebrating a common past manifested by “ongoing processes of commemoration and officially sanctioned rituals” (Halbwachs in Connerton, 1992: 32). Here individual and collective memories become two sides of the same coin. Individual physical and emotional memories, in this sense, are recalled, revived and reconstructed by group or collective memorial activities as described by Connerton. Thus, “it is individuals who remember, not groups or institutions, but these individuals being located in a specific group context, draw on the context to remember or recreate the past” (ibid).

Collective memory can unify individuals’ past and heritage; it tells a collective story. Nonetheless, groups’ intentions to recreate a particular past can be both multiple and interpreted differently. Because individuals express their memories through social collective manifestation, each group’s method of recall will be different. The diversity of representation creates, according to Halbwachs, a multiplicity of collective memories, thus a multiplicity in interpreting and constructing the past (Halbwachs, 1992). The fact that collective memory is multiple reflects the different and specific intentions for each group, institution and society. Similarly, the differences and
multiplicities in representing and framing a particular collective memory are subject to “the beliefs, interests and aspiration of the present context” (ibid: 37). The selectivity of shaping and reconstructing past memories is, according to both Halbwachs and Schwartz (1996), subject to present manipulations and desires. A good example provided by Halbwachs (1992) and Zerubavel (1995) is the Jewish interest in *Masada*, which arose only with the rise of Zionism in this century. I will come back to this example after discussing the ambivalent nature of narratives within historiography and the representation of memory.

Collective memories may not have organic existence but their presence are not only bound to metaphor or individual agencies only. Any public action taken, such as creating associations or writing memoirs, is triggered by personal intentions and desires; nevertheless, they are not purely private matters, since they exist in a social framework of collective action. “Collective memory originates from shared communications about the meaning of the past, anchored in the lives of individuals who partake in the communal life of a specific collective” (Sivan & Winter, 1999: 10). This observation is particularly apt in the Palestinian case, where, in the absence of a state, first the individual and later on group agency have played a key role in cultivating collective memory.

### 2.2 History, Memory and Narrative

Practitioners of history have attempted to differentiate between history and memory, drawing on their functions and modes of operation, or have tried to establish a bridge between history and memory. To understand the interwoven nature and specificity of each concept in relation to this research, it is relevant to draw on Paul Ricoeur and Hayden White’s readings about the ambivalent interconnectedness between historiography, narrative and memory. Then, I will refer briefly to Mona Baker and Francesca Poletta’s views concerning the power of narrative, being a tool of representation and/or overlapping with another tool of representation and interpretation: framing. Finally, I will draw on Maurice Halbwachs and Pierre Nora’s views on the relationship between memory and history. This discussion will clarify and question the role, impact and power of narrative in relation to memory and history; it will also pave the way for a discussion of Palestinian collective memory.
Ricoeur dedicated his works to the analysis and interconnectedness of concepts such as time, narrative, history, memory and forgetting. If we look first at his three volume work *Time and Narrative*, Ricoeur analyses the relationship between the historical text and the reader through the strong implication of time and narrative. He highlights the interdependence of both terms, when he says: “I take temporality to be that structure of existence that reaches language in narrativity and narrativity to be the language structure that has temporality as its ultimate referent. Their relationship is therefore reciprocal” (Ricoeur, 1981: 165). Narratives are stories which reflect human experiences, told by particular people in a specific time frame. The temporality (or lived experience of time) here plays a major role in framing the aims of a particular narrative; or vice versa, “time becomes human time to the extent that it is organized after the manner of a narrative” (Ricoeur, 1984: 3). Thus, a narrative discloses the features of a temporal experience. The reciprocal intelligibility of time and narrative is essential to understanding the construction of a historical event, and particularly so when we turn to consider Palestinian narratives, both historical and political.

The link between time and narrative can also include an important reference to human thought, intention, and positioning. This is because, as Ricoeur argues in his third volume *Time and Narrative*, “our being-in-the-world” and our very “within timeness” is achieved or completed in the narrative experience of time. In other words, the narrative is realised through a process of telling or reading, through which our relation to time is marked. Ricoeur explains in a later essay that human experience has “a pre-narrative quality” and hence “we are justified in speaking of life as a story in its nascent state, and so of life as an activity and a passion in search of a narrative” (ibid, 1991: 29). On another level, the narrativity concept, according to Ricoeur, covers human historicity. Historiography in his eyes can function in a similar way to fiction, shaped into a narrative, highlighting a temporal interactive phase between time, space and the world shared by people; a narrative provides a state of being-with-others in a shared world, “which depends on continuity of time as well as of space” (ibid: 113). The idea that narrativity acts as a medium of continuation between time and space is also perceived as a tool to reconcile past with present. It is via narration that all of temporality, space and identity acquire sense.

A few years later, Ricoeur extended these insights by examining the reciprocal relationship between remembering and forgetting in *Memory, History, Forgetting* (2004). Since, in his opinion, representation as part of a philosophy of time describes
human existence as historical; and since human beings are capable of talking, narrating and acting, humans have also the capacity to make memories and, conversely, of forgetting. He starts his discussion by highlighting the issue of temporal duration to which he establishes a distinction between “immediate memory or retention and secondary memory (reollection) or reproduction” (ibid: 32). Then he discusses the relationship between representation and narration. He notes that “the narrative form as such interposes its complexity and its opacity on the referential impulse of the historical narrative. The narrative structure tends to form a circle with itself and to exclude as outside the text, as an illegitimate extralinguistic presupposition, the referential moment of narration” (ibid: 237). Ricoeur also questions the exterior distance in reproducing a memory of history. Writing history, in his opinion, is an irreducible course of reconstruction in order to “represent the past faithfully” (ibid: 229) as an instrument for seeking truth as a faithful testimony. On the one hand, narratives can be representative of a life in a particular time, in which the narration of experiences helps to safeguard memory and provide a medium through which it can survive. On the other hand, however, narratives are rarely innocent and straightforward reflections of people’s experiences: they are open to contestation and controversy, as well as to being manipulated and used as a powerful means of social control. This makes the representation of memory a deeply political question. In this sense, it is worth analysing in more depth Ricoeur’s concepts and others in my discussion of the notions of post-memory, memory as a form of resistance, and forgetting and forgiving in the Palestinian context throughout this chapter and the following ones.

Given the emphasis on the Holocaust in Ricoeur’s writings, it is unavoidable to refer to the importance of collective memory within the field of historiography; he writes that “as soon as the idea of a debt to the dead, to people of flesh and blood to whom something really happened in the past, stops giving documentary research its highest end, history loses its meaning” (ibid, 1988: 118). Historiography in his view aims at unfolding stories and narratives about collective memory. Ricoeur’s definition can be debatable and controversial in the field of historiography, a point I will not analyse in depth as it is not relevant to the current research. As I explore in the following section, Ricoeur’s theorisation of the relationship between memory and history, in spite of being described by more recent studies as traditional or idealistic, helps to understand the importance of preserving and expressing a narrative continuity in the Palestinian context.
where the process of coming to terms with the traumatic Palestinian past is far from over.

For Ricoeur, narratives act as gateways to understanding and awareness of human historicity (being-in-time). His approach, however, does not consider the act of narration as linking the present to the past. The question to be asked, in relation to history, is whether narratives of the past are changed to fit a particular present. Unlike Ricoeur, Hayden White (1989) challenges the idea that narratives are means for human beings to deal with the aporias of temporality in order to understand their existence in time. White argues that the function of historiography can be more complex and less naïve. Narratives concerning the past, he claims, are made and constructed so as to be adhered to and accepted within present standards. In the same vein, Louis Mink, the American philosopher of history, believes that “our experience of life does not itself necessarily have the form of narrative, except as we give it that form by making it the subject of stories” (Mink, 1978: 131-132). In this sense, experiences of a past are inseparable from the way that past is narrated through a particular story line or structure. Both Mink and White see narrative being used to establish form or impose order on human behaviour and hence affect expectation and interpretation.

To continue this theme, I would like to draw briefly on the definition of narrative in relation to framing by Mona Baker and Francesca Poletta, whose views complement those of Ricoeur and White. Narratives, according to Baker, are “public and personal ‘stories’ that we subscribe to and that guide our behaviour. They are the stories we tell ourselves, not just those we explicitly tell other people, about the world(s) in which we live” (Baker, 2006: 19). A narrative, like a painting or a photograph, may be surrounded by a frame which “undoubtedly plays an important role in defining the boundaries of the image (or narrative) and constrains our understanding or appreciation of it” (ibid, 2008: 23). Baker’s definition refers to the “frame”, or “framing”. The process by which the meaning of events is socially constructed and negotiated has been primarily addressed from two related yet largely distinct perspectives. The first, which favours the use of the term “framing”, focuses on actors (e.g. a text producer) setting out to evoke certain responses and mobilise support for their respective position (Klandermans 1992; Snow and Benford 1988; Snow et al. 1986). A second perspective, which might be termed the “sense making” perspective, emphasises the social, psychological and epistemological processes by which actors form an understanding of the situations in which they find themselves (Weick 1995, 1999). In literature, framing is perceived as a
central organising idea or story line that provides meaning “to an unfolding strip of events, weaving a connection among them” (Gamson and Modigliani, 1987: 143). In the first chapter, I explained briefly the concept of ‘paratext’ which is considered to be a form of framing. The power of framing or paratexts will become clearer once we analyse both folktales and the compilers’ annotations, referred to as ‘framing’ or ‘paratextual materials’.

At this stage, it is worth remembering that both framing and narrative can overlap and be two faces of the same coin. For instance, in *Riddles of Belonging* (Merill 2008), Christi Merill discusses the way oral-based fictional works from Hindi, Rajasthani, Sanskrit and Urdu are embedded within complex narratives, whether those of spousal abuse or ethnic violence, which the society appears to deal with by incorporating them into sarcastic stories. In her view, for one to understand what framing devices are used in telling these oral stories, one has to “ask what kind of world is being created collectively in the ongoing storytelling process we are engaged in at that moment, in comparison to other possible performances located in various points in time and space” (ibid: 106). This means that a particular narrative is subject to being framed in different ways at different points in space and time, and using different framing devices, thus giving rise to different interpretations of the same set of events.

Commemoration, in the context of social memory, is another good example for understanding memory manifestation within a specific narrative layout. In Yael Zerubavel’s words, commemoration reproduces a commemorative narrative - a story about a particular past that accounts for this ritualised remembrance and provides a moral message for group members (Zerubavel, 1995). The multiplicity and repetitive nature of those commemorations, whether consistent or fragmentary in nature, contribute to the formation of a “master narrative” (ibid: 89) or a “masterplot” (Abbott, 2002: 42), focusing on the group’s distinct social identity and drawing attention to its historical development. In fact, it establishes “the story line that is culturally constructed and provides the group members with a general notion of their past” (ibid: 89). The master commemorative narrative stresses the existence of a particular social

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34 Somers and Gibson (1994:61) define master narratives as universal narratives “in which we are embedded as contemporary actors in history... Progress, Decadence, Industrialization, Enlightenment, etc” or as part of major historical events. Baker (2006) points out the difference between “master narratives” and “masterplots”, defined by Abbott (2002: 42) as “stories that we tell over and over in Myriad forms and that connect vitally with our deepest values, wishes, and fears.” As Abbott explains, masterplots “undergird” master narratives, “are much more skeletal and adaptable and can occur in narrative after narrative” (Abbott, 2002: 43).
identity, which reflects in its turn the group’s collective memory. Commemorations do not only serve as mediums for memory but are also used deliberately to react against the threat of losing or silencing the identity of a particular group. Palestinians, for example, consider the 
Nakba
as a key reference for their commemorative narrative. As I will discuss, the 
Nakba
narrative represents both a painful memory of the nation’s suffering and a continuing open struggle for the protection of identity, as well as a focal representation of a pre-1948 longing for harmony and stability.

The overlap between the notion of frame and that of narrative is also evident when we consider one of the definitions of frame, as a central organising idea, and compare it with one of the features of narrativity, namely causal emplotment (Baker, 2006). Causal emplotment refers to the way that narratives do not recount events randomly but emplot them in such a way as to allow people to make moral sense of them. Thus, two people could agree that terrorism is an inhuman act but disagree about its causes. One person might see it as an unjustifiable act of violence against innocent people, whereas another might interpret it as an inevitable and desperate response to occupation or oppression. Sniderman and Theriault (1999) found, for example, that when government spending for the poor is explained as enhancing and improving their living standards, individuals tend to support increased spending. However, when it is explained as resulting in higher taxes, individuals tend to oppose increased spending.

Like Baker, Polletta (2006) attempts to distinguish between narratives and frames, though she defines both somewhat differently. For her, a narrative is a story which has “an identifiable beginning, middle, and end” (ibid: 8). Narratives make sense of a chronological set of events in the past and the present, which are then projected into the future. Moreover, narratives are the basis of self-identity and action: “we act not after the kind of categorization that frames imply […], but by locating events within an unfolding life story” (Polletta 1998: 140 italics added for emphasis). The overlap between narratives and framing can be also seen in the way Poletta uses the phrase ‘locating events’ since, in my opinion, locating is a form of interpreting via choosing, selecting or prioritising. Polletta focuses specifically on the power of storytelling and stories in mobilising political and social movements. According to her, “stories are politically effective not when they have clear moral messages, but when they have complex, often ambiguous ones” (Poletta, 2006: 21). This means that stories are inherently open to interpretation depending on different framing devices that may be used to mobilise the recipient.
Drawing a distinction between a narrative and a story, Polletta describes “events in a story [as] coherent, true, and normatively salient because they conform to stories we have heard before”; narratives, however, “depend on plot, and plot depends on previous plots, on a common, conventional, stock of plots” (Polletta, 2006: 168-169). She goes on to argue that narratives are ambiguous because words and events are always subject to interpretation. In her terms, “we know that things could have turned out differently but also that a different moral could be derived from the same events told differently” (ibid: 172). In other words, the narrative can be told in different ways using different categorised and labelled frames, which endow the same narrative with multiple interpretations. The overlap therefore results in transforming the frame into a narrative in its own right.

A good example at this stage, providing a clear illustration of the multifaceted nature of narrative, is seen in the contemporary representation of Masada in Jewish history.35 Yael Zerubavel shows how this particular tale is today embedded in Israeli commemorative narratives and aims at stressing heroism and patriotism in spite of the defeat against the Romans. Zerubavel explains the reason for equating both Holocaust narrative and Masada in Israeli culture to “contributing to the centrality of the ‘tragic plot’ as a paradigm for reflecting on the past and interpreting the present” (Zerubavel, 1994: 89). By also comparing past to present, Masada to Zionism, and by designating point of reference in the past, the power that historians have in shaping the narrative is highlighted. The past here is embedded within a contemporary narrative, which aims to justify present actions, such as Zionism, by making them acceptable interpretations within the stream of Jewish history. Knowing the nature and interconnectedness of both narratives and framing at this stage will help understand the different ways that Palestinian collective memory is presented in the compilation under study, which I will discuss in depth in the following chapters.

35 Nachman Ben-Yehuda: “Masada was part of a much larger Jewish revolt against the Roman Empire between the years 66-73. That revolt ended in disaster and in bitter defeat for the Jews. Masada was only the final defeat in the much larger suppression of that revolt.” Cited in http://www.bibleinterp.com/articles/masadamyth1.htm [October 24, 2011] p.2-3.

Ben-Yehuda (1995) in Masada Myth: Collective Memory and Mythmaking In Israel states that “According to Josephus, a 1st-century CE Jewish Roman historian, Herod the Great fortified Masada between 37 and 31 BCE as a refuge for himself in the event of a revolt. In 66 CE, at the beginning of the First Jewish-Roman War against the Roman Empire, a group of Jewish extremists, called the Sicarii, overcame the Roman garrison of Masada. After the destruction of the Second Temple in 70 CE, additional members of the Sicarii and numerous Jewish families fled Jerusalem and settled on the mountaintop, using it as a base for harassing the Romans.”
Traditional historiography supported the belief that history itself consists of a “congeries of lived stories, individual and collective, and that the principal task of historians is to uncover these stories and to retell them in a narrative, the truth of which would reside in the correspondence of the story told to the story lived by real people in the past” (Hayden White, 1978: ix-x). However, as history became a discipline and a profession, its linkage with collective memory became both more reflective and more problematic, limited by the norms of science and the rules of evidence. Yerushalmi (1982: 95) draws a sharp contrast between Jewish memory and Jewish historiography, arguing that until the eighteenth century, the former excluded the latter. On the one hand, he complains about this condition because, as he writes, “…collective memory…is drastically selective. Certain memories live on; the rest are winnowed out, repressed, or simply discarded by a process of natural selection which the historian, uninvited, disturbs and reverses.” On the other hand, he critiques history’s distance from meaning and relevance: “…Jewish historiography can never substitute for Jewish memory… A historiography that does not aspire to be memorable is in peril of becoming a rampant growth” (ibid: 101). Halbwachs and Nora, among other scholars, have questioned the relationship between memory and history. Halbwachs considered history as dead memory, a tool through which we preserve a past we no longer have an organic experiential relation. In this regard, it is worth highlighting the differences in dealing with both concepts by Halbwachs and Nora. Halbwachs makes a distinction between autobiographical memory, historical memory, history and collective memory. Historical memory “reaches the social actor only through written records and other types of records, such as photography. But it can be kept alive through commemorations, festive enactment and the like” (Halbwachs, 1992: 23). Thus, each celebration is a reinforcement of the memory of an event. Autobiographical memory, on the other hand, “is memory of events that we have personally experienced” (ibid: 24). In this way, we can understand history as part of an inactive or unimportant phase of our lives; while collective memory is “the active past that forms our identities” (Olick & Robbins, 1998: 133).

Halbwachs’s work influenced many historians who elaborated further on the distinction between history and memory. In his collectively-authored Les Lieux de Mémoire, the French historian Pierre Nora, for example, has provided extended definitions for both memory and history:

Memory is life, borne by living societies founded in its name. It
remains in permanent evolution, open to the dialectic of remembering and forgetting, unconscious of its successive deformations, vulnerable to manipulation and appropriation, susceptible to being long dormant and periodically revived...History, on the other hand, is the reconstruction, always problematic and incomplete, of what is no longer... Memory is blind to all but the group it binds. In other words, memory is multiple but individual at the same time. History, on the other hand, belongs to everyone and to no one. (Nora, 1989: 9-10)

Like Halbwachs, Nora establishes a binary opposition, “emotionally charged”, between history and memory (Erll, 2008: 6). Memory is hence selective, multiple, concrete, fixed and alive; whereas history is incomplete, reconstructed, intellectual and temporal. From his definitions, one can see the differences between both concepts but also their interconnections. Instead of having memory versus history, as Erll (2008) suggests, it is more useful to combine both and analyse the “modes of remembering” (ibid: 7). Since our past is not given but represented and reconstructed continuously, and since our individual experiences differ but end up becoming grouped into the collective, it is more fruitful to look at not only what is remembered but “how it is remembered” (ibid).

This binary opposition between history and memory received criticism from a number of historians. For Yael Zerubavel (1995), history and memory do not operate in totally detached opposite directions; rather, their relationships are underlined by conflict as well as interdependence. “The past cannot be literally construed; it can only be selectively exploited,” as collective memory continuously negotiates between available historical records and current social and political agendas (Al-Ahrām Weekly, 1998). Another opponent to the binary opposition between history and memory is the French historian Le Goff, for whom collective memory is mythical and distorted. He considers collective memory to be a tool used in order to mix the past with the present in a confusing way; nonetheless, it is the living connection between both periods (Le Goff [as it appears] in Kawathrānī, 2000). Le Goff questions the credibility of collective memory as the only source for knowing the past, but at the same time he gives more importance to history written by “expert historians”, as he likes to refer to them. However, some scholars believe in the importance of the social and historical knowledge derived from the nation’s collective memory. In this regard, Moḥamad Dakrūb goes on to say:

It [collective memory] is the crucial element for a continuing

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36 My translation as it appears in Kawathrānī Wajīh (2000).
knowledge. It is not just an imaginary creation aimed at establishing the missing elements of a lost balance of civilization. Collective memory also represents a true realistic value through its role in preserving traditions, beliefs and values. (Dakrub, 1984: 25)

Unlike Le Goff, Dakrub considers collective memory as the storage facility from which knowledge of society can be obtained and on which all historians and sociologists can draw when need be. Kawathraní also recognises the power of memory in controlling historical discourse (Kawathraní, 2000). Whereas Le Goff considers “history as a means to enlighten memory, and rectify its mistakes” (Le Goff cited in in Kawathraní, 2000: 26), Kawathraní perceives collective memory as being able to influence history, especially in the way history deals with the past. Memory can interfere in the plotting or formation of historical events in relation to the political, ethical and intellectual contexts of a given nation.

Recent approaches to historiography, however, hold a different understanding of the relationship between history and memory. The idea that memory employs history in its service is used, for example, in order to provide political legitimisation for nationalism. In this regard, Novick (1988) questions the objectivity of historians and the notion of objectivity itself. Historians or historiography, according to postmodernists, are constructing the truth as much as uncovering it (Iggers, 1997; Novick, 1988). Another important controversy in historiography is its selectivity and interpretation. Historical events are interpreted and selected in such a way as to serve a particular purpose in the present by putting it into a “narrative frame” (Baker, 2006). In other words, events and/or experiences occur through a narrative or plot, in which the experience is transformed into a story with a plot. Burke (1989) thus refers to history as social memory, which “sums up the rather complex process of selection and interpretation” (Burke, 1989: 43).

The debate over recent theories and their forerunners centres on whether narrative is considered a natural depiction of human experiences or whether narrative form is imposed on experience in order to control its meaning and interpretation. As we have seen, this leads many theorists to attempt to come to terms with the problematic categorisation of memory within history and vice versa. It is, in my opinion, very difficult, if not impossible, to treat memory and history as separate entities. Their intertwined nature can be even more difficult to separate when tools such as framing and narrative are used to shape the representation of history within memory or memory within history. The aim of reviewing these concepts is to understand these ambivalences.
of narrative in terms of its historical representation of memory when analysing the compilations under study. The question in this case is whether the narrative adopted by the compilers of *SBSA* (1989), *Qul Ya Tayer* (2001) is meant to replicate existing ways of being or whether Palestinian narrative identities are confined and defined according to an imposed master narrative. Another question I will try to answer is the extent to which history is serving memory, where Palestinian folklorists’ narrative can produce a resistant form of historiography against Israeli attempts of fabrication and denial. Moreover, to what extent can history affect as well as shape Palestinian storytellers and Palestinian cultural memory?

### 2.3 Palestinian Collective Memory

As noted at the beginning of this chapter, memory works within the mechanism of a society: “It is in society that people normally acquire their memories. It is also in society that they recall, recognize, and localize their memories” (Halbwachs, 1992: 43). Because of the multiplicity of the social structure, it is hard to say that memory is monolithic. Collective remembering is a highly complex process, involving different people, practices, materials and themes. Every society has many social groups, thus many collective memories to relate to, but the ways of remembering and representing its components can be different and/or contested. In this regard, Jeffrey K. Olick describes collective memory within two kinds of models. The first one is what he refers to as the “Traditionalist model”, which “assimilate[s] collective memory to heritage, patrimony, national character, and the like, and view[s] collective memory as bedrock for the continuity of identities” (Olick, 2008: 24). The second model, “Presentist”, he argues, “assimilate[s] collective memory to manipulation and deception, a mere tool of the arsenal of power” (ibid). The latter model discusses the intervention of contemporary interests in shaping the past, making the use of memory highly variable. Combining Olick’s models, I will explain what I see as the essential elements in the construction of Palestinian collective memory and identity: namely oral history, nationalism and language. I will then situate the Nakba_ as a contested narrative in shaping Palestinian collective memory_ within memory and trauma studies.

#### 2.3.1 Palestinian Oral History

Collective memory has so far been understood as a social construct aimed at preserving and shaping a group’s cultural, social and political identity. Collective memory, as many
writers and scholars consider it, is a living mobile account of a specific historical event which transcends time and place. The mobility of collective memory is based mainly on “everyday communication” (Assmann, 1995); or what can be also referred to as “communicative memory” (ibid, 1995), which can flourish by relying on oral history. The latter is divided into two types, as stated by Jan Vansina in Adil Yahya’s Al-laji ’ūn al-Falasînîn 1948-1998 ta ’ rîkh shafawî (Palestinian Refugees: 1948-1998 Oral Historisation):

Oral history is a research methodology. It is the study of the past through a spoken language transmitted orally. There are two kinds of oral history: The first is oral heritage which is the study of a remote past through widespread oral stories in a particular society. These stories are transmitted orally over generations or within one generation at least. The second kind is the history of life which focuses on studying the near past through the accounts of eyewitnesses; it is about people’s oral stories, about their lives and experiences. (Vansina in Yahya, 1998: 45)

The role of oral transmission is important for the survival of memory as people interact communicatively in exchanging their accounts, jokes and experiences. Formlessness, wilfulness and disorganisation, according to Assmann, “control the nature of oral communication among people” (Assmann, 1995: 129). Via this form of communication, each individual creates a memory which, as Halbwachs has shown, is socially mediated and connected to a group. Through the practice of oral history, people gain more insight into and a better understanding of a particular collective memory. In this sense, memory is communicative since it mediates the experiences, stories and lives of individuals belonging to a specific group to other individuals belonging to the same or other groups. In other words, “each individual memory constitutes itself in communication with others” (ibid). These individuals consolidate their belonging in a unified group by promoting a shared past over time. The sharing can be within “families, neighbourhood and professional groups, political parties, etc, up to and including nations” (ibid). Every individual belongs to numerous groups and therefore entertains numerous collective self-images and memories.

Oral history research is not merely about information gathering. Since the late 1970s, oral historians have established “the significance of storytelling and the idea that all memories are selective social constructions” (Field, 2006: 34). Storytelling in all its forms enlighten insiders as well as outsiders; it is a vivid depiction and transitional phase between the past, the present and the future of a group’s joys, endeavours, pains,
nostalgia and hope. Māhir Al-Sharīf, a Palestinian thinker and writer, considers collective memory to be “oral memory”. According to him, oral memory is “an oral discourse adopted by a group of people [...] It reflects the changes that occurred in the life of the group; it expresses the need for redefining the original identity which can be at stake” (Al-Sharīf, 2004: 128). Oral history is, in fact, perceived as vital for the preservation and continuation of a whole culture and society, especially if the latter is witnessing multiple threats and risks of disappearance. Portelli (1991) argues that memory has more to do with the ‘creation of meanings’ than with what exactly happened in the past. The creation of sense and consensus can take different shapes and is told by different people most of the time orally.

Much research on collective memory and orality has drawn attention to the point that nations suffering from severe political or social instability feel the urge to protect and strengthen their cultural and/or national identities. In other words, collective memory tends to play a more substantial role in shaping the self-perception and culture of peoples who have suffered historical defeats (such as the Serbs, the Jews and the Palestinians, among others). In the words of Ernest Renan (cited in Lowenthal, 1994:50), “suffering in common unifies more than joy does. Where national memories are concerned griefs are of more value than triumphs, for they impose duties, and require a common effort”. Miller and Touryan (1991), for example, conducted a study on diaspora Armenians who were expelled by Turkey in 1915-18. Miller and Touryan’s research aimed at measuring and analysing the degree of transmission of Armenian collective memory over three generations (grandparents - parents - children in Diaspora). The results show that Armenian collective memory is strong and vivid since Armenians ensured it was preserved by not mixing with other communities and by consolidating cultural identity through oral literature and folklore. By doing so, Miller and Touryan indicated the detail with which Armenian history, cultural identity and social strata are being preserved and strengthened from one generation to the next (ibid).

Another prominent example in memory studies, showing people and institutions’ efforts in preserving and highlighting a nation’s identity, is Holocaust memory. Having been threatened with eradication, Jews witnessing the aftermath of the Nazi massacre attempted to strengthen a sense of communal destiny and identity. In so doing, the preservation of memory is manifested in art, literature and historical archives. In addition, memorial sites are safeguarded through continuing events and commemorations, which represent a source of constant remembrance. In a study
undertaken by Howard Schuman, “Keeping the Past Alive: Memories of Israel Jews at the Turn of the Millennium” (2003), Schuman conducted his research on 2800 Israelis from different ages. The study shows that the most important and memorable two events for Israelis are first the Holocaust and second the establishment of Israel. With regard to the Holocaust, the study shows that there are no differences in describing the Holocaust amongst most Israelis across age, sex, level of education, knowledge or degree of remembrance. Schuman attributes this to the fact that the Holocaust, as a central concept in the Israeli-Jewish history, receives much interest and attention from mainly academic institutions and religious schools among others. The latter play a major role in helping preserve Holocaust memory through lectures, visits to sites such as Auschwitz, visits to geographical sites such as Yad Vashem and through annual commemorations of the event (Schuman, 2003).

Another key example is that of the Palestinian case, which is the focus of this study. Like Armenians and Jews, Palestinians have witnessed important ruptures in their history which have greatly affected their collective memory. Over the course of the twentieth century the task of safeguarding Palestinian cultural collective memory and oral history, seen in folksongs, folktales, clothing and traditional social practices, has become an urgent one given the level of political instability and threat of disappearance. There are two main historical events that have changed Palestinians’ lives and nationhood: the Nakba and the defeat in the 1967 war. Initially, Palestinian national identity emerged during the 19th century throughout the Ottoman period but became more prominent “in the wake of World War I as a result of several interlinked processes and political upheavals”.37 Since 1914 Palestinians have striven to build a national identity. However, with the rise of the Zionist movement, then the expulsion of half of the Palestinian population in 1948, Palestinians marked the Nakba as one of the most tragic turning points in their memory.

Being exiled and under occupation, many Palestinians found themselves either as outsiders struggling to create new homes as refugees in different parts of the world, or as insiders living under occupation. Palestinians found themselves threatened with the loss of their identity and collective integrity since there was no official written or documented history. According to Sonia Al-Nimr (1993: 55):

37 Litvak (2009: 2) explains this as follows: “the breakdown of the Ottoman Empire, the failure of an indigenous successor-state to unite ex-Ottoman Syria, the escalating Zionist challenge, the establishment of British rule over a territorially distinct Palestine, and the corresponding politicization of Palestinians due to unsettled conditions between 1914 and 1923.”
What has been written of Palestinians’ history (mainly by their colonizers and occupiers), ignores their culture, aspirations and point of view, and in many cases falsifies this history. As stateless people, the Palestinians have compensated for the lack of official institutions which document and preserve their history by sustaining collective memories.

Promoting collective memory under unstable social and political circumstances has become a vital element in developing Palestinian identity. For example, Palestinians in refugee camps in the Middle East regrouped themselves into similar social structures to their village society in Palestine prior to 1948. They were and are making continuous efforts to preserve their habits, costumes, customs, folk stories and sayings, songs, dances, and food. Most of all they sustained inter-village marriages to secure the continuity of village communities from one generation to the next (Al-Nimr, 1993). In her research on Palestinian costume, Shelagh Weir interviewed refugees from the village of Bayt Dajān who were living in Jordan, Gaza and the West Bank in the 1980s, and observed:

Village identity and pride remain strong among refugees. Much intermarriage still takes place between fellow villagers, the older women still wear costumes which proclaim their village origins. (Weir, 1989: 52)

Along the same lines, Rosemary Sayigh noticed the same phenomenon during her research in the 1970s among the Palestinian refugees in Lebanon:

So even today a camp Palestinian’s speech gives away his/her village of origin. Other cultural methods - embroidery styles, songs, folk sayings dishes - are further evidence of village particularism, reinforced by inter-village marriage, a custom so strong it is still that marriage that camp people prefer. (Sayigh, 1977: 22)

During Al-Nimr’s research into pre-1948 revolutions in Palestine, she found that in Galilee and other areas under Israeli rule, village traditions, habits, inter-village marriage and ritual occasions have been kept almost completely intact from the pre-1948 period. One of her interviewees told her:

Peasants in general are passive people, they don’t accept new things easily, especially if they are imposed on them. We kept our traditions, and we took a strong hold on them as a way of expressing our refusal of the new life and culture the Israelis are imposing on us. (Al-Nimr, 1993: 54)
This is a key point in my discussion of peasant identity within the folktales in the compilation under study, being a form of protecting Palestinian cultural memory and identity, which I will elaborate in more depth in the fourth chapter.

The defeat in the 1967 war also increased the need to consolidate and revive Palestinian collective memory and identity. The hope of regaining the homeland was shattered by the defeat of Arab troops by Israel. As a result, an immediate and urgent sense of securing and transmitting Palestinian heritage, culture and identity to younger generations emerged. After coming to terms with defeat, the 1970s and 1980s saw “the proliferation of folk songs, traditional dance, interest in and use of traditional costume, publications of collections of folktales and research about folklore” (Al-Nimr, 1993: 54). Thus, more recently, there has been an increasing interest and intense awareness of the significance of oral history in the Palestinian situation, particularly with the passing away of the older generation.

Because there is little research and documentation in the Palestinian case, in comparison to other countries affected by traumatic events, some Palestinian thinkers, anthropologists and intellectuals are making efforts to contribute to the documentation of Palestinian oral history and the revival of Palestinian cultural identity. Two leading researchers, among many, are Rosemary Sayigh and Sharif Kanaana. Sayigh began her oral research among Palestinians in the refugee camps in Lebanon, carrying out an important study in 1979, entitled Al-falāḥūn al-Falasṭīnīn: min al-iqtiṣā ilā al-thawra (Palestinian Peasants: From Uprooting to Revolutionaries). Sayigh has then looked at Palestinian women in some Palestinian camps in Lebanon in her work entitled Nisa ‘al-mukhayamāt al-falastīnīa: ruwāt al-tārīkh (Women of Palestinian Camps: Narrators of History in 1998). At the end of her study, Sayigh concludes by saying:

We can consider writing the history of a village, a city and a camp in recent years as an attempt to regain, at least partially, those places which did disappear because of destruction or forgetfulness […] Women played a major role in narrating history since they represent a crucial element in the national history, without whose role our history would be missing and incapable of explaining the continuity of Palestinian resistance. (Sayigh, 1998: 58)

Palestinian women have, as I will elaborate in the third and fourth chapters, played a major role in narrating, promoting and preserving Palestinian collective memory. They are reliable eyewitnesses of life and history, and very good narrators and storytellers (Muhawi & Kanaana, 1989).
In the 1980s, Sharif Kanaana (co-compilers of *SBSA*) published a series of booklets entitled *Tawthīq al-qurā al-Falasṭīnīa al-mudamara* (Documenting the Destroyed Palestinian Villages). In this series of twenty-four booklets, Kanaana’s principal objective is to document social, political and economic life in some Palestinian villages before they were destroyed by the Israelis, as well as documenting the traumatic memories of Palestinians expelled in 1948. His study focuses on the importance of Palestinian oral history in safeguarding Palestinian heritage, culture and identity. As Kanaana and Sayigh’s research shows, refugees have developed “communities of memory” (Magat, 2000: 22), in which people take part in activities that reflect a commitment to both the memory of the past and the dreams of return to an independent Palestine in the future. In Litvak’s words:

> On the one hand, Palestinians have experienced major historical changes and dislocations in the past century, culminating in the 1948 Nakba, which has largely eliminated an old way of life. On the other hand, the living memories of 1948 are still alive—even though those who have actually experienced these events are gradually passing away. It is because of the current political status and living conditions of many individuals in the refugee camps and the proximity to the lost villages in what is now Israel that these memories are kept alive. (Litvak, 2009: 14)

### 2.3.2 Nationalism and Language

At the beginning of this chapter, I referred to Ricoeur’s understanding of the duality of space and time in forming human identities within the stream of historicity. Narratives can not only be considered as a representational mode of a specific time or space but can also be seen as ontological and social phenomena (Sommer and Gibson 1994: 38; Kreiswirth 2000: 296). Theories of narrative identity have agreed so far on the fact that the concept aims at expressing how we make sense of our experiences and how we construct and interpret our realities and lives through narratives. The way we construct our life stories and the way we interpret them will shape the narrative self and thus our identities. Because we are the products of our experiences and social interactions, communication, whether written or oral, lies at the heart of transmitting and interpreting our identities. Communication is represented via language which is a dynamic component in forming narrative identity, and hence memory.

In every society, collective memory is transmitted from one generation to another, and so requires a reliable medium of expression. In this regard, language is an important element in the process of remembering, recollecting and narrating. By language, I mean
written, readable and spoken words, imagery and symbols, all of which are considered crucial for the construction of memory: “Language is the place where collective memory is stored” (Khoury, 1990: 219). The role of a language in transforming or strengthening collective memory lies in reviving oral and written texts, mainly literary ones such as poetry, short stories or novels. For example, Benedict Anderson (1991) has explained the importance of language in nation formation. In his opinion, modern nations have worked on the construction of their culture, history and memory by reviving their languages using the collective imagination of people. In this regard, Anderson highlights the role of intellectuals, dictionary editors and writers, using local languages, in the formation of European nations in the nineteenth century (Anderson, 1991).

Anderson also focuses on the dynamic modes of identity construction and emphasises the creative and contingent character of national identity, as well as its adaptability to different political and social contexts in the modern world. He perceives the diffusion of the written word, in Anderson’s terms “print capitalism”, as mobilising and facilitating collective political action. Newspapers and novels are the tools of print capitalism, helping to generate a new sense of community. Thus, there is an interconnection between memory, language and nation formation. Reviving memory requires giving importance to language, which can represent a group’s national language, in order to preserve its cultural heritage. And by reviving the language heritage in literary, religious and historical texts, memory is strengthened - hence transmitted - from one generation to the next. In such ways, both memory and language are key elements in the construction and maintenance of national identity, and it is useful to consider this “triangle” of memory, identity and nationalism when dealing with the Palestinian context.

The use of language in reviving and strengthening Palestinian memory is seen vividly in Palestinian literature, both oral and written. The Nakba represents the most tragic and memorable event in Palestinian history, represented by many writers and poets. Themes of nostalgia, trauma and displacement are present in most Palestinian literary works. As I discuss in the coming section, both nostalgia and trauma feature in Palestinian writing

38 Elias Khoury is a Lebanese novelist, playwright and critic. He has published over ten novels, which have been translated into several foreign languages, as well as several works of literary criticism. He served as editor of Al-Mulḥaq, the weekly cultural supplement of the Lebanese daily newspaper Al-Nahār, and is a prominent public intellectual. http://www.aljazeera.net/NR/exeres/F48116B0-F572-4052-A8F0-6A3FBC85D5C.htm [last accessed 23-02-2011].
as sources of power, regeneration and continuation. For Palestinians, the places of the pre-Nakba past and the land of Palestine itself have an extraordinary charge. They are not simply sites of memory but symbols of all that has been lost and sites of longing to which return is barred. Language in this case becomes the witness, the voice of resistance and endurance as well as the hope of change and return. The strength of the language used by Palestinian novelists and poets increases when subjected to the threat of erasure or silencing. One of the main characteristics of Palestinian writing is the use of the collective first-person voice, a communal collective voice. This collectivity is represented in the choice of words, style and themes which are shared among the whole Palestinian society. Lena Jayyusi (2007) believes that the repetition of collective first-person voice, “ours”, in stories articulates the speaking of different stories as shared. This stylistic choice, in her opinion, has a “generalized impact on the coherence of collective subjectivity and on the integrity of communal fabric” (Jayyusi, 2009: 111).

When we look at Palestine, the role of language in the narration of collective memory appears particularly significant. Writing for Palestinians is more than just a means of expression or description; it is their weapon to write back against imposed political and historical meta-narratives supplied by Israel or the West. Most importantly, writing acts as a modifier and activator of communal tragedy, resistance and hope. “Writing is a political act that not only represents the past, but also, within the Palestinian-Israeli context, molds the past. Words determine what is remembered and what is forgotten” (Slyomovics, 2007:1). Such written language, particularly when it takes a sophisticated literary form, tends to be accessible to and shared only by a specific social category, mainly educated urban Palestinians: to understand the style of Ghassan Kanafani and Mahmud Darwish, among many others, Palestinians would have to be familiar with the styles and complexities of language, connotations and metaphor.³⁹ This category of

³⁹ Mahmud Darwish (1942- 2008): “Poet and journalist, an interpreter of the exile and hopes of the Palestinian people. Darwish’s major theme in his poems is the fate of his homeland. Darwish has described the conflict between Palestinians and Israelis as “‘a struggle between two memories’”. Ibrahim Muhawi, his translator, has written that “his is poetry of witnessing.” Cited in http://www.kirjasto.sci.fi/darwish.htm [Accessed on 24/03/2012]

Ghassan Kanafani (1936- 1972): Palestinian novelist, short-story writer, and dramatist. The main themes in his writings are uprootedness, exile, and national struggle. In his stories he often uses the desert and its heat as a symbol for the plight of the Palestinian people. “Ghassan Kanafani’s life and career as a writer was closely connected to the situation of the Palestinians, and his intense involvement in Palestinian affairs gave him a unique vantage point. Kanafani’s first two novels, which experimented with language and form, rank among the most complex in all of Arabic fiction of that time.” Cited in http://www.kirjasto.sci.fi/kanaf.htm [Accessed on 24/03/2012]
readers would enjoy the linguistic and stylistic sophistication that is embedded between the lines; however, it can be difficult for other readers to do so. Peasants or Palestinians from rural areas may have no literary background and hence face difficulties in understanding or reading this kind of literature. This is where the importance of orality or oral literature, mainly storytelling, comes into the picture.

There are two kinds of storytelling: the first is personal accounts or individual testimonies shared by people of the same group. This type of storytelling usually refers to lived past experiences, oral testimonies of the occurrence of an important event or the witnessing of a tragic incident. Oral accounts in the form of storytelling about past events are used in the Palestinian context to “reclaim” and “revive”, mainly to strengthen the communal shared voice of endurance, nostalgia and remembering. Oral stories are like the Palestinian history: a source of knowledge (Sayigh, 1998). It is via storytelling, the medium and form of communication, that narrative identities are made and maintained in an interactive space. The individual’s life-story interacts with other life stories, creating a unified medium of representation and expression (Gergen and Gergen 1983: 270; Mancuso and Sarbin 1983: 236; Carr 1986: 111; Ricoeur 1990: 190; Cavarero 1997: 82).

As discussed in the first chapter, the second type of storytelling is part and parcel of Palestinian popular culture and folklore; it is the narration of folktales which combine real and imaginary elements. This type of storytelling, which my current research discusses in depth, has historically tended to be most common among peasants in rural communities, but is less widespread today. The setting of this type of storytelling is relaxed and harmonious. According to Muhawi and Kanaana, “The folktale tradition we have been describing falls within the context of the extended family and forms part of the social life of a settled and flourishing peasant community” (M&K, 1989: 8). It is through the narrative mediation between personal and social existence that identities are framed, and as I will explain in my analysis of the folktale collection, the framing of Palestinian folktales emphasises the idea that the integrity of our narrative identities depends on their concordance with the versions others offer of ourselves (e.g. Rosenwald and Ochberg 1992: 9; Bruner 2001: 34). For example, as mentioned in the previous chapter, Muhawi & Kanaana, unlike other Palestinian compilers, grouped the folktales in both collections thematically. They divided the folktales into five groups which reflect the individual’s life cycle from childhood to old age. The folktales in their
thematic order reflect the individual’s interaction within wider social layers, which “ground the tales in the culture from which they arise” (M&K, 1989: 11).

The tradition of storytelling was very common before 1948 but decreased after the Nakba. When both compilers, Muhawi and Kanaana, recorded the tales between 1978 and 1980 in SBSA (1989), they also tried to merge the past into the present in the setting of the narration. “The setting in which the folktales presented here were recorded generally resembled the authentic folktale settings of the past, except for the presence of the tape recorder” (ibid: 4). Merging the past into the present is an indication of the need to revive not only the habit of telling stories but more importantly the setting, the feel and the memory. Palestinian connection to memory can be both mental and physical by recreating similar physical sites, which can trigger sensual and vivid images and longing for a more stable past.

As argued in the first chapter, the tales were narrated in the Palestinian dialect and the compilers’ annotations were written in modern standard Arabic. The fact that the tales in Qul Ya Tayer (2001) were not standardised has a significance that is worth highlighting here. In his discussion of the emergence of Palestinian nationalism, Litvak (2009) compared Benedict Anderson’s description of the formation of European nationalism, following the transformation of European oral vernaculars into written languages, with that of the Middle East. According to him, the vernaculars in Europe are different from the various Arab vernaculars, which will never evolve into written languages. Litvak bases his analysis on that of Gerber (1990) who believes that “the central and sacred role of literary Arabic as the language of the Qur’an stands in the way of such a process, thereby slowing down the evolution of distinct identities within a broader Arab nationalism” (Gerber in Litvak, 2009: 8). However, many Palestinian folklorists, like Muhawi and Kanaana among others, argue against Gerber’s claims since both have deliberately kept the tales in the Palestinian dialect and put it into writing in their collection. Muhawi and Kanaana want to preserve the Palestinian dialect, drawing on its strong connection to the formation of an ongoing Palestinian sense of belonging and identity. Muhawi and Kanaana framed their intention clearly in the introduction of SBSA:

The Palestinian folktale is part of the Arabic folk narrative tradition. The tales are told in the Palestinian dialect, with its two major divisions of fallahi (village speech) and madani (city speech). Most of

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40 More explanation is provided in Chapter One.
the tales included were narrated by villagers only because tellers were more available in villages, where the tendency to preserve folk traditions is today much greater than in the cities. In times past, however, the folktale tradition was as popular in cities as in villages, perhaps even more so since city dwellers had more leisure time compared with peasants, who were tied to the cycle of the seasons. City dwellers tend to be more polished in their use of language than villagers, and are less likely to hold the variety of folk beliefs exhibited by village tellers. (Muhawi & Kanaana, 1989: 7)

Cultural forms of writing, including prose, poetry, visual and oral literature, have contributed to forming national symbols, idols and narratives that Palestinians can relate to in their pains and aspirations. In so doing, individual identity is partly constituted through “acquired identifications, values, norms, ideals, models and heroes” (Ricoeur, 1990: 46). In both oral and written Palestinian literature we notice that the peasant *falāḥ* acquires a specific value and becomes a Palestinian national signifier. Idolising the peasant in this way is not to rally an actual peasantry to the national cause, but to constitute a unified people and nation and to endow it with an authentic history and culture. In fact, themes related to land, peasantry and rural life represented an innovated form in Palestinian literary culture, which previously had been rooted in the classical tradition (Parmentier 1984; Jayyusi 1977). The peasant has become “the hero of national literature, whereas prior to 1948, the *falāḥ* - connoting someone lower-class, backward, and uneducated - was absent from official culture” (Swedenburg, 1990: 20). For instance, the tour of eight West-Bank artists from US concluded that “the land, villages, and Palestinian people are preserved through [the painters’] art, as timeless expressions of a unique culture with rich history and traditions” (Cadora, 1988). Among those Palestinian intellectuals who consider it their patriotic duty to save Palestinian folkloric and cultural heritage are Kanaana and Muhawi. Their collections *SBSA* and *Qul Ya Tayer* highlight and stress the theme of harmony, continuity and unity within the Palestinian rural/peasantry collective community.

Features, symbols and ideals highlighting a communal sense of collectiveness in Palestinian memory are transmitted from one generation to another thanks to efforts made by groups to preserve national memory and identity. In other words, the group maintains its identity to exist, while memory represents its cornerstone. Thus, the sense of continuity is protected by remembering and by letting identity find its position and name among a particular group or nation. “National identity requires both having a heritage and believing it to be unique” (Gillis, 1994: 4). While true for every nation, these observations are particularly appropriate for the Palestinians “as a semi-diasporic
people still engaged in a struggle for statehood and a process of nation building” (Litvak, 2009: 1). The notion of nationhood in the Palestinian case is an important element in the formation of Palestinian collective memory.

The work of scholars such as Benedict Anderson and Antony Smith provide insights when discussing Palestinian nationalism. As discussed previously, language and its manifestation, in the press and novels, or what we can call ‘print capitalism’, constitute the cornerstone for the growth of any nation, according to Anderson. Being part of Arab culture and history, Palestinians used the development of the modern Arab press during the Ottoman era to develop their own national and local newspapers.41 The move was meant to create a foundation for a distinct Palestinian identity. A second important aspect that Anderson describes as “shaping modern national consciousness” (Anderson, 1991: 19) is the role of colonial boundaries. Following the First World War, new borders and territorial entities were created under different foreign administrations, and governed by different political systems in the Middle East. The presence of the British mandate on the one hand consolidated the idea that Palestine was part of historical Syria (Bilād Al-Shām), and on the other encouraged Palestinians to react by making efforts towards shaping their own national identity.42

In his discussion of nationalism, Anthony Smith considers that there is an important ethnic essence to all modern nations (Smith, 1999). To understand modern political nationalisms, reference to these earlier ethnic ties and memories, in some cases to pre-modern ethnic identities and communities are needed (ibid). His idea is very useful in understanding Arab nationalism but may be of less help in understanding Palestinian nationalism. Palestinian nationalism has evolved, in fact, following conflict between two groups over territory; in Smith’s words “the frequency, intensity and duration of wars between rival polities is itself a significant factor in crystallizing ethnic sentiments

41 “The most prominent was the biweekly Filastin, which was founded by the Christian al-‘Isa cousins, ‘Isa and Da’ud, in Jaffa in 1911 and became the Arab newspaper with the largest circulation in the country. Although the boundaries of the geographical region envisioned by the name “Filastin” (Palestine) were not clear, the paper’s categorisations or distinction between local and foreign news, and particularly its vocal opposition to Zionism, played a key role in instilling the notion of Palestine as a geographical and sociopolitical entity, whose various social groupings were threatened by Zionism” (Litvak, 2009: 8; Khalidi, 1982).

among an affected population” (Smith, 1986: 38). When we look at the Palestinian case, we find that the threat of loss or disappearance, mainly triggered by the Zionist challenge has created a strong sense of community among Palestinians. In a similar vein, the political geographer Oren Yiftachel explains how, due to the constant struggle with Zionism over the land, Palestinian nationalism grew as “ethnonational in character” in which territory became part and parcel of the nation (Yiftachel, 2002). Smith has also discussed how every national movement’s quest is to establish and even reinforce a common historical past. Despite the fact that some nationalisms are based on fabrications or flawed interpretations, the belief of having a shared historical ground is necessary for the survival of communities and their national identity. Nationalism could be considered as the most powerful agent and activator in the construction and reconstruction of Palestinian collective memory. In fact, “nationalism identifies the available repositories of the past and selects fragments or elements of past periods, events, symbols, or heroes from which it creates a new unified collective past” (Litvak, 2009: 19). The national past becomes memory rather than historical past. This memory is materialised by sites, rituals and representations, which end up being part of a collective identity.

2.3.3 The 1948 Nakba, Trauma and Nostalgia

Scholars of collective memory and historians argue that someone who undergoes a traumatic experience develops belated memory, and performs what Kammen refers to as “memory work” (1995:34-49). With the passing of time, the individual comes to terms with his/her traumatic experience, folding it into a past that has a closure, and thus is able to distance him/herself through the telling of memories. In fact, narrating the past lies in having a detached perspective in the present. But to what extent are Palestinians detached or distanced from their trauma? To answer this question, we need to position the Palestinian trauma, marked by the 1948 Nakba, within the discourse of memory.

The Nakba and its aftermath provide a central element in Palestinian collective memory and it has been extremely influential for Palestinian concepts of nationalism, identity and survival. Nonetheless, the discourse of Nakba suffers from a lack in research and representation within memory studies. The 1948 War that led to the creation of the State of Israel, resulting in severe fragmentation of Palestinian society. “At least 80 percent of Palestinians who lived in the major part of Palestine upon which Israel was established - more than 77 percent of Palestine’s territory - became refugees” (Sa’di & Abu-Lughod,
For these reasons the Nakba has become a demarcation line between two distinct periods; it has come to represent “a sanctified symbol of identity - a unique and unprecedented historical experience that is a scar on the forehead of the world and a calamity for humanity” (Al Quds, 15 May, 1998). For Palestinians, the 1948 War led to a “catastrophe” on a par with events that are remembered as world atrocities such as the World Wars and Holocaust; among others; it has come to mark the onset of a humanitarian disaster which disintegrated and dispersed its society, destroying the communal and social life. The rupture within Palestinian collective life also produced four distinct populations: Palestinians in Diaspora, the refugees, the Palestinians inside Israel, and those in the West Bank and Gaza. These four groups have a unified collective sense of responsibility to remember and to revive Palestinian collective and communal past and memory (Doumani 1992; R. Khalidi 1997; Sa’di 2002).

To read the Nakba according to theories of trauma, it is necessary to highlight some relevant points in the field of trauma studies. The interest in trauma studies started following the First World War, the impact of industrialisation and the atrocity of the Holocaust (Whitehead, 2007). The clinical definition of trauma, from a psychiatric approach, is when “a person has experienced an event that is outside the range of ordinary human experience” (American Psychiatric Association, cited in Caruth, 1995:3). Loss, death, rape and violent acts among others can be diagnosed as traumatic events. The problem with traumatic experiences lies in the fact that human beings can carry post-traumatic symptoms, or what is clinically referred to as Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), which can be difficult to diagnose and treat. The main problem with traumatic symptoms, according to Freud (1921), is that “memory became an effect of the impact of the outside world on the unconscious and the preconscious where censorship takes place” (Freud in Whitehead, 2007: 187). The struggle between the conscious and unconscious in controlling an individual’s memory negatively affects the patient’s reaction to the external world, present and future. From those basic understandings of trauma in psychology, scholars like Caruth and LaCapra have expanded this work to analyse trauma at the social rather than the individual level, looking at mass and historical traumatic experiences. Caruth (1995) has reflected on the dreams and flashbacks that shell shocked soldiers suffered after the First World War. Other scholars like Langer (1995) have looked at the significance of testimony among Holocaust victims. Looking at work such as Caruth’s and LaCapra’s, among others, can help us to approach the Nakba in a similar way to such traumatic experiences.
Traumatic events in individual and collective cases can be unforgettable, causing deep scars. Trauma can also be lived twice through the medium of narration and/or testimony. Caruth (1995; 1996) raises the question of how “the crisis at the core of many traumatic narratives often emerges as an urgent question: Is the trauma encounter with death, or the ongoing experience of having survived it?” (Caruth, 1996: 7). By reliving traumatic experiences, the line between past and present can become blurred, bringing the past into the present via flashbacks or nightmares. The verbalisation of trauma into narrative, however, can involve a loss of the past’s precision, a loss of “the force of its affront to understanding” (ibid, 1995:153). This could be true to some extent in cases where forgetting details is subconsciously helping the traumatised person to overcome the pain of remembering. However, the opposite is true in the Palestinian case. Palestinians, who either remained or were deported following the Nakba, have vivid memories and testimonies of their tragic experience.

In order to better understand how the opposite is true in the Palestinian case, it is useful to refer to Dominick LaCapra’s distinction between “historical trauma” and “structural trauma” (LaCapra, 2001). Historical trauma usually refers “to historical human made occurrences” such as the Holocaust, slavery, apartheid, child sexual abuse or rape. Structural trauma involves, in LaCapra’s view, “transhistorical losses”, such as entry into language, separation from the mother or the inability to partake fully in a community (ibid:70-98). Both categories involve trauma; the difference between the two lies in the fact that historical trauma can be worked on or healed with time; structural trauma cannot be changed or healed. The function and interconnection of both kinds is useful to analyse in cases where the division between the two traumas is clear.

In the Palestinian case, it is possible to argue that the structural trauma is the result of the historical one. This is because following the Nakba (which in LaCapra’s definition can be considered as historical trauma), many victims suffered not directly from the catastrophe, but also found that future generations are paying the price of displacement, uprooting and reconstruction: a situation of chaos which cannot be changed in the near future. The painful memories of ordinary Palestinian individuals place their personal traumatic experiences into the larger historical significance of the Nakba. In Palestinian literature, for example, individual memories were narrated and adjusted so as to create a collective shared vision of memory and endurance. Palestinians are still paying a high price, because their historical trauma has resulted in structural traumas. “Unlike many historical experiences, such as the bombing of Hamburg, World War II, the Holocaust to
the World Trade Centre attack, which all lasted a specific period of time, the *Nakba* is not over yet” (Sa’di & Abu-Lughod, 2007: 10). As a result, it is hard to say that one category can be healed easily whereas the other cannot. Both structural and historical traumas in the Palestinian case cannot be easily healed because the historical trauma is pertinent and is still part of the present.

LaCapra views traumatic narrative as helping one to change the past not through a “dubious rewriting of history but to work through post-traumatic symptoms in the present in a manner that opens possible futures” (LaCapra, 2001: 128). LaCapra’s idea alludes to some kind of reconciliation with past trauma through efforts of recovery in the present. However, the traumatic experience of Palestinians is different from other historical traumatic experiences. Most historical traumas, such as the destruction that accompanied the two World Wars, civil wars in Latin America or the Holocaust, tend to use time as a healer of pain and an agent of forgetting. The inability of Palestinians to deal with *Nakba* as part of the past, the impossibility of storing it safe in their minds and turning the page from that era is simply because Palestinians’ current situation is distorted by the past. In other words, affected nations are trying to heal their traumas by having a legitimate voice to express victims’ pain, agony and terror; the foundation for post-traumatic recovery and dialogue was guaranteed with no threats and with a sense of belonging to a particular land. Since the present Palestinian case lacks such possibility, the wound of the past will keep on bleeding. In revolutionary France and in the United States, the need to commemorate arose out of a desire to heal and break with the past. For the Palestinians, the opposite is true: collective memory and commemoration have assumed particular importance in order to attempt to overcome the break with the past that was caused by the 1948 *Nakba*. In other words, efforts to remember in the Palestinian context are meant to reconnect dispersed and dispossessed Palestinian voices and reiterate the urge to revive Palestinian collective identity and memory.

If we look at Palestinians following the *Nakba* we find that the tragedy has formed “a constitutive element of Palestinian identity,” a site of Palestinian collective memory that “connects all Palestinians to a specific point in time that has become for them an ‘eternal present’” (Sa’di, 2002:177). In his article on “The Continuity of Trauma and Struggle”, Bresheeth sees the prevalence of *Nakba* themes in recent Palestinian films. The latter are “always connected to the second Intifada, suggesting that the *Nakba* is not mere memory or a trauma of the past; instead, these films seem to point to both a
continuity of pain and trauma, reaching from the past into the heart of the present, as well as a continuity of struggle”, (Bresheeth, italics in original, 2007: 161). Violent clashes in the present, such as Al-Aqsa Intifada in 2000, or the war on Gaza in 2008/2009, awakened memories such as the massacre of Dayr Yasîn in 1948.

There is no such state of normality between Israelis and Palestinians, rendering as a result the neutral distancing hard, if not impossible, to realise. One can argue that the subjectivity of Palestinian narrative traumas is governed by the political situation that perpetuates displacement and exile, a life dominated by nostalgia and will to change, which is always obstructed by present political pressures. The history of trauma in the Palestinian case shows that “the trauma remains a vivid event, extant and unchanged, as if it is fully present and not represented in memory” (Gertz and Khleifi, 2006: 8). This is why history cannot be told “as a chronology of events, or a rational sequence of cause and effect” (Webman, 2009: 41). The traumatic events of Palestinian history have, however, acted as a unifying national factor. In an attempt to overcome differences and fragmentation and controversies, the Nakba has formed one history around one shared memory. “The trauma of Al-Nakba is imprinted on the psyche of every Palestinian, on those that witnessed it as well as those that did not” (Al-Ahrâm Weekly, 22 September 2005).

Likewise, if we look at the Nakba and its aftermath within the concept of nostalgia in memory studies, we get a better understanding of the intertwined relationship between identity, collectivity and continuity. As the field of nostalgia is broad and interdisciplinary, in my current research I will focus on some aspects of nostalgia which are relevant to my analysis. Nostalgia in the broad sense of the word is defined as “suffering due to relentless yearning for the homeland” (Sedikides, Wildschut, Arndt & Routledge, 2008: 304). Nostalgia had been associated with homesickness up until late 20th century where people started to “regard nostalgia as different from homesickness” (ibid). Gradually the meaning of nostalgia developed into a sentimental longing for one’s past (Wildschut et al, 2006). Longing for one’s past is usually triggered by lack or/and disruption in people’s lives, a feeling explained by Milligan (2003) as caused by ruptures “to place attachment or the bonding of people to place” (ibid: 382). In other words, the disruption to the built environment (Goffman, 1959) - physical surroundings manifested through social interaction- can cause identity discontinuity. Having discussed at the beginning of this chapter how memory, being social or collective, revolves predominantly on the individual’s identity (Goffman, 1963), felt identity is an
individual’s “subjective sense of his own situation and his own continuity and character that an individual comes to obtain as a result of his various social experiences” (ibid: 105). Felt identity is mainly characterised by its urge towards continuity, in case of complete change, or aims at preserving aspects of its former image; “in most situations of loss, individuals look for a mean to preserve their former identities or to establish new ones in order to regain a sense of continuity” (Charmaz, 1994; Davis, 1979 quoted in Milligan, 2003: 383).

Understanding the mechanism of identity development throughout this chapter enables us to understand its connectedness with society and culture and its resistance to change or disruption. One of the main triggers of nostalgia is the inability of self identity to establish a form of continuity within a new setting or circumstances. As Davis (1979: 107) argues, “the sources of nostalgic sentiment are to be found in felt threats to continuity of identity”. In spite of how sentimental or undesirable it might sound, nostalgia can be seen as a proactive element in identity development and construction; it is “one of the means we employ in the never ending work of constructing, maintaining and reconstructing our identities” (ibid: 31). Another important feature of nostalgia is the fact that it creates a sense of collectivity among people, all of whom take part in a common past, possibly linked to a shared sense of loss, and who all share the fight against identity discontinuity. Davis (1979: 115) argues that:

> Nostalgic sentiment dwells at the very heart of a generation’s identity; that without it, it is unlikely that a generation could come to conceive of itself as such or that generations in advance or in arrears of it would accede to the distinctive historical identity it claims for itself.

For Palestinians the loss of land, instability of life and constant displacement have all nurtured the sense of longing for pre-Nakba Palestine. On the one hand, nostalgia can be seen as a mechanism or tool for reconstructing new identities or safeguarding a former one, being collectively carried out due to the shared experience. In this regard, and as I will elaborate more in the fourth chapter, nostalgia psychologically generates a positive feeling or “positive affectivity” (Sedikides, Wildschut, Arndt & Routledge, 2008: 306) as the individual recalls the experience with a positive perception. For Palestinians, this feature might not be very obvious due to the persistence of a volatile political situation, yet in forms of popular culture and oral literature, as I shall discuss in the coming chapters, nostalgia reinforces people’s hope in the existence of long established heritage or cultural identity. The latter is at the heart of Palestinian discourses of survival, recognition and regeneration. A second important feature for nostalgia is the fact that it
“fosters affiliation or stronger social bonds” (Sedikides, Wildschut, Gartner, Routledge & Arndt, 2008: 231). Because Palestinians suffered from a shared experience of loss and identity discontinuity, nostalgia can be in this case a vehicle for unifying people’s memories and experiences as well as hopes and dreams. Nostalgia thus fosters the sense of collectivity among Palestinians all over the world via different forms of popular culture, specifically storytelling and folktales, and can work towards fighting oblivion. Nostalgia, on the other hand, can also evoke sentimental feelings, which would limit people to a fixed past, making them romanticise a lost paradise by constantly mourning their present. The Nakba can be seen as “the creator of an unsettled inner time. It deflects Palestinians from the flow of social time into their own specific history and often into a melancholic existence” (Abu-Lughod & Sa’di, 2007: 5). For Palestinians, in particular, nostalgia is quite complex and ambivalent. The fear of melancholia and being trapped in an idealist belief of the past is unavoidable sometimes, particularly if the trauma of the past is not over yet. Finally, nostalgia “carries existential meaning, serving as a reservoir of memories and experiences that is helpful for coping with existential threat” (Sedikides, Wildschut, Gartner, Routledge & Arndt, 2008: 231). This particular feature is very important in the sense of safeguarding Palestinian cultural memory across time and space, especially if both present and future are unpredictable. Once more the fear of losing the foundation of Palestinian cultural identity and memory triggers the collective and shared desire to establish a continuum between past and present, between older and younger generations. To ensure identity continuum and cultural regeneration, concepts like post-memory and prosthetic memory enrich as well as complete my discussion in the coming section.

2.4 Post-memory and Prosthetic Memory in the Palestinian Case

As discussed above, the traumatic Palestinian past seems to be strongly connected to the present, where there is an extension or continuity in fighting the ordeals of the Nakba as well as trying to safeguard the remaining cultural marks of a collective memory under threat. One of the inevitable questions in recent memory studies, which hints at holes or crises in fully understanding memory, is “can nations forget or/and forgive?” This question will underpin the following discussion in the coming section and chapters about the challenges and efforts made by the folklorists of SBSA, namely Kanaana & Muhawi, as regards whether their works are promoting a discourse of collective
memorial continuity among future generations, in an attempt to fight oblivion, and whether the voice of collectiveness and continuity throughout storytelling and folktales foreground the role of Palestinian women as cultural memory mediators.

The French ethnographer Marc Augé, in his book *Les forms de l’oubli* [Forms of Forgetting], published in English under the title *Oblivion*, believes that “forgetting is an integral part of memory itself” (Augé, 2004: 24). According to him, forgetting constitutes an active agent in the formation of memories, most famously highlighted in his image of the sea: “Memories are shaped by forgetting, like the contours of the shore by the sea” (Augé, 2004: 24). In the same vein, forgetting is perceived as important as remembering since it allows regeneration and action in the present (Renan, 1997: 14; Mannheim, 1995:278; Nietzsche, 1957: 8). As Susan Rubin Suleiman summarises it in her chapter “Amnesia and Amnesty: Reflections on Forgetting and Forgiving”, “forgetting, then, is not only part and parcel of the very working of individual and collective memory; it is also salutary, an actively benign faculty” (Suleiman, 2006: 216). However, is this applicable to the Palestinian case? The problem that Suleiman tries to raise later in her chapter is that forgetting is not as easy as it seems, since in many cases it is determined by forgiving and this is very hard to achieve sometimes. The “collective pardon” (Suleiman, 2006: 217), or in Ricoeur’s terminology “amnesty”, can only be realized if different factors like time and the present are helping a collective recovery from past trauma. I would go further and argue that the risk of forgetfulness can become the motivator and activator for people, mainly intellectuals, scholars and folklorists, to make efforts in selecting, highlighting and then emphasising the components of a nation’s social, cultural and political memory, which needs to be protected and passed carefully from one generation to the next.

In the case of Palestinians, it is difficult to say that either forgetfulness or/and forgiveness is achievable in the present. Palestinian literature, in all its forms, reveals the effort not to forget since the *Nakba* and its repercussions have shaped Palestinians’ destiny; this tragedy represents their collective, unified and eternal memory:

Although we are aware that such memory work can burden present generations whose traumas might be made to seem like mere echoes, or who want to forget - as Augé (2004) notes, wishing for oblivion - we also see strong evidence that making memories public affirms identity, tames trauma, and asserts Palestinian political and moral claims to justice, redress, and the right to return (Sa’di & Abu-Lughod, 2007: 2-3).
Palestinian literary works, including those by Kanaana and Muhawi examined in this research, aim to fight forgetfulness and create what can be referred to as “the narrative of continuity” (Jayyusi, 2007) or the “continuing Nakba” (Sayigh, 1998). It is the ongoing quest for collective regeneration of identity and representation despite physical discontinuities. Palestinian memory is triggered in all forms of writing not just to be remembered but also experienced in the present, revived and safeguarded for the coming generations.

In order to understand collective Palestinian efforts to fight oblivion or forgetfulness, it is worth highlighting some important new concepts within memory studies, namely post memory and prosthetic memory, to help us grasp the process which Palestinian memory is undergoing in the present. First, I will briefly explain the notion of periodisation and generational time, in order to link them to the concepts of post memory and prosthetic memory. To understand the development of Palestinian collective memory, the “notion of periodisation” (Zerubavel, 1995) plays a role in imposing a certain order on the Palestinian past. According to Zerubavel, the power of periodisation does not lie in its accurate, systematic, or sophisticated mapping of the past, “but in establishing basic images that articulate and reinforce a particular ideological stance” (ibid: 76). In the Palestinian case periodisation over the last century can be divided into at least three periods. The first is from the Ottoman Empire until the First World War in 1917; this is followed by the period before the establishment of Israel in 1948. The third and major period started in 1948. Within the third period, one can add post periods marking important events such as the 1967 war, the two Palestinian Intifadas and the Oslo Accords. Thus, collective memory can highlight some periods as being key to the development of a group while defining others as historical setbacks. More importantly, collective memories are controlled and shaped with a present voice and desire. The present can accordingly direct, classify and even regenerate collective memories. The ideological influence of periodization can, for example, be seen in a folktale compilation by the Israeli folklorist Raphael Patai, *Arab Folktales from Palestine and Israel* (1998)\(^{43}\). Patai, unlike Muhawi & Kanaana, presents and orders the folktales according to three periods: *Group 1: 1910 - 11, Group 2: 1946 - 1947, Group 3: 1982 - 1984*. Carrying an ideological stance, Patai’s categorisation of the tales according to

\(^{43}\) Raphael Patai, a Hungarian-Jewish ethnographer and anthropologist, whose main contribution to scholarship has been in the field of the cultural anthropology of the ancient Hebrews, and of Jews in the modern Middle East and Israel. He is the author of hundreds of scholarly articles and has written or edited some thirty-five books, including his highly controversial *The Arab Mind* (1973).
specific periods maps the tales so as to fit within a specific time frame related to specific historical or political events.

Because time and memory are interconnected, the passing of time can create memories but can also lead to forgetfulness, nurture nostalgia and threaten distortion. In this regard, the pre-1948 (pre-\textit{Nakba}) generation is threatened with being forgotten and erased from present generations’ memories, which is especially significant given that the pre-\textit{Nakba} generation bears the memories stories, history and life of a very specific phase, referred to among Palestinians as ‘the days of the lost paradise’. To avoid the fear of amnesia growing in the Palestinian context, playwrights, novelists, poets and folklorists are urged to make the effort to register, record, film, store and document Palestinian collective memory. Some Palestinian intellectuals rely on using, for instance, the device of storytelling in novels, plays or films. This device, as I will discuss in more depth in the coming chapter, helps to bridge the gap between two phases and/or generations. The link between pre- and post-1948 in the Palestinian case is maintained through what is referred to by Sa’di & Abu-Lughod (2007: 19) as ‘generational time’:

Yet in time-reckoning, the \textit{Nakba} has embodied an unbridgeable gap between two qualitatively periods: pre and post \textit{Nakba}, often experienced as generational difference. Generational time is a key dimension of memory for Palestinians. There are processes of transfer from one generation to another – of stories, memories, foods, and anger; there is inheritance of the identity and burden; but there is also some resistance across the generations to the great significance of the past.

One of the processes or devices of transfer between one generation to another is developed in Marianne Hirsch’s concept of ‘post memory’ (1996, 1997, 1999), which is relevant to my present discussion. As explained previously, traumatic experiences are lived and experienced once within a specific frame of time and generation; however, their effect can persist, be transmitted and documented, as part of a nation’s collective memorial experience, thanks to joint efforts between past and present generations. Within memory studies, this particular relation to a parental past has been analysed and seen as a ‘syndrome’ of belatedness or ‘post-ness’ and has been variously termed ‘absent memory’ (Fine, 1988), ‘inherited memory,’ ‘belated memory,’ and ‘prosthetic memory’ (Lury, 1998; Landsberg, 2004). These terms refer in one way or another to the existing connection between the descendants of survivors of massive traumatic events with the previous generation’s remembrance of the past. The transmission of memory
thus involves those who were not actually there to live an event (Hirsch, 2008). Post memory is distinguished from memory by “generational distance and from history by deep personal connection” (Hirsch, 1997:22). In other words, memory is more connected to the past; nonetheless, it can be mediated. Post memory characterises “the experience of those who grow up dominated by narratives that preceded their birth, whose own belated stories are evacuated by the stories of the previous generation shaped by traumatic events that can be neither understood nor created” (ibid, 1997:22).

To better understand the generational mediation and continuum between past and present, both Jan and Aleida Assmann have distinguished between two types of collective memory: ‘communicative memory’ and ‘cultural memory’ (Hirsch, 2008). Having expanded on Halbwachs’s notion of ‘collective memory’, memory as being social rather than just individual, Assmann defined communicative memory “as being formed by the biographical recollections of individuals passed from generation to generation in informal, oral conversations” (Hirsch, 2008: 105). The transmission of memories can be directly manifested within individuals, mainly within the family as the main unit of transmission. The individual “can pass on their bodily and affective connection to that event to their descendants over a period of three to four generations” (ibid: 106). Communicative memory, according to Assmann (2006), falls into the category of individual and family/group memory, otherwise referred to as intergenerational memory. Cultural memory, on the other hand, bears a more formal, national and institutionalized meaning. It is manifested through traditional archiving of memories, portrayed through images, monuments, days of remembrance and other structures or institutions that together form the shared identity for a group. Cultural memory is associated with the national/political and cultural/archival memory, and is also known as trans-generational memory (Hirsch, 2008).

However, traumatic experiences and catastrophe tend to break the flow and transmission of memories. As a result, individuals are threatened by the loss of identity and sense of belonging because their link with the past, represented in archives, possessions, records and artifacts, has been destroyed. The continuity of normal transmission between the individual, family, community and cultural heritage is disrupted and broken. To counter this fracturing of memory transfer and to preserve a continuum of transmission, second

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and third generations play the role of nourishing post memory work in order to process the experience of the first generation, and to mend and reactivate the damaged memorial structures. In Hirsch’s words, “postmemorial work strives to reactivate and re-embodiment more distant social/national and archival/cultural memorial structures by reinvesting them with resonant individual and familial forms of mediation and aesthetic expression” (Hirsch, 2008: 112). Hence, the notion of postmemory is a mediation between present and past; it “defines the present in relation to a troubled past rather than initiating new paradigms […] it is a structure of inter- and trans-generational transmission of traumatic knowledge and experience. It is a consequence of traumatic recall but (unlike post-traumatic stress disorder) at a generational remove” (ibid: 111). Like to the concept of post-memory, the concept of prosthetic memory is a powerful new concept of memory developed by Alison Landsberg (2004). With prosthetic memory, as with earlier forms of remembrance, people are invited “to take on memories of a past through which they did not live” (Landsberg, 2004: 8). Since remembering is initially physically experienced by human beings, it can derive much of its power through effect. The same idea is developed in Landsberg’s notion of prosthetic memory, in which a mimic reproduction of the effect can be achieved through the use of mass culture. “Mass culture makes particular memories more widely available, so that people who have no ‘natural’ claim to them might nevertheless incorporate them into their own archive of experience” (ibid: 8-9).

Memory in the traditional sense is subjective as it describes the individual’s relation to the experience, whereas history has long been considered impersonal or objective in comparison to personal lived experiences. Referring to the role of media:

The most significant ‘historical’ events are often transformed into ‘experiences’ that shape and inform the subjectivity of the individual viewer: with the media continually and effortlessly re-presenting the past, history once thought of as an impersonal phenomenon, has been replaced by ‘experiential collective memory’. (Landsberg, 2004: 4)

Thus, prosthetic memory originates outside a person’s lived experience “and yet [is] taken on and worn by that person through mass cultural technologies” (ibid: 19). Prosthetic memory can be seen as the medium between historical events and our personal experiences, the replaced missing link between first and second generation. In fact, this form of memory can be powerful since it can be transportable and variable, challenging as such traditional forms of memory that are based on claims of authenticity, heritage and ownership:
Prosthetic memory emerges at the interface between a person and a historical narrative about the past, at an experiential site such as a movie theatre or museum. In this moment of contact, an experience occurs through which the person sutures himself or herself into a larger history [...] In the process that I am describing the person does not simply apprehend a historical narrative but takes on a more personal, deeply felt memory of a past event through which he or she did not live. The resulting prosthetic memory has the ability to shape that person’s subjectivity and politics. (ibid: 02)

Prosthetic memories, accordingly, are neither purely individual nor entirely collective but are created at the interaction of both. Being mobile, “prosthetic memories develop from a person’s mass-mediated experience of a traumatic event of the past” (ibid: 4). In fact, the recently developed concept of memory rejects the fact that all memories and by extension the identities that those memories sustain are the product of a lived social context. Prosthetic memory, therefore, unlike its medieval and nineteenth-century precursors, “is not simply a means for consolidating a particular group’s identity and passing on its memories; it also enables the transmission of memories to people who have no ‘natural’ or biological claims to them” (ibid: 18). In a similar way to post memory, prosthetic memory tries to bridge the gap between one generation and another and establish a tangible link of reconnection. The difference, however, can be seen in the representation of past narratives as prosthetic memory finds room for continuation and transmission in movies, documentaries and other images.

The manifestation of prosthetic memory and post memory are seen within different modes of representation, particularly cinematic and literary. Landsberg sees the reproduction “as a positive development, arguing that the mimetic, bodily experience of the historical past afforded by the mass media can make particular histories or pasts available to people across existing stratifications of race, class, gender, and generation” (ibid: 19). Drawing on Landsberg’s explanation, Palestinian cinema and film production, for instance, are influenced by the practice of storytelling of the Nakba. “Even the structure of the films is deeply affected by the storytelling function” (Bresheeth, 2007). In his article on “The Continuity of Trauma and Struggle”, Bresheeth discusses the use of storytelling in some Palestinian films as “an Ethnotopic device”. He argues that storytelling, in the films he analyses not only functions as a device for delivering historical detail and personal memory but also “revive[s] and reclaim[s] for Palestinian memory [...] constructing a possible space for national and individual existence and identity today” (ibid: 165). When asked about the rationale for telling a political story as a myth in the Palestinian film Ustura (Myth), the director, Nizar
Hassan, relates it to his own childhood and to the important role his mother played in strengthening his sense of belonging and identity through her stories. In an interview published in an arts and media journal (Ben-Zvi, 1999: 80), Hassan says:

My clearest meeting with Palestinian history as a story, a narrative, and not a collage of isolated incidents, I owe to my mother. I was six or seven years old- and my mother took us to our bedroom. She sat on the bed and we three sat in a circle around her (which is what gave me the idea for the central scene in Ustura, in which Umm Salim tells her story). I only remember her telling the story without any tragic note, without victimhood, but with a dramatic sense of survival. She was full of anger, a strong will, and much hope. We went to bed, and for the first time in my life I felt grown up, not just “a big boy,” but grown up, like kids think about grown ups. I understood that I live in my homeland, Palestine that I belong; I am Palestinian, and no one can take that away from me.

In spite of the fact that films are not the focus of my research, Hassan’s description and use of storytelling both in his own reality and fictional film production help to underline the importance of storytelling in Palestinian society, as an expression of continuation, existence and affirmation, using mass media in this case as a prosthetic medium for transmission and identification. In fact, storytelling and folktales, as I will show, forge the individual, family and society into a wider national spectrum. In other words, “the story is the secret of making sense as a person, as a part of a larger unit” (Bresheeth, 2007: 174). The story of family meets and overlaps with the story of nation; hence, it represents in the Palestinian context the anchor for both personal and national identity. In the instance of Hassan, for example, post memory is seen as a residual type of memory, a recollection of an event or a past not personally experienced but socially felt. It is, in the Palestinian case, the responsibility of every mother or first generation to raise awareness, to connect and affirm subsequent generations’ communal, collective and social identities. The existence and importance of history in the Palestinian case is unavoidable. History, in effect, as argued by Landsberg (2004: 24), “must become like memory in order to inform subjectivity, in order to change and alter consciousness, which is the basis for any kind of political alliance or action”. The mass media can give people an experience and taste of history, giving the same impact and feel of memory, and hence help in raising the mediated collective identification across existing social divisions.

Because cultural memories, identities and practices do not flow simply or predictably from one generation to the next or from the homeland to diasporic communities, writers,
folklorists and thinkers, usually in the Diaspora, try to make efforts to reproduce the missing transition between past and present, between lived experiences and the recreation of effect and between loss of authentic memory and the chase for a replacement. In the work of Daniel & Jonathan Boyarin (1993), the structural logic of Diaspora emerges as a progressive model for maintaining cultural identity across geographical ruptures. Indeed, some memories and traditions even develop and become stronger in the Diaspora than they are in the homeland. Thus the efforts in recreating or investing (Landsberg, 2004), as seen in mass culture or literature, emphasise the idea that prosthetic memories are not intrinsic to any individual, and not limited to the organic experience of any person or group, but equally available to everyone. Referring to the Holocaust, Hirsch says that:

The children of exiled survivors, although they have not themselves lived through the trauma of banishment and the destruction of home, remain always marginal or exiled, always in the Diaspora. ‘Home’ is always elsewhere […] This condition of exile from the space of identity, this diasporic experience, is characteristic of post memory. (Hirsch, 1996: 130)

The same applies to many exiled Palestinians living in the Diaspora, with the difference that their past is not over yet nor is it forgotten. To the present day, their national identity and cultural heritage is threatened by deliberate attempts at eradication and termination. This diasporic experience, which Hirsch refers to, is what many Palestinian writers, poets, intellectuals, film makers and storytellers are working on in order to safeguard and articulate to coming generations, both in Palestine and in the Diaspora. For many second-generation Palestinians, films and literary works, including folktales and storytelling, have become the main vehicle through which Palestinian post and prosthetic memories are articulated, understood and made alive.

In the compilations under study, we notice that the compilers and storytellers seem to be aware of the importance of transitional generational time, whether consciously or not. Muhawi & Kanaana, for example, have tried to facilitate and reinforce the process of transfer from one generation to another highlighted in both the content of folktales and their effort to describe and frame them. The aim in their collections (both Arabic and English) is to draw a continuation of the past into the present, as well as to raise awareness among younger Palestinian generations of the existence of a homeland, culture and history through the transmission of Palestinian folktales. In the Arabic collection of SBSA (1989), the compilers stress in the introduction the importance of
**Conclusion**

This chapter has provided a broad understanding and definition of memory and collective memory, ranging from the age of Aristotle, the Romantic Era and Modernism to the Durkheimian school, and has highlighted developments in the way that memory has been understood as a social phenomenon. This led to a discussion of the triangular or dialectical relationship that exists between history, memory and narrative within space, time and self, which can be ambivalent when open to representation and interpretation. I then described how meaning formation and transmission is controlled by powerful tools of representation such as narratives, and how these can overlap with “framing”. The second part of this chapter focused mainly on explaining the nature of Palestinian collective memory, established through the role of Palestinian oral history, language and the notion of nationalism. The discussion focused around an important traumatic marker and constituent of Palestinian collective memory and history, the *Nakba* of 1948. Lastly, the chapter provided a critical review of the situation of the *Nakba* in Palestinian collective memory with reference to trauma studies. The role of nostalgia in the Palestinian case as a tool to generate and reactivate Palestinian cultural identity and memory across time and space was worth mentioning at this level as...
nostalgia is believed to be only a melancholic and sentimental longing for the past. The discussion hence moved to look at the relevance, role and manifestation of newer concepts, such as post memory and prosthetic memory, in general and in the Palestinian case in particular. These concepts help us understand efforts and motives to safeguard the continuity of Palestinian cultural and historical memory by both ordinary people and intellectuals. The theories and concepts covered in this chapter aim at paving the way for a more elaborate discussion of different concepts of memory, nostalgia, identity, language and nationalism when analysing the folktales themselves and their framing structures (paratextual apparatuses). The next chapter will discuss the role of Palestinian women as cultural mediators through their roles as storytellers and protagonists in the compilation under discussion with a view to analyse their roles as mothers, daughters and sisters in Palestinian family and society. Palestinian women’s narrative, I will analyse, disclose their power not only as storytellers but as active agents of memory and identity transmission.
Chapter 3. Palestinian Women and the Preservation of Memory in *Speak, Bird, Speak Again* (1989) and *Qul Ya Tayer* *(قول يا طير)* (2001)

In fighting the erosion of cultural identity and in safeguarding heritage, Palestinian oral literature, in all its forms, represents an effort not to forget both pre- *Nakba* Palestine and the *Nakba* and its repercussions. Based on my discussion in the second chapter of some concepts, such as prosthetic memory (Landsberg, 2004), post-memory (Hirsch, 1996, 1997, 1998, 2008; Assmann, 2006), narrative identity (Ricoeur, 1981, 1984; Smith, 1986, 1999) and language, I will analyse in the current chapter how cultural continuity from one generation to another as well as safeguarding memory are realised.

Questions to be addressed include: How do compilers and storytellers facilitate a continuation of the past into the present within the discourse of orality and folktales? And how do they raise awareness of a homeland, culture and history amongst younger Palestinian generations?

To do so, I will look at how the collective regeneration of identity and cultural memory is achieved through the role of the woman storyteller. Alongside the role of Palestinian folklorists, such as Muhawi & Kanaana, in framing (Goffman, 1974; Snow, 2007; Genette, 1997) Palestinian cultural identity, ordinary Palestinians, especially Palestinian women storytellers, have a crucial role in protecting, consolidating and transmitting Palestinian memory. Palestinian women’s agency as mothers, sisters and wives, I will argue, engenders and genders Palestinian cultural, post and collective memory within folktales. In order to understand Palestinian women’s roles both in folktales and social reality, it is important to highlight the power of Palestinian women storytellers, featured in their authority and narration, in shaping and empowering the transmission of memory at inter-and trans-generational levels (Assmann, 1995). Through the lense of Palestinian women’s narrative, whether as protagonists or storytellers, as I will explain, the Palestinian family institution and its dynamics are grounded, mediated and safeguarded within a collective, social and cultural Palestinian identity.
3.1 Gendered and Engendered Palestinian Memory and Identity: Women’s Narratives

Given the on-going Palestinian struggle, traumatic experiences are not just lived and experienced once within a specific timeframe and generation; rather, their effect can persist, be transmitted and documented. As I discussed in Chapter Two, trauma can take different shapes and even create a source of regeneration in an attempt to reconcile the past with present, which can be seen in literature or cinema. The main question posed is how folktales can transcend then transform the trauma of the Nakba into “a narrative of continuity” (Jayyusi, 2007) and into a revived cultural identity. At this point, it is important to think of the agents who not only witnessed the historical and political transformation of Palestine, but most importantly, have lived through social and cultural developments across three generations. The agents, in this case, Palestinian women, I argue, represent credible and powerful sources for preserving as well as transmitting Palestinian memory and identity. In SBSA, both folklorists used the medium of literature, specifically folktales, to explore, study and document Palestinian social reality and culture. Indeed, “they have discussed the dynamic and dialectical relationship between Palestinian society and the tales” (Peters, 1991: 441). This is true; however, their discussion would have been relatively impoverished without Palestinian women’s position as storytellers in reality and protagonists in the folktales.

It is women’s voices as mothers, daughters, sisters and wives in the folktales which, I think, merge memory, identity and history with their personal narratives and private spheres. Hence, I intend to look at Palestinian women’s narratives within their families as mothers, sisters and wives. The discussion looks at a selection of folktales45 where the roles of Palestinian women disclose a resilient discourse of strength, continuity and heritage. Through the voices of Palestinian women, Palestinian collective memory and cultural identity gain momentum, disclosing women’s narrative of home and family interaction as well as social criticism. Through storytelling and roles in the folktales, the division of roles – as mothers, sisters or wives - plays an important part in informing both the reader and the folklorist about the origins of traditions and beliefs, highlighting Palestinian family rules and desires, and most importantly cultural habits or rituals among family members, which are at stake because of political upheavals. Hence, in order to understand Palestinian social dynamics, it is important to look at the roles of...

45 Due to time and space limitations, my discussion will focus on a selection of folktales only.
Palestinian women and narratives within the family, merging their positions as storytellers in reality with their projected roles in the folktales.

Because folktales express the popular voice of a group, community and society, as discussed in the first chapter, Palestinian folktales can be a source for understanding social traditions, structures, and interactions. As observed by a number of Palestinian folklorists and anthropologists, such as Al-Sarîsî (2004), Al-Jawâhirî (1979), and Al-Khalîlî (1977), Palestinian folktales reveal customs, rituals and marriage traditions, among other rural and urban social practices, which I will expand on when I discuss marriage and sexuality. Like other forms of narrative, folktales “thrive on conflict and its resolution” (M&K, 1989: 13), which originate from real social milieux; thus “tellers don’t have to invent situations of conflict” (ibid). Similarly, Palestinian colloquial language, “with all its expressive potentials, is seen in the linguistic environment” (ibid). The similarity in the ways themes and language are derived from a vivid reality emphasizes the survival of social and linguistic identity. Hence, the plots, themes and language are rooted in present social and family structures. The kinship system, which is explained extensively in the compilers’ introduction, helps the reader to understand themes of conflict and harmony in Palestinian folktales. Moreover, it helps to define social position, roles and modes of interaction:

The family occurs in all the tales without exception, either as theme or as background. And because our concern is to explore the relationship between the tales and the culture, we must examine the whole system of family relationships in order to provide the necessary cultural background to the tales. We thus avoid the pitfall of looking at the tales as mere reflectors of the culture but rather see them as aesthetic transformations—miniature portraits of an existing social reality. (ibid: 20)

Since family relationships constitute the core of Palestinian culture, Palestinian mothers, who represent the majority of storytellers in the present compilation, use language and plot in order to portray their roles in the family and society, reinforcing Palestinian cultural identity as well as collective memory. For instance, if we look at the titles of the majority of tales in SBSA (1989) and Qul Ya Tayer (2001), we notice “the prevalence of grammatically feminine titles, many of which are women’s names (Tales 3, 13, 17, 18, 20, 26, 27, 31, 33, 42, 45)\textsuperscript{46}, and even those that do not have feminine titles, such as Tales 14 and 43 (“Sackcloth” and “The Rich Man and the Poor Man”),

have women as the major characters” (M&K, 1989: 18). Because most of the storytellers are women, the tales express women’s insights, thoughts and desires; in short, the tales reveal their inner world and narrative:

Women’s personal narratives [...] illuminate the significance of the intersection of individual life and historical moment; they address the importance of frameworks of meaning through which women orient themselves in the world. (Personal Narrative Group, 1989: 22-3)

To understand how Palestinian collective memory is both gendered and engendered by women within the Palestinian family, the following discussion will be divided into four parts, namely: mother - daughter narrative, mother - son narrative, siblings narrative and courtship and marriage narratives. Palestinian women’s narrative, as I will examine, is not only descriptive of their social positions or roles but can also be critical of some social norms and cultural attitudes. Their narrative, can also be educational, targeting younger Palestinian generations in order to reinforce in them social integrity, identity and culture. Their voice through the folktales is embedded with a mix of personal, cultural, historical and national narratives.

3.1.1 Mother – Daughter Narrative

The role of mothers is important in Palestinian society because they control the dynamics of the whole family. The popularity of the first tale in SBSA (1989), “Tunjur, Tunjur” Ṭunjur Ṭunjur among Palestinians stems from its representation of the strong bond between mother and daughter. The tale emphasizes an important theme, the importance of having children in Palestinian society; this is because children are considered a source of economic stability as well as security for the family. “Tunjur, Tunjur” starts with the mother being sad because she has not borne children. Consequently, she keeps praying to have a female child, even if it was a cooking pot. The mother’s wish is fulfilled and she has a cooking pot, which is feminine in Arabic (ṭunjara). Tunjur continually leaves the house in order to bring all kind of goods to her mother. The daughter, according to the compilers, demonstrates the economic value children have for the Palestinian family. In the absence of the father, the daughter, in spite of her appearance, has a duty towards her mother to get food and money. The tale shows how children in Palestinian society provide financial support to their elderly parents; it is in fact their duty to help their parents:

In addition to the emotional bonds that hold mother and daughter together, an economic motive is operating in the tale as well. The
mother’s initial wish is not only for a daughter but also for a source of income, and her willingness to let her daughter out of the house is conditioned by her poverty. (M&K, 1989:82)

There is also an important emotional and cultural aspect behind the mother’s wish, following a Palestinian cultural belief as “Palestinian sayings, confirming appreciation-for example, “‘Girls are kind’” Il banāt ḥanāyin and “‘Daughters will help you [literally, ‘you will find them’] in your old age; they will take pity on you’” Il banāt bitlāqīhin bikabarak, byshfaqū ’līk (M&K, 1989: 21). The mother-daughter relationship in Palestinian society is based on strong emotional bonds, trust and understanding. Daughters are expected to be affectionate and kind with their parents, especially mothers. The daughter Tunjur symbolises a daughter’s dedication, attention and love in making her parents comfortable and cared for. Daughters are also initiators of action, looking for food or income to help the mother. The assumption here is that the mother of Tunjur is a single mother, hence the girl’s freedom in leaving the house is “intertwined with that of economic necessity” (ibid: 82). The freedom granted to the daughter in “Tunjur, Tunjur” can be morally ambiguous by conservative rural Palestinian standards. It would have been different and more difficult to have this kind of freedom had the daughter had brothers, as the compilers explain in the foreword. The folktale, among many others, introduces the plot and roles under the frame of Palestinian cultural identity, which is transmitted via the language used by the storytellers.

The interconnection between language, plot and the position of the storyteller in “Tunjur, Tunjur” is also significant. Upon realising that Tunjur (the cooking pot) brought treasure to her mother and not the usual food, the mother became annoyed and surprised at the same time. The mother realises that her daughter’s freedom can be risky since she is getting into the habit of taking other people’s belonging to satisfy the mother economically. Here the voice of the storyteller is merged with the voice of Tunjur’s mother, saying:

“Yee! May your reputation be blackened!” She cried out. “Wherever did you get this?” (M&K, 1989: 59
italics for emphasis) "بي يا مشحرة!" منين هاظ جبتيه؟ (M&K, 2001: 68)

The mother’s reproach stands for her worry for her daughter’s reputation; her freedom is not acceptable in a conservative village. As a result, she reproaches her daughter.
using a very common expression among Palestinian women only. The expression “May your reputation be blackened!” *Yī ya mshahara* the compilers deemed important to explain in a footnote, saying:

*Ya mshahara-* literally, “O you who smeared herself with soot!” is a popular expression used among Palestinian women in order to reinforce a specific storytelling style attributed to Palestinian women. A woman blackens her face as a sign of mourning when someone dear dies. Hence, metaphorically when a woman does something she is not supposed to do, her honour dies and her reputation becomes black. The expression, however, need not always carry connotations of ominous wrongdoing; it is frequently used, as in the present context, as a form of mild reproach. (M&K, 1989: 59)

The dramatic situation created by *ṭunjur* led the storyteller to use the power of language in order to authenticate the role of the mother as well as to add a stronger effect. The framing of this particular expression by the compilers serves two functions. On the one hand, it empowers the narrative of Palestinian women storytellers, attributing the art of storytelling to them. On the other hand, the reader, particularly the non-Palestinian, realises the fears of a Palestinian mother over the reputation of her daughter in a rural pre-*Nakba* environment. The roles of mother and daughter and their interaction in “Tunjur, Tunjur”, I argue, are inseparable to Palestinian cultural and social identity, which the *Nakba* narrative constitutes an important part:

They [*Nakba* memories] focus on the family and the domestic space of home. Since caring for the family has been the primary role of Palestinian women, their memories of the *Nakba* are often inseparable from family life and their identity as daughters or mothers. (Humphries & Khalili, 2007: 219)

The whole tale revolves around the mother and her daughter *ṭunjur* within a Palestinian domestic setting. Even when the daughter is out searching for goods, such as honey *’sal*, meat *lahma* and the bride’s jewellery *ṣīgha*, the storyteller shapes the plot based on Palestinian domesticity, to which a rural Palestinian mother would relate to. Not only does the storyteller shape the plot of the story but she uses language to empower her authority as a storyteller as well as to trigger a sense of collectivity among the audience. For instance, the first time *ṭunjur* is found by a passerby, he shouts, saying:

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47 The interconnection between rural setting and pre-*Nakba* setting is a theme I will discuss in more depth in the fourth chapter.
“Eh!” He exclaimed, “Who has put this pot in the middle of the path? I’ll be damned! What a beautiful pot! It’s probably made of silver.”

(M&K, 1989: 56 italics for emphasis)

إه! مين حاططها هاي بنص الدرب؟ يخرب بيت هالطنجة ما أشلبها! كنها فظة!

(M&K, 2001: 66)

A phrase used to express surprise and disbelief in Palestinian dialect, the passerby said *ykhrib bayt*, which literally means ‘may a house be ruined’, is used to refer to someone or something. The phrase, translated as *I’ll be damned*, is not used in an insulting way, but added in this context to dramatise the flow of narration by the storyteller. Being usually used by Palestinian women, the compilers have added a footnote to the Arabic compilation but not to the English one, explaining:

“Since the use of such phrases is most of the time attributed to women, it endows the folktale with a distinctive narration style not suitable for men”

(My translation).

أو بما أن استعمال هذه الأنواع من الألفاظ يرجع إلى النساء في أكثر الحالات فهو يمنح الحكاية الشعبية أسليها خاصا لا يليق بالرجال استخدامه بالطلاقة ذاتها.

(M&K, 2001: 66)

Another device used by the storyteller, interrupting the flow of narrative, to express surprise and “to alert the listeners that something out of the ordinary is about to occur” (ibid: 55), is the use of the word *Behold* in English, و الاّ *wuila* in Palestinian dialect:

“A day came and a day went, and behold! She [the mother] was ready to deliver” (ibid: 55)

روح يا يوم تع يا يوم و الاّ هي صارت بدها تحبيب.

(M&K, 2001: 65)

The fact that the folktales contain such devices or phrases of surprise contributes, in my opinion, to enriching not only the narrative style and flow but also serve to emphasise the linguistic identity of Palestinian women and their culture; specifically the Palestinian dialect, which needs to be preserved from one generation to the next. As will become apparent in the coming sections, Palestinian storytelling via women’s agency aims at highlighting also “the importance of the social aspect of oral tradition, in which listening to and watching the teller and reacting collectively cannot be recorded” (Barhoum, 1990: 71). The experience of storytelling, as one can see, is rich and interactive, maintaining shared experiences among listeners and storytellers. As Brad
notes in her discussion of women’s discourse of collective memory, the voice of collectivity starts with women’s accounts of narrative style in rural pre-Nakba Palestine. “It begins idyllically with such words as ‘hand in hand’, ‘together’ and ‘closer’, stressing the strong community atmosphere” (Brand, 2007: 178).

In “The Cricket” Al-khunfusa, the mother plays an important role in her daughter’s marriage. She advises her daughter to choose the most suitable partner, revealing the degree of love and trust the daughter feels for her mother, which is a natural reflection of the trust and reliance mothers and daughters share in Palestinian society. “The Cricket” also reveals the degree of wisdom and experience mothers have in life, giving them the credibility to be consulted by both son and daughter. The tale shows a harmonious and affectionate relationship between a mother and her daughter, who, no matter what she looks like, will always be loved and protected by her mother. Motherly love can be seen as a universal theme in the majority of folktales; the distinction in this case lies in grounding the love and image of motherhood within Palestinian culture and according to Palestinian beliefs about the family institution.

The love and advice extended by the mother to her daughter, I argue, is related to the position of the storyteller in reality. Because the majority of storytellers in SBSA were over sixty years old when the tales were recorded, they are endowed, according to the compilers, with excellent skills of narration. In fact, “women, in their maturity, are at the apogee of their authority in the society” (M&K, 1989: 18). Having been through a complete cycle of life, often within extended families, Palestinian women are regarded as “a very good school” (ibid: 18) in terms of experience, knowledge and advice, all within the role of storytellers. Storytelling for Palestinian women is a form of expressing authority and extending wisdom to younger generations:

The tales are themselves empowering and constitute a form of authority for the old women who narrate them. The narrative style and method used draw their authenticity from the rules and conventions handed down by the Palestinian tradition in folk narrative. Similarly, the individual tellers, who already enjoy social authority through their special position as old women, derive moral authority from the tradition, which serves to validate the act of narrating the tales to the young, thereby providing them with heroic models for behaviour. (Italics added for emphasis, ibid: 29)

Older Palestinian women, mothers and grandmothers, are not only seen as reliable sources of narration due to their maturity and experience, but are also perceived as examples to follow by younger generations, who consider their mothers or
grandmothers as inspirational and heroic models for behaviour. The parallels and extension of roles between the mothers in “Tunjur, Tunjur” or “The Cricket” and the storytellers in reality are their sharing of cultural identity and social structure. The latter supplies material for basic plots and also provides models for the authority that regulates individual behaviour in the tales. Gender and age create a form of authority for women heroines as well as storytellers. The authority position Palestinian women are endowed with controls behaviour in the family, knowing how it works helps the reader to understand the plot of the tale as well as reinforcing the sense of belonging and identity extended to younger generations.

As individual identity is partly constituted through “acquired identifications, values, norms, ideals, models and heroes” (Ricoeur, 1990: 46), the younger Palestinian generation would identify with and relate to the national role of storytellers as well as seeing themselves in the characters of most of the tales. Spreading pre-Nakba culture, symbolized in the harmonious family structure and roles in the tales, is a national duty perceived by many women storytellers. The latter become national symbols through an active fusion between memory and history. The past and its setting, as I discuss in more depth in the fourth chapter, constitute sites of memory, giving rise to Palestinian national and cultural identity. Symbols, past periods or heroes become our repository in order to regenerate a unified collective memory but also a collective national aspiration to safeguard cultural identity. Given the role of mothers in Palestinian families, I briefly discussed the daughter-mother interaction in some tales, showing how significant their relationship is to understanding cultural traditions, social roles and even fears. To gain a broader understanding, it will be important to look at the mother-son relationship, which will reveal other aspects of Palestinian cultural identity.

### 3.1.2 Mother – Son Narrative

The mother-son relationship is prevalent in many of the tales, such as “The Woman Who Married Her Son” *Ili tzawajat ibinhā* and “Shwesh, Shwesh!” *Shwish shwish*. This type of relationship is remarkably strong but complex in Palestinian society. In “The Woman Who Married Her Son”, the tale revolves around the mother-son relationship and the jealousy created once the son gets married. The conflict arises when the son replaces his mother’s attention and protection with that of his wife. In a patrilocal extended family, “when the son marries, both mother and daughter in-law have

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48 See summary of the tale in Appendix 3 (number 1).
difficulties” (M&K, 1989: 82) adapting to the new changes. It is the mother’s possessiveness and control which lead her to get rid of the wife so that she can be both mother and wife to her own son. In spite of the dramatic plot, the language used by the storyteller invites the reader to enjoy the authentic sense of Palestinian cultural identity through poetic language. As an example, when the wife took refuge at the neighbours’ house, the mother (disguised as wife) was pregnant so sends her servant to ask the neighbours for sour grapes. The real wife, sad and upset, answers the servant as follows:

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“My mother gave birth to me in the wilderness, and over me birds have built their nests. The king’s son has taken his mother to wife, and now wants to satisfy her craving at my expense! Come down, O scissors, and cut out his tongue, lest he betray my secret!” (M&K, 1989: 61)
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Disputes between daughter-in-law and mother-in-law are common in many societies. In the Palestinian case, particularly Palestinian popular culture and oral literature, the distinctiveness lies in the artistic and linguistic form of expressing the conflict. The poetic pattern used is known as Zajal, a popular form of rhymed poetry based on improvisation and use of Palestinian dialect. The art of Zajal, according to Asadi, “characterises the language of a Palestinian mother, the language of the land and heritage; it carries Palestinians’ hopes, pains, aspirations and dreams” (Sadī, 2008). Zajal is not only attributed to women and mothers in particular, but also has the power to transform the plot and themes in this tale into a cultural representation of a national heritage. It is an art that transmits a collective, national and cultural specificity into the memory of the reader and listener as well as nurture post-memory (Hirsch, 1997) work across younger generations. Post-memorial work helps mediate between present and past; it “defines the present in relation to a troubled past rather than initiating new paradigms [] It is a structure of inter- and trans-generational transmission” (ibid: 111). By reinforcing the distinctiveness and strength of Palestinian folk culture, Palestinian women secure a smooth transition for Palestinian cultural memory over generations:

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Indeed, the very survival of the tales as a tradition with a recognizable narrative structure, a coherent moral universe, and a set of assumptions immediately understandable to audience and narrator alike confirms the cultural continuity of Palestinian social life. (M&K, 1989: 12)

Women’s role and narrative, whether as storytellers or heroines, empower pre-Nakba history, social structure and cultural traditions. Nationally speaking, their narrative is a form of resistance against oblivion and change since they represent a model of wisdom for younger generations to follow and respect. Artistically speaking, the popularity of Palestinian folktales is attributed to women’s developed storytelling style, which men learn and duplicate:

The Palestinian folktale is a highly developed art form. Its style, though not artificial, follows linguistic and literary conventions that set it apart from other folk narrative genres. It relies on verbal mannerisms and language flourishes not used in ordinary conversation, especially by men. Women were largely responsible for developing this style, and they carry on the tradition. To sound credible, men who tell these tales must adopt the narrative style of women. (M&K, 1989: 3)

Having only three male storytellers out of seventeen in the present collection, female storytellers rely more on linguistic expression than epic stories. Palestinian men usually prefer epic stories in Al-dīwān50, which differs in the manner of delivery as men tend to use physical movement while women use “certain stylistic features, which give the tales their particular character” (ibid). Women’s speech is “direct and earthy” (ibid), and Palestinian women are considered to be reliable observers of their society since there is an immediate connection with their own lives and the overall social structure. Age also constitutes an important consideration. Palestinian women narrators gain credibility through old age, which is considered to be marked by wisdom and trust:

Because the tale-tellers are older women who have gone through the cycle of life, they are free of blame and at the same time endowed with the experience and wisdom necessary to see through hypocrisy and contradiction. (ibid: 13)

In their introduction, the compilers establish a distinction between ‘passive’ and ‘active’ storytellers. The former, “is someone who doesn’t normally tell tales, nor is he/she known in the village as a teller” whereas the latter “is one of four or five in any village community who show an intense personal interest in preserving and transmitting the

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50 For every Palestinian extended family there is Al-dīwān, which is a place for social gatherings, usually for men only.
practice of tale telling” (ibid: 9-10). The way this division is made endows Palestinian women storytellers with a level of responsibility and position to carry the tradition from one generation to another, despite being uneducated.

Mother - son narrative in the folktales seems to be dependant on the mothers’ authority over the son’s marriage in Palestinian society. The son’s choice for a bride is dependent on the mother’s choice and opinion, as it is the case in “Shoqak Boqak” 

In this tale both sister and mother played an important role in finding a suitable wife for the son, they even “can provide him with a critique of the intended’s deportment and character” (ibid: 21). The mother and sister’s control of the situation can be partly because of the degree of social and gender separation in villages. In “Shoqak Boqak” the following dialogue reveals the agreement between the son and his mother over finding a bride:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>He said: “You must look for a bride for me whose face is like blood on the snow.”</th>
<th>قالها:”بدي تدوريلي على عروس يكون وجهها مثل دم عالثلج.”</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rushing home, she said to him, “Son, what a bride I’ve found for you! In all my life I’ve never seen anything like her.”</td>
<td>روهت قالت لابنها: &quot;يما شو لافيتيك عروس! بعدني بتاريخ حياتي ما شفت مثلها.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(M&K, 1989: 182)  
(M&K, 2001: 167)

In rural areas the custom persists until today that the mother is the one who searches for a bride, checks on her, proposes and may even test her, as in “Jummez Bin Yazur” 

In both tales, the reader is shown a number of real elements from Palestinian social and cultural habits. As mentioned before, mothers extend their role through the authority granted to them by the society and family. As Hilma Granqvist (1931, 1935) observed while analysing the status of Palestinian women in villages, mothers and sisters usually try to find a bride for their son/brother who is also from their own extended family. In this way, the bride will be considered as an insider.

Remaining within the fusion of mother and storyteller narrative, “Shwesh, Shwesh!” 

Shwish shwish exposes a different angle to mother-son relationships in Palestinian
In this folktale, the mother tries to break free from her role because she wants to remarry. The son is not pleased with this and decides to punish her. In Palestinian society, mothers over the age of fifty are expected to dedicate their full attention to their sons and daughters, especially if the father is away or dead. This tale shows how mothers in Palestinian society represent symbols of sacrifice and dedication to their offspring. The fact that the mother in “Shwesh, Shewsh!” wants to think of herself and choose a new man is culturally unacceptable, particularly in rural Palestine. The narrative of the mother, nonetheless, is ambivalent. On one hand, “the mother seems to have achieved what all women are supposed to dream about: loving and obedient sons and grandchildren and dutiful daughters-in-law” (M&K, 1989: 67). The footnote follows this part in the tale:

His (the son’s) wives organised themselves so that one of them was always rocking her while another was doing the work. His mother spent all her time in the hammock, and his wives were always rocking her. (ibid: 66)

The image depicted by the storyteller could reveal to some extent the inner desire of a Palestinian single mother; who within a particular social, polygamous and rural environment (before 1948) could have enjoyed this ideal situation. On the other hand, the storyteller’s narrative shows the social restrictions on women who are past childbearing age, and who are not allowed to act on their sexual desires. The narrative of Palestinian women in this tale relates to the tension between her desires and social expectations and duties.

An important question raised by the compilers in their introduction on whether women are indulging in fantasy or wish fulfilment (M&K, 1989) is worth looking at, particularly within the gender differences and restrictions imposed by some social beliefs in the Middle East. According to the compilers, the pertinence of fiction and fantasy in folktales does not deny that the tales present a portrait of the culture. In spite of gender and social constraints, Palestinian women are endowed with a level of objectivity, wisdom and authority. Palestinian women storytellers mirror their society with its worst and best aspects, observing and “weaving plots for the folktales from the materials of their daily experience” (ibid: 18). As noted earlier, Palestinian women’s roles are continuously manifested through artistic and literary representations. Even if they suffer from lack of public presence or from patriarchal kinship restrictions, Palestinian women try their best to define their roles in society themselves without seeking male input, which can be seen throughout the tales. James Scott’s notion of the
‘hidden power’ or ‘resistance’ (Scott, 1985) among peasants can be relevant when referring to Palestinian rural women’s form of power. According to Scott, who opposes Gramsci’s idea of hegemony51, peasant and slave societies use cultural forms of resistance rather than political forms of rebellion. Indeed, forms of power do not have to be manifested within a public sphere but can be better expressed through art and orality for Palestinian rural women:

[…] and in other forms of folklore that in Palestine are traditionally their domain: embroidery, basket weaving, pot making, and verbal arts like wedding songs and laments for the dead. Women provide a large measure of the creative and artistic energy in the society, as these folktales amply demonstrate. (M&K, 1989: 19)

I would further argue that women’s role in preserving the transmission of Palestinian popular and oral culture, whether as contributors in folkloric activities or as active carriers of Palestinian storytelling, is a form of narrating “Palestinian collective memory in a social story rather than political” (Brand, 2007: 188). As Hanita Brand argues in her article, “Palestinian Women and Collective Memory”, Palestinian women’s way of expressing collective memory reflects their roles, aspirations and efforts within the Palestinian social institution. Storytelling, in fact, acts as a compensation for what Palestinians lost; “it is a form of retrieving back their past” (Kanaana, 2012: 5). Storytelling can be even seen as a prosthetic device, as I explained in the second chapter, through which Palestinian memory is revived and reclaimed through “constructing a possible space for national and individual existence and identity today” (Landsberg, 2004: 18). In other words, one can argue that prosthetic memory combines a person and a historical narrative at an experiential site, such as women’s storytelling. The latter, I think, is not just a means to reinforce group identity and pass on memories; it also enables, as Landsberg explains, “the transmission of memories to people who have no ‘natural’ or biological claims to them” (ibid).

Despite the traumatic and unstable political situation, which still exists today, Palestinian cultural structures have developed over generations, and thus cannot simply disappear. Some changes have taken place, no doubt, but the main “standards of behaviour characteristic of this ancient institution are still current in their social milieu”

51 Gramsci’s notion of hegemony highlights the control of one social class over the other, whether socially, politically or economically. For him hegemony features over two levels: “civil society”, that is the ensemble of organisms commonly called “private”, and that of “political society” or “the State”. These two levels correspond on the one hand to the function of “hegemony” which the dominant group exercises throughout society.” (Inverted commas in original, Gramsci in Buttigieg & Callari, 1992: 67)
(M&K, 1989:12). This is important to maintain and preserve over generations. Here the voice of Palestinian women becomes very important; turning the political narrative of cultural and collective memory into a social one. I would further argue that Palestinian women confirm the pertinence of social and cultural values in the tales, which exist within strong familial, social and cultural integration within Palestinians:

The tales assume a stable social order, which no doubt characterized Palestinian society for hundreds of years before the advent of the British Mandate in the early 1920s; the current situation for most Palestinians, however, is one of Diaspora and exile, requiring adaptation and cultural change. This is not to say that the cultural assumptions informing the tales and those prevailing in modern Palestinian society have been severed. Ideals of behaviour that have developed through the institutions of the culture over countless generations do not simply vanish overnight. (M&K, 1989: 12)

Although the ideals of behaviour are persistent, the tales are not simply mere reflectors. The tales, through women’s narrative, are rather a representation of family reality, interaction and cultural existence throughout different generations. For instance, women’s narrative of authority in choosing their sons’ brides, as I discussed in “Shoqak, Boqak”, or mothers’ vulnerability to their sons’ opposition to remarriage as in “Shwesh, Shwesh!” among other examples, highlight the role played by women storytellers in transforming Palestinian narrative of memory from the political into the social. The transformation happens through, I argue, their constructive voice in educating younger generations as well as their role in criticising or exposing social problems. In other words, both compilers and storytellers frame Palestinian cultural memory, whether by analysing family relationships, or addressing conflicts in society that when translated into tales “become the existential realities of the heroines and heroes” (ibid: 20). For instance, polygyny is a recurrent theme but, in spite of being out of proportion to its incidence in the society, “the frequency [M&K feel] serves an educational function, especially if children are listening every time these tales are told” (ibid).

Memory, as seen in the second chapter, survives thanks to inter and trans-generational work (Assmann 2006; Hirsch 2008). “Intergenerational memory” (Hirsch, 2008) known also as “communicative memory” (Assmann, 2006) is constructed through the effort of individuals to pass on their biographical recollections from one generation to another generation in informal and oral conversations. The transmission of memories can be directly manifested within individuals, mainly with the family as the main unit of transmission, who can pass on their bodily and affective connection to that event to their
descendants, over three to four generations. “cultural memory” (Assmann, 2006), also
called “trans-generational memory” (Hirsch, 2008), however, is associated with the
national/political and cultural/archival memory. Being a national and institutionalised
form of memory, cultural memory is manifested through traditional archiving of
memories seen “through monuments, days of remembrance and other structures or
institutions that together form a shared identity for a group” (Hirsch, 2008: 111). The
combination of both communicative and cultural memory exists in SBSA (1989) and its
Arabic version. Thanks to the compilers’ anthropological observation of the Palestinian
family over three generations, throughout their introduction, footnotes and afterwords,
Muhawi & Kanaana formally document the heritage of a vibrant oral culture within its
social reality and cultural memory. Moreover, women’s narrative as storytellers and
heroines reinforces social bonds of communicative memory through their informal and
conversational role within the family.

Returning to the three tales I have so far discussed, “Tunjur, Tunjur”, “The Woman
Who Married Her Son” and “Shwesh, Shwesh!”, the reader of SBSA (1989) and its
Arabic version not only enjoys the plot and characters’ interaction but, more
importantly, appreciates the cultural and social reality, characterised by trust and
dependence between mother and daughter, or by love, protection (and even jealousy)
between mother and son. In addition to presenting reality, women’s narrative of
memory, I argue, is educational for younger Palestinian generations given that children
are among the main readers or listeners to the tales. For instance in “Tunjur, Tunjur”,
the child learns to accept himself / herself in spite of any differences, so do his parents:

[The tale] makes the child aware and reassured of his value and
important role in maintaining a continuation of life. Moreover, the tale
teaches parents to accept their child the way he/she is, without regret
or wishes. As many tales start with a childless mother, who wishes to
have a child at any expense, the mother once having a child learns to
accept and raise him/her, even if it were a cooking pot or a cricket.
(Fayād in Al-ayām, 2010)

Through women’s narrative, storytelling can perform a therapeutic function in popular
culture, acting as an aid to emotional and social growth. “Such tales help children move
from one level of consciousness, guided by ‘the pleasure principle’, to a more adult
level, guided by ‘the reality principle’” (Bettelheim cited in Hinds, Motz and Nelson,
2006: 71). Hence, through both inter- and trans-generational memory, Palestinian reality

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52 ‘The pleasure principle’ and ‘the reality principle’ are concepts initially discussed by Sigmund Freud
(1901).
is extended to younger generations to help them grasp vital cultural practices and social identities. The fusion of cultural and communicative memory helps to raise awareness, in the case of oral literature, that both culture and art are not reducible to, or deducible from, each other. Tales on mother-son/daughter relationships not only expose familial interactions but reveal a portrait of the culture or “a chunk of the culture” (Kanaana, 2012: 3) which the reader will relate to when similarities in form occur or cultural details adapted by local tellers. As I discuss in the coming section, siblings’ relationships highlight different social, cultural as well as national paradigms.

3.1.3 Siblings’ Narrative

As discussed in Chapter Two, the process of remembering is not simply a retrieval of stories or images out of the storehouse of memory. It extends and transmits stories, memoirs, feelings and aspirations among people or children who do not have first-hand experience of such events (Hirsch, 2002; 2005). Palestinian women play an important role in paving the way for a smooth transition of cultural values in Palestinian society and family. Women’s roles, I argue, as mothers or sisters, engender as well as gender the preservation of cultural memory, which is manifested through their roles and narratives. Sisters, like mothers, play a major role in consolidating family bonds and establishing harmony. The narrative of siblings as portrayed by the storytellers and the compilers consists of one of the most fundamental bonding ties in a Palestinian family. According to Muhawi & Kanaana the “sister-brother relationship is one of the most important of women’s relationships, and the one with the greatest potential of growth” (M&K, 1989: 28). Culturally, the sister has great influence in choosing her brother’s bride. As discussed previously in “Jummez Bin Yazur”, together with the mother, the sister searches for a suitable bride, with whom they can get along, as they will probably be sharing the same household. The sister also shows her joy in her brother’s wedding by “expressing publicly through dancing at his wedding and singing songs of praise for his wife” (ibid).

The sister can even replace the mother’s protectiveness and affection as seen in “The Orphan’s Cow” 53 Baqarat al-yatāmā where the sister is faithful and loving to her brother in hardship. Poor treatment by the stepmother strengthens the relationship between brother and sister. Even after being enchanted, the brother in the form of a gazelle is very affectionate and caring with his sister, the latter is thrown in the well by

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53 See summary of the tale in Appendix 3 (number 2).
the Sultan’s family. Through hardships, the death of the mother and the bad treatment of the husband’s family, the relationship between sister and brother became stronger - the very survival of both sister and brother depends on their mutual love and cooperation. The narrative of siblings, in my opinion, is related to the role of sisters in the Palestinian family and social institutions. Cultural identity becomes causally tied to the Palestinian social institution. In other words, individuals identify with Palestinian social structure and norms hence adhere to their social identity. Moreover, the importance of the bond between brother and sister is connected to the sense of collective identity, family solidarity and unity. The narrative also draws on the specificity of Palestinian cultural institutions, where the brother is regarded as responsible for his sister even when she is married; he remains her protector sanad or ’izwa for the rest of her life” (ibid: 24). As Bushnaq noted:

idealized brother and sister relationship in the stories is a reflection of the patrilineal bond that makes father and brother responsible for a woman even after she marries and goes to live in her husband’s house. (1990: 133)

The narrative of siblings can be very powerful and a means for not only cultural work on memory but also national work, as it is the case in “The Green Bird” Al-fayr al-akhir54. This is one of the most popular tales among Palestinians, glorifying once more the bond between the brother and his sister. At the beginning the sister has a leading role as mediator between the stepmother and her father, following the death of her mother. Later on, in spite of being manipulated and badly treated by her step mother, her faithfulness and devotion to her brother revives him. The tale shows:

The level of solidarity between a brother and his sister, which cannot be compared to the husband and wife relationship. Blood-relationship has a crucial role in shaping siblings’ relationships, which reflects the dimension of kinship in Palestinian rural society. (Al-Quds by Naṣir, 2002: 20)

The bond between the sister and the brother reveals “a meaningful clue concerning the cultural emphasis on first-cousin marriage. First-cousin marriage in Palestine ideally combines both brother/sister and husband wife relationships” (M&K, 1989: 113). The metaphoric representation of the brother-sister relationship or the narrative of Palestinian storytellers in this particular tale is meant to idealize endogamy/first-cousin

54 See summary of the tale in Appendix 3 (number 3).
marriage in Palestinian society, since ideally the cousin combines the brotherly
tenderness and protection with sexual attraction.

In addition to promoting among younger generations love and care between brothers
and sisters, as well as the social and cultural importance of first-cousin marriage in
Palestinian society, the tale has deeper layers worth highlighting. As the story unfolds,
the reader finds that the bird is the reincarnation of the dead brother, who was murdered
by his step-mother and eaten by his father (without the father’s knowledge). At the end
of the story, the bird comes back to his human shape after punishing his parents and
paying tribute to his sister’s loyalty. When the bird makes his appearance at the
wedding his sister was attending, he says:

“I am the green bird
Who graces this gathering!
My stepmother slaughtered me
And my father devoured me
Only my kind sister
(Allah shower mercy on her!)
Gathered up my bones
And saved them in the urn of stone.”
(M&K, 1989: 101)

In disbelief at seeing a bird speaking, the guests keep on repeating: “Speak bird! How
beautiful your words are!” (ibid) and the bird repeats the same poem until he
becomes human again. Birds appear frequently in Palestinian folk culture, particularly in s
ongs and proverbs. They symbolise women’s femininity and sexuality, as I will discuss in the
coming section, as well as being an important folkloric symbol in Palestinian popular
and folk culture. As Granqvist observes, in her study Marriage II (1935), the green
bird occurs in many of the songs sung at wedding celebrations.

Further to the bird’s folkloric and cultural significance, I would argue that the bird
symbolises Palestinian cultural heritage in general and women’s narrative in particular.
In other words, the bird in the tale keeps on singing until life is brought back to the son.
In the same vein, Palestinian storytellers are urged to revive their memory and safeguard
their cultural and national identity. This explains also why the collection under study is
entitled Speak, Bird, Speak Again or qūl ya ṭayr literally meaning ‘speak bird’ in

For more details see the work of Stephan (1928), entitled “Animals in Palestinian Folklore” on the
symbolism of birds in Palestinian proverbs.
Arabic. Both titles invite the readers to listen to the bird’s singing, a symbol of stories which stand for vibrant heritage, love for life, regeneration and resistance against denial and oblivion. One could even say that the title of the compilation represents the folk and oral literature of a nation which is asking for recognition and identity affirmation from the whole world. In the interview I conducted with Dr Sharif Kanaana in 2012, he stated that:

Yes it [the title] is symbolic of course. The title comes from a tale in the collection entitled al-ṭayr al-akhir “The Green Bird”. The bird represents Palestinians and Speak Again refers to revival, regeneration also to hope. (ibid: 9)

In the realms of memory, “The Green Bird” also symbolises narratives of continuity “that marks not only the past within the present, as legacy, scar, outcome, wound, etc., but also the past still at work within the present, still actively re-engendering it in its own shape, the past potentially therefore within the future” (Jayyusi, 2007: 114-5 italics in original). Even more, the narrative of continuity becomes Palestinians’ unavoidable duty to secure a cultural continuum between past, present and future.

Furthermore, the narrative of continuity is embedded within women’s voice as storytellers, seen again in the symbolism of the bird. As I mentioned earlier, the bird’s significance is not only national or political but also in my opinion represents the voice of Palestinian women. “It [the bird] is a symbol of femininity and of indestructible power associated with femininity” (M&K, 1989: 117). This will become more apparent in my discussion of sexuality and marriage. The way birds are connected to storytelling and women’s narrative is seen in the way Palestinian women storytellers end some tales. As I discussed at the beginning of the chapter, Palestinian women are endowed with the skill of telling folktales; it is one of the arts they master. The folktales have specific forms of narration at the beginning and at the end; otherwise known as closing and introductory formulas. Among other closing formulas, some storytellers end their folktales by saying:

| “The bird has flown and a good evening to all” (M&K, 1989: 65). | وطار الطير وتتمسو بالخير. (M&K, 2001: 74) |

The presence of the bird in women storytellers’ style attributes Palestinian women with the power of regeneration and of preserving cultural identity, I believe. Palestinian
women represent the voice of the bird who tells stories of collective memory, history and identity to younger generations. It is their responsibility as mothers, sisters and wives to transmit the essence of Palestinian cultural identity to those who “grow up dominated by narratives that preceded their birth” (Hirsch, 1997:22). Palestinian narrative, whether by mother or sister, shapes Palestinian post-memory, through which storytelling fuses ‘cultural’ and ‘communicative’ memories at the ‘inter’ and ‘trans’ generational levels (Assmann, 2006; Hirsch, 2008). In other words, folktales encapsulate a whole cultural system portrayed by Palestinian women, who safeguard heritage through preserving the transmission of Palestinian communicative memory at the family or the inter-generational level. The framing of the folktales by M&K is, on the other hand, a national project of documentation to reinforce Palestinian cultural memory, thereby promoting trans-generational continuity.

Because the Palestinian extended family is characterised as “patrilineal, patrilateral, polygynous, endogamous and patrilocal” (M&K, 1989: 13), it is inevitable that conflicts arise. Once more women’s narrative of cultural memory, as I have discussed with regard to Palestinian mothers, gains strength as a means of education for younger generations, as well as of social criticism. Through women’s voice as sisters or storytellers, folktales are not only descriptive of social life in Palestine, but can also be critical of social practices and norms. Under the guise of humour and entertainment, Palestinian women’s narrative aims to draw attention to and rectify unacceptable behaviour by either the individual or the group in Palestinian society. Within sibling relationships, love, affection and mutual cooperation can turn into conflict, competition and jealousy. The main problems tackled, in women’s narrative in this case, is gender favouritism, as males are considered by the family and society to be better and more gifted than females. Forms of racial and social status privileging have also been challenged in some folktales and women’s narratives.

One of the best examples of this, “one of the most popular and one of the best loved tales in Palestine, perhaps because it dramatises a situation that can occur in any family” (M&K, 1989:111), is “Half-a-Halfing” Nus nṣīṣ. Within a polygamous environment, the tale firstly shows how the husband can sometimes be unfair with one of his wives, treating the non-blood-related wife better than the cousin wife. Endogamy, otherwise known as first-cousin marriage, can be regarded in Palestinian society as “the ideal marriage because it exercises a positive pull toward family harmony” (ibid: 16).

56 See summary of the tale in Appendix 3 (number 4).
Nonetheless, competition among brothers “is acted out against a family background of polygyny and first-cousin marriage” (ibid: 111). As a result, the sons of one of the wives compete for attention causing harm and distress. The educational element is felt throughout the tale, it reinforces the idea that heroism lies in actions not in appearances. The most important elements in a hero are his virtues of courage, truthfulness, and resourcefulness, seen in the character of “Half-halfing”. The latter has successfully helped his half-brothers to escape from the Ghoul, which demonstrates “generosity of spirit by rising above the pettiness of sibling rivalry” (ibid: 111).

The question one might pose is how can women’s narrative against favouritism contribute to engendering Palestinian cultural memory? I argue that it is related to developing the identity of younger generations, whom we know constitute the majority of the audience, and heroism is embedded within women’s narrative so as to help children develop their identities within the family and society. Identity development, as the tales reveal, starts from understanding the rules of society, mainly the notion of authority. The latter implies learning more about the system of rewards and punishments in Palestinian culture, seen, for example, in respect for tradition, old age and obedience to parental authority. On a higher level, the question of authority is relevant for understanding “the individual’s relationship to society, and hence to the meaning of heroism in the tales” (ibid: 30). In other words, women’s narrative, whether as storytellers or heroines, promotes the idea of respecting authority and co-existence among patrilineal, patrilateral, polygynous, endogamous and patrilocal Palestinian rural society. Because it can be difficult to achieve harmony and agreement, it is necessary to make younger generations avoid the act which triggers problems, namely favouritism. Moreover, by constant repetition of tales, children develop an understanding of the structure of extended families in Palestine, mainly prior to 1948, in which collective identity was stronger than nowadays. It is, I think, important to highlight the collective social milieu and its connection to respect for age and gender throughout the tales, ensuring that collective identity is inherited, whether consciously or sub-consciously, in the construction of younger generations’ cultural memory and identity:

Heroic action in the tales also concerns the idea of identity in the society. Again, from the perspective of the extended family, identity is collective. Through respect for tradition and deference to age, individuals are socialized from childhood to harmonize their will with that of the family. They are encouraged to perceive themselves as others see them and to validate their experience in terms of the approval of others. (M&K, 1989: 31)
As mentioned earlier, heroism is related to the development of identity, which means that the hero does not necessarily start as a hero in the tale, like in “Half Halfling”, but learns to become one by the end. In an interview conducted with Sharif Kanaana by Robin Myers and Shadi Rohana (2011)\(^57\), Kanaana comments on the link between Palestinian folklore and identity, saying:

> I feel that humanity is losing so much these days by not resorting to folk tales in the raising of its children. Folktales are universal, they assure the child that one day he or she is going to grow up and be as strong as the hero.

Both Kanaana’s observation and women’s narrative throughout the folktale compilation, I argue, reinforce one main characteristic within cultural memory, known as “the concretion of identity” or the relation to the group (Assmann & Czaplicka, 1995). Being the store of knowledge from which a group gains awareness and unity, cultural memory acts as an identificatory system of signification. Integrity and collectivity in the process of developing younger Palestinian generations’ identities are supported by the “capacity to reconstruct” (ibid: 130). No memory can preserve the past without an actual effort to criticise, preserve or transform. In other words, through the valorisation and promotion of human values, such as cooperation, truthfulness, faithfulness and humbleness, or heroic actions in the tales, women’s narrative helps to unify the integrity of individual identity within collective, social and cultural memory. I would even say that women’s narrative acts as a post-memory mode aimed at promoting important human values since after the Nakba “people’s humanitarian and Arab values were shaken by trauma as well as modernization” (Al-Sarīsī, 2004: 239). The transmission of post-memory, as such, connects generational experiences through also the bridging of social and human values, rendering memory more of a personal than historical experience (Hirsch, 1997). One should not also exclude the downside of post memory as it can burden coming generations with lack of closure to their political identity and future. This is particularly seen within the oral narrative of Palestinian history told by refugees in Palestinian camps in Lebanon, who form their collective memory through “individual stories told and re-told in refugee gatherings” (Sayigh, 2007: 140); nonetheless, they feel bitter about their present circumstances:

First generation refugees were blamed by their children and blamed themselves for leaving Palestine, possibly as a reflection of Lebanese

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\(^{57}\) The interview was conducted by Robin Myers and Shadi Rohana in 2011 on [http://electronicintifada.net/content/interview-sharif-kanaana-palestinian-folklore-and-identity/9825](http://electronicintifada.net/content/interview-sharif-kanaana-palestinian-folklore-and-identity/9825) [accessed 10-11-2013].
accusations of cowardice. A common formula for expressing this guilt and anger was, “if only we had died in our country rather than come here!” (ibid: 156)

3.2 Courtship, Marital Narrative and Palestinian Cultural Identity

In all of the above, Palestinian women are endowed with strong characteristics; “their values, in fact, depend a lot upon their personality” (Granqvist, 1935: 169). The narratives of Palestinian women represent authority and respect as well as symbolising love, wisdom, affection and support. Palestinian women do not only act as heroines in folktales but as heroines in real life, as mothers, wives, daughters and sisters. The relation to male social identity can, like in real life, affect women’s social identity, resulting in either harmony or conflict. Palestinian women, whether as sisters or mothers and through the voice of women storytellers, not only manifest their cultural roles, but also try to represent the social struggles and pressures many of them endure, such as social restrictions over women’s sexuality before marriage and tensions once the newlywed is introduced to the husband’s extended family. “For the female, conflict is inherent in the structure of the system” (M&K, 1989: 14), which she tries to challenge or co-exist with. In short, “these tales almost always concern, not heroes, but heroines: mothers, daughters, and wives” (ibid: 18).

To complete women’s circle of narrative in the compilation under study, I deem it essential to shed light on their identity development and the way it is once again projected in the tales, in this case as a lover and a wife. A decisive and crucial transitional period through which each individual gains maturity is known as sexual awakening or development. During this phase the individual becomes emotionally and physically attracted to someone else. The development of sexual awakening and identity is prevalent within the tales and, I argue, is also part of women’s narrative to engender cultural memory and identity.

3.2.1 Sexual Awakening

Maintaining the argument of identity development in relation to cultural memory, “The Little Bird” Al- ʾuṣfurā al-ṣaghīra, is a pertinent example. This very popular tale is one of the first stories told to Palestinian children, according to the compilers. The tale is basically about a bird that is getting ready for marriage. The bird goes through a
preparatory state and readiness, which symbolise sexual awakening for young Palestinian girls. The latter, as the bird shows, prepare the make-up, henna and trousseau: “By collecting her trousseau, and by beautifying and putting herself on display, she arouses the interest of the sultan’s son” (M&K, 1989: 144). The tale, on one hand, reveals women’s sexual awakening, maturity and open desire to find a husband or “going out and actively pursuing one” (ibid: 27). On the other, the bird symbolises the woman’s preparation and desire for marriage. The tale, in spite of its brevity, is culturally rich and denotative of women’s inner world and desires. Reality in this tale is seen from the woman’s perspective; even if not able to publicly express her interest in sex, the woman actively looks for her match within a Palestinian cultural context. This transitional stage, among women, shows their eagerness to pursue a husband and desire to have a family. Because Palestinian women, mainly in villages, have little freedom to express their sexual desires, the tale’s popularity implicitly reveals woman’s awareness of her beauty, sexuality and desire to be chosen by a man.

In doing so, the storyteller has adopted a style of narration full of humour so as to attract her audience, mainly children. The reconstruction of cultural memory as discussed previously can be achieved through the power of narration, hence language. As I discussed in the second chapter, language is a fundamental constituent in the construction of national identity as well as collective memory. Spivak argues that “language works as a negotiation of the public and the private” (2007: 09). The negotiation between private and public in this case is aimed at disclosing the hidden voice of Palestinian women and their desire to finding the right mate, as well as targeting younger generations in order to transmit and preserve customs and values. The implied educational function is realised through the medium of humour and language as the tale shows:
“She [the female bird] sat awhile. Then, my little darlings, came the son of the sultan, who was roaming the neighbourhood looking for something. Meanwhile, she was singing:

“I am wearing my very best!
Ya-la-lal-li
And this is the day of my feast
Ya-la-lal-la.”

“Eh!” he thought. “Who is singing like that?” He listened carefully and behold! It was the little bird singing. Aiming his gun, he fired and shot her. She sang her song:

“What a sharp shooter!”
Ya-la-lal-li
What a sharp shooter!
Ya-la-lal-la.”

He then plucked her feathers, and she was singing:

“A fine feather-plucker!
Ya-la-lal-li
A fine feather-plucker
Ya-la-lal-la.”

Then he cooked her, and still she chirped:

“What a good cook!
Ya-la-lal-li
What a good cook
Ya-la-lal-la.”

Putting her into his mouth, he chewed her until she was soft, then swallowed her. She went down into his stomach. In a while, he got up and spat her. She then sang out:

“Ho! Ho! I saw the prince’s hole,
It’s red, red, like a burning coal.”

(M&K, 1989: 116-17)

Although sexual subjects are taboo in polite conversation, “Palestinian folk culture in general is accepting of language that concerns other bodily function, which are a principle source of humour in the tales” (M&K, 1989: 117). Humour has the power to make the content of the language memorable, enriching the heritage of oral literature as well as empowering women’s narrative of femininity within their social identity. The symbolism of birds, as discussed before, is versatile and significant to engendering as well as gendering memory. Birds stand for women’s power, freedom and cultural identity as well as sexuality.
Because folktales belong to people and their lives in all its forms, the tales showcase Palestinian popular culture, which “reinforces the existing cultural attitudes and lifeways” (Harmon in Hinds, Motz and Nelson, 2006: 69). Palestinian folktales, I would argue, in general and this collection in particular, projects the image of harmonious life before the Nakba. For instance, the reader gets to know about village social life, wedding customs, clothes and cultural practices. The normality and harmony of life is another feature, I would say, of women’s narrative, particularly if the aim is to maintain a continuity of folklore and heritage. In both “The Little Bird” and “The Green Bird”, for instance, women’s narrative and the compilers’ cultural framing aim to expose readers to Palestinian cultural customs so as to appreciate the flow of the story and understand the significance of weddings in Palestinian society. This is mainly done for two reasons; the first one is to document the oral heritage of a very unstable part of the world, hence highlighting the specificity of Palestinian culture and identity to non-Palestinians. Secondly, the aim is to work on developing young Palestinians’ cultural and national identity and to enlighten them from an early age about the cultural stages and preparations the bride has in the Palestinian context, seen in “The Little Bird”. Describing the bridal seat and wedding procession in Palestine, the compilers explain in a footnote:

The bridal seat (masmade مصمدة) is usually an elevated seat, composed of several folded mattresses, where the bride sits after having been led in the wedding procession (zaffe زفة) from her father’s house to that of the groom with all the female wedding guests singing, dancing and ululating (zaghareet زغاريد) around her. The groom usually joins her later in the evening, and the couple sit together in the midst of the dancing and singing. (M&K, 1989: 116)

Likewise, in “The Green Bird”, the dead brother appears as a bird while his sister is at a wedding. When the bird starts talking, the storyteller says: “the guests forgot about the wedding procession and turned their attention to the bird” (ibid: 101). Muhawi & Kanaana deemed it important at that moment to add a footnote explaining Palestinian wedding processions:

The wedding procession (ژفة) zaffe is an essential part of the Palestinian wedding ceremony in which relatives and friends of the couple sing and dance in the street in celebration of the marriage. See Granqvist, Marriage II: 35-137. (ibid: 101)

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58 It is worth mentioning that both Muhawi & Kanaana rely heavily on the seminal work by Granqvist, *Marriage in Palestine*, Vol I & II: “The Night of Henna” and “Marriage Customs”, constantly referring to
According to Al-Sarīsī, Palestinian storytellers are very faithful in describing marriage ceremony rituals in detail, mainly in the countryside, as those details are missing nowadays due to the diasporic situation or displacement. “The full presentation of marriage rituals in the countryside around Jerusalem, as seen in the folktales, is meant to document those rituals as practised before the Nakba” (Al-Sarīsī, 2004: 191). This, in fact, confirms that rural Palestinian women are “the transmitters of kinds of narrative and cultural performance that fit within the ‘heritage’ paradigm” (Sayigh, 2007: 137). Through symbolism, humour or cultural reference, the discourse of continuity, regeneration and affirmation is attributed to Palestinian women. In this regard, Hilma Granqvist conducted studies of the village of Artas in the 1920s and 1930s. The results showed how Palestinian women were responsible for owning, preserving and transmitting songs and dances that celebrated the central peasant institution of marriage (Granqvist, 1935; Sayigh, 2007). Thus, Palestinian women’s narrative and roles can be identified as cultural transmitters within the tales and present Palestinian social reality. Women are seen as narrators and active carriers of the Palestinian folk tradition in reality, as well as heroines in fiction; the compilers therefore aim to empower Palestinian women and address the assumptions of otherness, weakness and submissiveness interpreted by the West:

> Western readers will be struck as much by the tone of the tales—the narrative voice that speaks through them—as by their style, for the tales empower the women who narrate them to traverse, in their speech, the bounds of social convention. (M&K, 1989: 12)

In spite of being a natural aspect of maturity among young men and women, sexual awakening can create conflict within the family. When a girl’s identity transforms into that of a woman, her physical appearance becomes her tool to attract men. This beauty, however, can trigger jealousy and tension as in, “Jummez Bin Yazur, Chief of the birds” Jumīz bin yazūr, shaykh al-ṭuyūr. The tale, similarly to “The Little Bird”, reveals the sexual awakening of Set Al Hussun, who metaphorically asks her father to bring her a man to marry. Both tales “share the metaphorical disguise of the bird symbol, thereby conveying a culturally complex message that would be impossible to communicate directly” (M&K, 1989: 145). Both highlight the eagerness for marriage among young

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<p>59 See summary of the tale in Appendix 3 (number 5).<br /></p>
women, who have started to understand the complexity of their sexual feelings. On the one hand, *Set Al Hussun*’s beauty and will help her to pursue the man she loves, on the other, it creates hostility and harmful jealousy among her sisters and her lover’s sisters, who all try to create obstacles for her. Sexual jealousy can appear more prominent among sisters than brothers. In real life, having the freedom to actively pursue a man is very difficult; as it could put at stake the woman’s reputation and honour. Some tales, such as “Jummez Bin Yazur” and “The Little Bird”, are not always representations of real social situations but can express wishes. In this case, both tales reinforce the cultural identity of a woman, within the customs of Palestinian society, while shedding light on her desires related to sex and marriage.

### 3.2.2 Marriage

To be able to understand the Palestinian social structure, one has to understand family and marriage institutions. Here the role of Palestinian women as storytellers is important since it reveals their inner or private world, as well as their family and marriage institutions. Hilma Granqvist explains that analysing the marriage institution in the Palestinian context shows “the historical development of the village and its families, from which we can understand the social structure and family principles” (Granqvist, 1942: 25). Following sexual awakening, there is a life changing personal, familial as well as cultural phase both men and women have to experience in relation to choosing the suitable husband or wife. The quest for a partner in Palestinian society does not depend on the individuals only; “there is interplay of social forces in the quest situation” (M&K, 1989: 168). Both parties, in this stage will have the personal readiness and willingness to carry out the quest for a socially and personally appropriate husband/wife. Women’s narrative throughout the tales merges both public and private spheres, as I will show shortly, defining the position of the Palestinian woman in relation to society, symbolised by authority and duty towards the extended family, as well as shedding light on the woman’s inner desires, maturity and conflicts. In fact, women in most tales instigate actions, their roles developing from lovers to wives, affecting as such the dynamics of conjugal and family relationships.

For instance, some of the tales, such as “The Brave Lad”60 *Al-shāb al-shujāʾ*, tackle the problem of authority at the family and societal levels. In other words, the freedom to choose the right partner in Palestinian society does not only depend on the individuals’

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60 See summary of the tale in Appendix 3 (number 6).
desire but is obstructed by the requirements of the social system. Firstly, the daughter’s choice of marrying the brave lad is rejected by the father or king. As the story unfolds, we realise that “the fulfilment of the lad’s private desire for the king’s daughter is made contingent on the performance of a public duty killing the Ghoul” (M&K, 1989:168). The latter represents also an authority figure against the choice of two people. In order to achieve their objective, both the king’s daughter and the brave lad have to face authority by challenging the Ghoul. According to the compilers, authority figures preserve tradition by hindering both sexes’ personal freedom:

Authority figures as part of the cultural pattern of Palestinian society. It can act as a constructive voice of wisdom and balance between the young couple's desires and social expectations; alternatively, it can control and limit individual’s freedom. The fact that the choice of a mate is also important to the community highlights collective responsibility towards the young couple and their families. Marriage, as I mentioned earlier, is not only dependant on the individual’s choice in a Palestinian rural society, but is shared and approved by the main male figures in the family as well as extended family, friends and neighbours. It is important to note that in pre-Nakba rural Palestine, as the folktales reveal, the notion of collective identity was very strong, as I will explore in greater detail in the fourth chapter. Women’s narrative hence shows how marriage and choice of partner transcend the private sphere and become a public collective responsibility. In spite of the limitations imposed on individual choices, the intervention of the community can reinforce collective identity among people through showing care and protection. Another important element in reinforcing the cultural pattern of Palestinian rural society is seen in the storyteller’s realistic narration style. It is characterised by “the absence of magic and the supernatural, giving a meaningful cultural context to the quest pattern” (M&K, 1989: 168). At the beginning of the tale, the storyteller says:
Social status differences are a universal theme in folktales, however, the storyteller’s narration harmonises the choice of words to fit in within the Palestinian cultural context. In the Palestinian Arabic version the storyteller chose to use the verb nāsaba meaning literally to be suitable for / in accord with. In this particular context, the verb nāsaba means to become part of the in-laws family or to ‘become the son-in-law’ as the English translation shows. This particular verb within the storyteller’s sentence carries a strong cultural connotation for the Arab reader in general and the Palestinian in particular, emphasised by the compilers’ use of a popular proverb in a footnote:

“The lad could not possibly have been able to afford the costs of the wedding, which are borne entirely by the bridegroom’s family, since for a king’s daughter the festivities would have to be lavish. A Palestinian proverb says, “He who has money can have the king’s daughter for his bride.””

(M&K, 1989: 148)

Combining the narrative of the storyteller and the compilers’ framing, cultural memory is nurtured through the use of a popular proverb. Using proverbs to consolidate a particular situation as is the case in this tale relates reality (finding the right partner) to oral culture and heritage. The cultural framing, added by the compilers, can act as one of the characteristics of cultural memory, namely ‘obligation’ (Assmann & Czaplicka, 1995: 131):

The relation to a normative self-image of the group engenders a clear system of values and differentiations in importance which structure the cultural supply of knowledge and the symbols.

Through the voice of the compilers, the narrative of women in relation to the choice of the suitable partner is strengthened. In fact, the footnote adds, I believe, credibility to women’s storytelling and mainly shows obligation to reflect the cultural institution of a
whole group. Conversely, in the tale “Clever Hassan” \(^{61}\) *Al-shāṭir Hasan*, women’s narrative shows how figures of authority and newlyweds may clash in the course of the latter’s identity development, and harmony can only be achieved “through cooperation and by having sufficient strength of character to be independent” (M&K, 1989: 203). The tales as mentioned previously do not only reflect cultural realities, but also criticise existing cultural restrictions and educate future generations on how to become self-reliant, wise and independent.

Once the new partner is chosen, the couple encounter considerable changes, challenges and lessons to learn. Some of the tales, in Group II *Family*, explore the challenges faced by newlyweds, who try to establish patterns of communication “and to adapt to each other’s needs and observe each other’s limits” (ibid: 203). Suitability is a key theme discussed in many tales disclosing personal, social and cultural contributors to marriage. Throughout the tales, we are shown how the insight of Palestinian women helps to establish a successful marital life. A successful marriage can only be achieved if both partners are suitable for each other. Mutual suitability and choice, “given the dynamics of the Palestinian social system, is of utmost importance in the lives of the newlyweds” (ibid). In this regard, “The Cricket” *Al-khunfsa* is a perfect educational tale, and “one of the most popular children’s tales in Palestine” (ibid) highlighting the importance of choosing a compatible partner in order to achieve happiness and harmony. Unlike, “Clever Hassan” *Al-shāṭir Hasan*, “The Cricket”\(^{62}\) stresses the importance of first consulting with parents, particularly mothers, before taking any decisions related to marriage. The choice of the individual’s mate is dependent on parents’ advice, recommendations and consent. The cricket which is looking for a suitable mate keeps asking her mother for advice until her mother approves the right one. The folktale uses symbolism to introduce a fundamental issue in the Palestinian marriage institution, namely the suitability or compatibility of mates. The perfect choice of a mate, as women’s narratives show in the folktale and in the narration, is based on a compromise between individual desire and family requirements. A successful marriage involves “an agreement not between two individuals but between two families in Palestinian villages” (Granqvist, 1931: 53). While looking for the right husband, the cricket came across the mouse and the following is a dialogue between the cricket, her mother and the mouse:

\(^{61}\) See summary of the tale in Appendix 3 (number 7).

\(^{62}\) See summary of the tale in Appendix 3 (number 8).
She [the cricket] went away, and walked and walked until a little mouse found her wandering about and chirping: “Tzee, tzee, tzee.”
“What’re you looking for” he asked.
“I’m wandering around looking for a bridegroom.”
“Will you marry me?” he proposed.
She answered:
“Cricket, cricket, your mother!
And you are cousin to the whore.
I’ll put the gold in my sleeve,
And talk to my mother some more,”
“O mama!” she said to her mother.
“His eyes are wee, his head is wee,
and his ears are wee. All of him is very small.”
“Yes,” said the mother, “this one’s your size. Marry him.”
So back to the mouse the cricket went.
“Yes,” she said, “I’ll marry you.”
(M&K, 1989: 200)

Because folktales mature with age, Palestinian storytellers “are considered asexual and hence beyond the operative social taboos concerning speech and other forms of outwardly acceptable politeness” (M&K, 1989: 3). Palestinian society considers women who are past childbearing age to have no sexual desires, giving them the green light to use sexual or taboo language in order to add humour to the narration. On one hand, Palestinian society accredits elderly Palestinian women for their narration skills since they are perceived to possess authority, knowledge and wisdom. On the other, Palestinian women seem to be victims of a projected social belief, making them act as asexual, using deliberate references to sex or body parts while narrating so as to trigger a sense of humour.

As discussed earlier, the popularity of most of the tales in SBSA, such as “The Cricket” and “The Little Bird”, is attributed to narrative style and humour. Humour for a child, according to Kanaana, “consists of breaking the rules and the taboos of adult society” (Kanaana, 2008), be it in mentioning sexual parts of the body or comic language. Kanaana in his article on “Stories Told by and for Palestinian Children”, believes that “crude terms used by storytellers from illiterate, traditional, oral societies do so to
entertain and amuse children and should be deemed quite legitimate” (Kanaana, 2008). In other words, humour functions as a device to smooth educational transmission of identity for children in general and Palestinian children in particular, who end up remembering, enjoying and appreciating, accepting and identifying with cultural institutions. Moreover, a child, unlike an adult or literary critic, “does not analyse a story logically and try to find the message behind it. A child rather lives out the story by identifying with one of its characters, usually the hero” (Kanaana, 2008). The child, as I discussed earlier, identifies with the authority image, thus developing the image of a hero in him/her. Heroes, as models of behaviour for younger generations, help in developing the child’s identity. At the same level of identification, the narratives of Palestinian women reinforce their cultural position and authority, which the child learns to respect and relate to.

Looking at the dynamics of cultural memory transmission and preservation, Palestinian post-memory, I argue, establish a connection between past, present and future, whether in a conscious or unconscious way. The bridge between generations cannot be pain free or smooth as the wound of trauma is still open for Palestinians; nonetheless, the memory work, particularly prosthetic, can highlight and safeguard the cultural and family institutions that third generation or Palestinian diaspora communities have not experienced. One can argue that art and oral literature are the best mediums to transgress post-Nakba pain. Through women’s narrative, be it critical, humorous or educational, and through the compilers’ framing, trans- and inter-generational transmission of heritage, cultural identity and self-identification become fundamental for later generations. For instance, the fact that the cricket puts gold in her sleeve is culturally significant for Palestinians. According to the compilers, ‘the gold’ refers to the bride’s wealth and the word ‘cousin’ refers to husband. I would argue that the gold can also stand for the bride’s dowry; moreover, it is common to call a husband ‘cousin’ in because traditionally cousin marriage is encouraged in Palestinian society. The gold is placed in her sleeve because “traditional Palestinian women’s dress has long, flowing sleeves in which small objects can be placed” (M&K, 1989: 199). The additional explanation helps contextualise the search for a mate in a specified cultural, societal and familial setting. Through exposing and framing the tales, post-memorial work strives “to reactivate and re-embody more distant social/national and archival/cultural memorial structures by reinvesting them with resonant individual and familial forms of mediation and aesthetic expression” (Hirsch, 2008: 112).
Following the challenges of choosing the right partner, issues emerge in the conjugal life between a husband and his wife, specific to the Palestinian context. One of the most recurrent themes is ‘sexuality’ and its impact on the development of the individual before and after marriage, within the codes of Palestinian culture. The vitality of sexuality is crystallized in the husband-wife relationship, “which is the most prominent relationship in the tales: it occurs as a theme in nearly all of them and provides the basis for the plot in several tales” (M&K, 1989: 27). In spite of the restrictions on sexuality imposed by the family and society on young women before marriage, sexuality remains an essential motivator and enhancer of feelings in relationships between newlyweds and mature married couples. Given the authority allowed to storytellers in expressing themselves freely, women’s narrative of cultural memory throughout the folktales is gendered and engendered also around the lives of husbands and wives, through which both undergo identity development, disappointment and regeneration. Throughout the narration and plot Palestinian women may express their desires and feelings openly. Even more, women storytellers can act as spokeswomen for other Palestinian women, expressing how they may feel about their inner needs and emotions:

Denial, is not however, the prevailing ethic in many of the tales; rather, we found women’s sexuality and their emotional needs largely affirmed. Indeed, women play a much more active role with regard to their sexuality in the tales than in real life. (ibid: 34)

Women’s narrative tries to transcend social restrictions over expressing romance. There is, indeed, an affirmation of romantic love before and after marriage. As seen in some tales, such as “Jummez Bin Yazur” Jumīz bin yazūr, “Sackcloth” ’Bū al-labābīd, “The Brave Lad” Al-shāb al-shujā’ and “Lolabe” Lawlaba romance is fundamental to the development of a relationship into marriage. To be more specific, women’s narrative throughout the compilation, I think, is juxtaposing the parental authority and social intervention over the girl’s choice before marriage with women’s inner desires and wishes, which the society will not allow in public. The heroines, for instance, in “Jummez Bin Yazur” and “Sackcloth”, are playful and creative in their ideas of how to pursue a mate, showing their strength of character and beauty. In “Shahin”, the heroine is more mature than the man, showing more wisdom and responsibility in dealing with the emotional upheaval stemming from the first stirrings of sexuality. Being the main

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64 As Granqvist noted, “children have little freedom in their own marriages […] children must bow to the father’s authority and choice of mate” (Granqvist, 1931: 54).
initiators of actions as they try to pursue the right husband, sexuality lies at the heart of female power in the majority of tales.

Some tales expose possible problems between a husband and a wife, mainly because of sexual insecurity and lack of trust, such as in “The Golden Rod in the Valley of Vermilion”*65 *Qaẓīb al-zahab biwadī al-ʾqīq and “The Seven Leavenings”*66 *Im al-sabaʾ khamayr. The relationship between husband and wife at a certain stage is characterized with tension as a result of mistrust in wife or sexual insecurity. According to Muhawi & Kanaana, some tales reveal “the dark side of sexuality, where men’s fear or anxiety about their virility is projected as the women’s sexual voraciousness” (M&K, 1989: 227). The lack of harmony and increase in tension are also caused by the absence of offspring. The problem is seen in the way women and men associate sexuality with fertility and virility in Palestinian society. The absence of offspring “makes a man more vulnerable to social criticism, and he would be urged to marry another woman” (ibid) as a result.

Since both husbands in “The Golden Rod in the Valley of Vermilion” and “The Seven Leavenings” feel inadequate because of the infertility of their marriage, they start to question their manliness and as a result vent their frustration by beating their wives. The lack of offspring, as the tales reveal, can be more problematic for Palestinian women than for men. Socially and culturally speaking, male children represent a form of security for mothers; “they are an essential part of her identity; indeed, a woman without a son has practically no identity and no security in life” (ibid). This attitude to male offspring is socially constructed since in Palestinian society male children represent manliness and virility, for the mother. In both tales, the resolution to problems is realized either through a positive transformation in the husband’s character admission of error, or through conceiving children: the wife in “The Seven Leavenings”, for example, gains her respect back only once she claims that she can conceive. The tales, in fact, show how cultural approaches to sexuality differ between men and women and between generations in Palestinian society. The problem, in my opinion, lies in how society defines women according to particular roles, in which their identities should satisfy the patriarchal society first. “Cultural practice dictates that women should be modest and not express their sexuality openly, yet women are not presented as being anxious about their sexuality” (ibid: 227). Tales, like “The Golden

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*65 See summary of the tale in Appendix 3 (number 9).
*66 See summary of the tale in Appendix 3 (number 10).
Rod in the Valley of Vermilion” and “The Seven Leavenings”, implicitly raise awareness of the consequences of men’s anxiety and fear, which can negatively affect relationships, leading to lack of trust and separation.

The discourse of sexuality throughout the narratives of Palestinian women in SBSA crystallises in “Im Eshe”67 Im ‘aysha. Once more, the language discloses the power of women’s narration, combining humour and a wife’s revelation over the importance of her husband’s virility. In most of the tales, reference to sexuality is present as a theme but not explicit in the language. In “Im Eshe”, however, the wife is given more freedom to express her feelings, giving the reader a more culturally subversive approach to sexuality. The husband slaughters their chickens and the cow and spills the oil, but the wife tolerates everything except the loss of his sexual organs:

“To hell with it [the oil]! Just open!”
“No. You will kill me!”
“What did you do?”
“I said to the cow give me some food! But she wouldn’t. So I slaughtered her.”
“Let it be a sacrifice! You’re worth everything. Just open!”

“You’ll slaughter me!”
“Why? What did you do?”
“The camel was chewing his cud. I said to him, ‘Give me some food!’ but he wouldn’t. He came at me, and I covered my pecker with a cauliflower leaf. He goes and bites me, eats the leaf and eats my pecker tool!”

“Alas! Alas!” cried Im Eshe. “Nothing in the world matters like your balls, and now you’re a gelding!” (M&K, 1989: 227)

The tale shows that the couple can tolerate the loss of any material possessions but “the one loss the marriage cannot sustain is that of husband’s virility” (ibid: 227). The Palestinian woman’s voice throughout the tale reveals her power in managing her household as well as her marital life. Unlike “The Golden Rod in the Valley of Vermilion” and “The Seven Leavenings”, where men’s frustrations are more apparent, “Im Eshe” reveals women’s frustration concerning men’s lack of virility. As a matter of

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67 See summary of the tale in Appendix 3 (number 11).
The source of frustration, whether for men or women, is related to their social position in a conservative rural community. On the one hand, both women and men have to abide by cultural constructs imposed by society, in which they have to perform their public roles. This means that women are expected to be fertile and men to be virile. On the other hand, women’s narrative sheds light on the dark sides of marital life, giving deeper insight into the fears of men and women within their private sphere. Once more the negotiation between public/culture and private/home spheres is combined in this folktale and its narration, reinforcing the power of language in expressing cultural identity and therefore memory. The latter is realised through what Assmann and Czaplicka (1995: 130) would refer to as ‘formation’, in which cultural memory features through “the objectivation or crystallization of communicated meaning and collectively shared knowledge”. The sharing of knowledge helps to turn cultural memory into “the culturally institutionalised heritage of a society”. In other words, women’s narrative throughout the tales and the compilers’ notes, do not only describe, for instance, the institution of marriage in Palestinian society, but relates it to Palestinian collective and cultural identity and hence the institutionalised heritage of Palestinians.

In addition to the importance of sexuality in marital life, symbolising fertility and productivity, its lack can cause disharmony or even divorce. The disruption of harmony between a wife and her husband, as exposed in most of the tales and as women’s narrative of cultural identity within the family reveals, comes from pressure inflicted by the extended family or from rivalry as a result of polygynous situations. In both cases, the wife tries to be in control of the situation and wants to win the husband’s attention and love, pushing her to become manipulative. Particularly in a polygynous situation, “women fight and conspire against one another, each trying to win the affection of her husband in different ways” (M&K, 1989: 15). The competition can be, for instance, over the production of male heirs. In other words, the more sons one wife has the more privileged she is by her husband. A clear example is seen in “Precious One and Worn-out One” Al-ghālya w al-ālya and “Half-Halfing” Nuṣ nṣāḥ; in the former tale the wife has fewer male children therefore is considered to be ‘the worn out one’ and in the latter tale, the second wife shows off her sons who are, in comparison to the son of the first wife, Half-Halfing, stronger and bigger. Hence, problems intensify because of divided loyalties in a polygynous situation. The jealousy and hostility are created when the woman is replaced by another woman or when the women compete for attention68. This

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68 More folktales in the present compilation treat the problems arising between wives and husbands within...
situation is observed in many cultures, and is ubiquitous in the Palestinian one. The tensions rising from polygamy and/or mothers-in-law co-existence for a married woman are issues that Hilma Granqvist (1935) observed when she carried out her study on *Marriage Conditions in a Palestinian Village*, Vol II, 380:

At marriage, when a woman leaves her father’s house, her greatest care is to adjust herself to her mother-in-law and to her co-wives should her husband have other spouses. The position of an old wife when a new wife is brought into the house is often difficult and frequently leads to her leaving her husband and returning to her father's people. There is no necessary disgrace attached to such a procedure, and frequently her fight forces the husband to change his behaviour.

The conflict between husband and wife can also worsen over “conflicting loyalties” (M&K, 1989: 248). Some tales, such as “The Woman Whose Hands Were Cut Off” *Muqaṭṭa ‘it al-dayāt*, shows how the husband is torn between his loyalty to his natal family and to his conjugal family. In the tale, the man is caught between his wife and his sister, making the situation more complicated as he chooses his wife over his sister. “The male is in a difficult situation vis-à-vis the females for whom he is responsible” (ibid). Once more, Palestinian cultural identity is exposed through the dynamics of marital life. Palestinian family structure seems to be more dependent on collective identity, namely the extended family and the phenomenon of polygamy in rural Palestine. From Palestinian women’s perspective, the extended family and polygamy threaten the harmony and peace of conjugal life. It might be frustrating for Palestinian individual women and men, nonetheless, the folktales through the women’s and compilers’ narratives show society as a stable and long established cultural system, to which Palestinians want to relate to even more today, particularly amid political instability and threats of identity loss.

**Conclusion**

Finally, in the light of concepts covered in Chapter Two, including collective, post and cultural memories in relation to the *Nakba*, language, identity and nationalism, this chapter shows how memory work, both at the inter- and trans-generational levels
(Hirsch, 2008), emerge through a joint effort between folklorists, such as Muhawi & Kanaana, and Palestinian women storytellers. The latter, I have argued, reveal Palestinian cultural identity through their roles and narratives as mothers, sisters and wives. To better understand the role of Palestinian women in both gendering and engendering Palestinian collective and cultural memory, I have looked at their roles and social interaction throughout the tales, both as protagonists and storytellers. The discussion has shown how women potentially wield more cultural power than men. They are represented in the tales as strong partners, caring and at times manipulative mothers, protective sisters, and supportive and loving towards their husbands and families. I have also argued that because storytelling is considered to be a “women’s art” (M&K, 1989: 12), the voices of Palestinian women in both the private and public spheres “reconstruct, reinterpret, and represent events for specific audiences and in specific contexts” (Hirsch and Smith, 2002:05). Through the power of language and humour in women’s narrative, the reader sees a portrait of Palestinian society, governed by the dynamics of authority, respect and collective identity. Their narratives, as I explained, shed light also on the source of their conflicts, their desires, character development and interaction under the umbrella of Palestinian social and cultural identity. Being an “act of transfer” (Connerton, 1989: 39), an active and relational process through which meaning is created, Palestinian women’s narrative, I have explained, counters the fracturing of memory following the Nakba by preserving a continuum of cultural transmission from first to second and third generations. Their narrative throughout strengthens, revives and affirms Palestinian social identity and the presence of a long established Palestinian cultural system. In the next chapter, I will look at the discourse of peasantry, religion and food, in both compilations, in a view of analysing how the latter mobilise memory work and empower Palestinian cultural identity. Through language and the agency of Palestinian women, the folktales, I will show, reveal the strength of a long established cultural institution.
Chapter 4. Cultural Identity and the Preservation of Palestinian Memory: Folktales in Society, Environment and Universe

In the third chapter, I analysed how memory, post-memory and cultural memory, be it collective and/or prosthetic, is at the heart of two narratives: those of the compilers and the storytellers. I focused mainly on the role of women in both gendering and engendering Palestinian memory through their roles as mothers, daughters, sisters and wives in the folktales, which to a great extent project their realities. Throughout their narratives as heroines or storytellers, I showed how Palestinian women’s roles are educational and crucial for building and protecting Palestinian cultural identity among future generations.

In the same vein, Chapter Four will extend important notions of memory, collective and cultural, and collective identity in looking at folktales, in mainly Group III Society, Group IV Environment and Group V Universe. I intend to discuss specific sites and agents of Palestinian memory, which, I argue, mobilise Palestinian cultural identity and collectivity across geographical space and time. In so doing, I look at the peasant discourse in the folktales, featured in particular examples related to setting, people and lifestyle, which reinforce and call for the regeneration of pre-1948 communal identity (hence post-memory). The discussion will allow me to elaborate on the role of language as a bridge between Palestinian cultural identity and memory in the folktales under study, connecting as such communicative with cultural memory (Assmann, 2006, 1995; Hirsch 2008, 1996, 1999). Palestinian cultural identity, as I will show, maintains its existence and force through a mixture of religious and folk beliefs, prominent in Palestinian dialect, which I argue empower a collective spirit and unity among Palestinians.

The third part of my chapter will focus on an important site of memory and component of Palestinian cultural identity, namely food. Like religion and peasanthood, food is a productive area for exploration. References to food in the folktales, I will show, can act as bearers of Palestinian memory. Food operates as a means for strengthening Palestinian social interaction, giving prominence to the distinctiveness of Palestinian cultural identity. My discussion on food touches upon relevant notions in memory and
food studies, such as prospective memory (Sutton, 2008), sensuous memory (Holtzman, 2006) and gustatory nostalgia (Sutton, 2000; 2001). Nostalgia can be seen as a form of reminiscence about a glorious past, a form of escapism from the present or as a driving force to renew cultural identity. Finally, Palestinian women’s role cannot be ignored when discussing food’s interconnection with memory and identity. Palestinian women, I argue, are agents of memory via the mediation of culturally related food symbolism in some tales and their titles. Women’s storytelling tradition, as I aim to show, relates to transactive memory (Smith, 2007), through which Palestinian women promote essential cultural values in Palestinian society. Women’s food discourse hence engenders Palestinian memory and cultural identity where there may be, for example, folkloric references to beauty, sexuality, conceiving children and craving.

4.1 Peasantry as a Site of Memory and Identity

In the first chapter, I mapped out the context of Palestinian folktales, being sourced in a rural environment and villages. The setting as I described and as the compilers explained it in their para-textual notes originates from a pre-Nakba or pre-1948 context. All the tales describe a harmonious and agricultural pre-1948 setting, most prominently in tales in group III Society and group IV Environment. The tales in these groups reveal the dynamics of Palestinian society and take a closer look at people and neighbourly interaction in rural villages. Unlike tales in group I Individuals and group II Family, in group III and IV “family bonds and obligations do not necessarily dictate the standard of conduct” (Muhawi & Kanaana, 1989: 277). This means that the level of interaction between individuals in the last groups of tales transcend family boundaries, integrating the individual into wider relationships with his/her community, environment and religion. The interaction between the state of peasantry and Palestinian lifestyles cannot be ignored when analysing the main pillar of Palestinian memory, namely cultural identity, in SBSA (1989) and Qul Ya Tayer (2001). Under the umbrella of cultural identity, people’s way of living, traditions and food rituals can be major markers in forming their national identity and therefore their collective memory. It is important to look at how peasantry, whether in setting or lifestyle, combine both communicative and cultural memory (Assmann, 1995), turning the Palestinian peasant into a national signifier (Swedenburg, 1990) and hence peasantry into a national discourse of Palestinian cultural memory.
4.1.1 Recreating the Homeland

Like memorial books which focus on maintaining place names, the folktale, I argue, can represent a folkloric landmark for Palestinians’ cultural memory. In his discussion on memory, Pierre Nora proposes a useful way to think about how humans relate to places in the past as: “lieux de mémoire” (sites of memory). As Nora explains:

The moment of lieux de mémoire occurs at the same time that an immense and intimate fund of memory disappears, surviving only as a reconstituted object beneath the gaze of critical history. This period sees, on the one hand, the decisive deepening of historical study and, on the other hand, a heritage consolidated [...] Lieux de mémoire are simple and ambiguous, natural and artificial, at once immediately available in concrete sensual experience and susceptible to the most abstract elaboration. Indeed, they are lieux in three senses of the word – material, symbolic, and functional. (Nora, 1989: 12, 18-19)

For Palestinians, physical spaces as well as rituals carry the emotive charge of nostalgia concerning pre-1948 history and communal life. As I discussed in Chapter Two, nostalgia is triggered when one suffers from a drastic change in the physical environment or built environment (Goffman, 1959), this disruption resulting in identity discontinuity. Because Palestinians’ present is not improving, nostalgia can work either way: a curse or bliss. Given the paradoxical nature of nostalgia in the Palestinian case, nostalgia can be a form of longing or reminiscence, confining memories to a deadlock past as a way to escape the present but can also act as a buffer against forgetfulness and denial. One way to look at nostalgia is as a motivator to recreate new identities or to affirm old identities (Charmaz, 1994; Davis, 1979; Milligan, 2006). Because pre-Nakba places or lifestyles are related to collective social practices, places turn into a live story of collective history. Through recalling places and their repetition in the folktales, Palestinians can connect with their pasts, strengthen cultural memory and preserve identity, perpetuating a strong sense of collective memory. If “the land, villages, and Palestinian people are preserved through [the painters’] art, as timeless expressions of a unique culture with rich history and traditions”, (Cadora, 1988:11), folktales, similarly, mobilise collective, cultural and social continuation.

Combining Halbwach’s (1992) approach to memory and the group and Warburg’s (1976) treatment of the language of cultural forms and memory, Assmann and Czaplicka (1995) attribute cultural memory with “the concretion of identity” and “capacity to reconstruct” (ibid: 130) among other characteristics. Assmann and Czaplicka’s discussion enriches my analysis of the portrayal of peasantry and peasants
in the tales and their accompanying footnotes or para-text. Both ordinary Palestinians, such as the storytellers, and folklorists, like Muhawi and Kanaana, merge communicative memory, meaning the daily communication, language, habits and lifestyles, with the will to officially document and preserve Palestinian culture and identity seen in the compilers’ efforts. For instance, in folktale 26 “Minjal” Minjal, Minjal bakes bread outdoors in her clay oven tabūn. The compilers found it necessary to explain the architecture of Palestinian village houses:

The ‘clay oven’ (Tabun) is a small structure housing an earthen oven used for baking bread and for some cooking. Villagers usually build the oven at some distance from their living quarters in order to avoid its smoke, most commonly at the edge of the road closest to the house. The Tabun is a circular structure a yard high and which diameter of about a yard; its smooth clay walls house two compartments, the lower for the fire and the upper (usually lined with pebbles over a metal sheet) for baking the bread. (M&K, 1989:219)

The elaborate footnote, both in Arabic and English, is not only aimed at informing the reader of the general layout of the lower part of the house, but also serves to trigger the visual imagination, conveying a more vivid image of real places that no longer exist. In her article “Mapping the Past, Re-creating the Homeland”, Rochelle Davis describes Palestinian memorial books with maps of pre-1948 villages, as “dossiers of evidence: land records, genealogies, photographs, and stories all aimed towards showing the villagers’ relationship to the places in the village” (Davis, 2007: 58), demonstrating the existence of a shared history and physical existence among Palestinians. The Tabun description is informative yet, in my opinion, maps out Palestinian memories and national belonging to tangible sites. Similarly in tale 40 “Dunglet” Baʾūrūn and tale 3 “Precious One and Worn-Out One” Al-ghaliā w al-balāliā, the reader is informed or reminded of the architecture of village houses. For example, Palestinian as well as non-Palestinian readers are invited to learn more about communal traditions that existed within a particular setting, such as qaws al-hawayij (the arch of clothes), and about collective traditions such as when women gathered before October to patch their roofs. The setting has the power to unify people’s memories with shared social experiences, a point I will elaborate on in the section on Peasantry and Collective Identity.

Because of displacement and persistent struggle over land, Palestinians are conscious of the necessity of reaffirming sites of memory and recreating maps of memory. Because memory takes various forms expressed through different mediums, as seen in Chapters Two & Three, it becomes evident that collective memory is manifested through symbols

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or sites which can be understood as manifestation, a response to and a symptom of a rupture, a lack, an absence, and “a substitute, surrogate, or consolation for something missing” (Zemon Davis and Starn, 1989: 3). In the same way, Palestinians’ memory strives to tackle the lack through the idealisation of particular sites or symbols, which can shape Palestinian national and collective identity. The compilers, in tale 31 “The Woman Whose Hands Were Cut Off” Muqafa ‘at al-dayāt, explained in a footnote the reference in the tale to “Gate of the wind” Bāb al-hawā where the plot takes place:

*Bab il Hawa* is literally ‘Gate of the wind’. In the hilly regions of Palestine, where most villages and towns are located on hilltops (as in the village of Turmushaya, district of Ramallah, where this tale was collected), the approach to the town is always through the valley. The western breeze blows up these valleys from the Mediterranean. (M&K, 1989: 241)

The role of this footnote, like the first, is to inform the reader about Palestinian landscapes and geography. The aim is to give a picturesque context to the plot of the folktale, so that readers’ visualisation and imagination is triggered. The recreation of setting, I think, echoes the role of maps and memorial books discussed by Davis (2007). To a great extent the footnotes help the reader to mark what is important at a particular time or place to a particular population. The geography of “Gate of the wind” embodies a sense of nostalgia and belonging among first and second Palestinian generations. The reference to place, along with the footnote, transmits to the reader in general and Palestinians in particular the awakening of a site of memory. Evoking a sense of nostalgia, whether in the folktale or in the footnote, has the power to affirm the presence of a past setting, triggering the reader’s memories in order to resist a painful present and possibly creating a future hope for return. As I discussed in Chapter Two, one of the main functions of nostalgia is that it “carries existential meaning, serving as a reservoir of memories and experiences that is helpful for coping with existential threat” (Sedikides, Wildschut, Gartner, Routledge & Arndt, 2008: 231).

Mapping out memory in folktales is apparent also in the listing of names of places which no longer exist. In tale 24 “The Seven Leavenings” *In al-sabi ‘khamāyir*, for instance, the old woman decided to go walking by the sea. The characteristics of the missing ‘thing’ in the past and how it is regenerated in the present resembles Lacan’s idea of ‘the mirror stage’ and ‘object petit a’ (2011), the latter known as the unattainable object of desire. Lacan’s idea is that the child identifies with the image of selfhood through a desire for the ideal other. “It is an expression of the lack inherent in human beings, whose incompleteness and early helplessness produce a quest for fulfilment beyond the satisfaction of biological needs” (Krishner, 2005: 83).
mention of a specific name, but the compilers added a footnote clarifying where the old lady went:

The storyteller had the seashore by the city of Acre in mind. For a discussion of the significance of the city of Acre (A’akka) in the history of Palestine, see “Topographical Researches in the Galilee” by Aapeli Saarisalo, which opens thus: “There is hardly any city in Palestine or in the whole world which has seen more history than Acre, Jerusalem perhaps excepted”. (M&K, 1989: 206 inverted commas in original)

In other cultures, a compiler would perhaps be less exhaustive in explaining the setting or even guessing where the hero intends to go. As anthropologists and folklorists, Muhawi & Kanaana chose to explain in order to affirm the historical existence and continuation of a pre-1948 city, basing their footnote on a credible study done during 1929 by Aapeli Saarisalo. Both Palestinian collective and post-memory are embedded within nostalgia and activated through recollection and “an imaginative investment and creation” (Hirsch, 1997: 22). If we argue that nostalgia is seen as a form of resistance and identity protection, the notion of post-memory could be also seen as tool for activation, particularly in the effort to extend memories and identity to generations who do not have first-hand experience. In Sigmund Freud’s essay ‘Beyond the Pleasure Principle’ (1922), he discusses compulsive repetition by traumatised patients. This manifests itself in the way patients’ fantasies and impulses, which were repressed before, are repeated and acted out in the present. The repetition is also seen in “the form of dreams reliving the original trauma” as well as “the symptomatic repetitions of hysterics, who are said to suffer from reminiscences” (Roger, 1987: 581). These forms of repetition are all used to circumvent the trauma of loss. Nostalgia, I think can also be read as a form of repeating and idealising the past. The existence of pre-Nakba place references along with the compilers’ framing, can be linked to some extent to Freud’s repetition compulsion in its role of actively regenerating the memory of an idealised past.

Likewise, in tale 26 “Minjal” Minjal the storyteller felt it necessary to digress during her narration to specify the area she is describing, referring to one of the characters: “The man, you might say, left his town behind and travelled until he came to a village like Il-Za’er, Rummane and Id-Der” (M&K, 1989: 222 italics added for emphasis). The three villages the storyteller mentions existed before the Nakba and were geographically located in the upper Galilee north of Nazareth. Reference to those particular villages demonstrates the authority of knowledge among local Palestinians. This confirms
Davis’s (2007) argument on how imprinting the presence of pre-1948 villages on maps serves as a powerful form of knowledge. This authority, he believes,

maintains Palestinians’ ties to pre-1948 Palestinian land by showing their intimate and familiar relationship to as well as their former dependence on the land, the maps help individuals continue to define themselves as Palestinians and as belonging to a particular village. (Davis, 2007: 60)

I argue that through the medium of art and literature, including folktales, knowledge demonstrates the authority of Palestinians in general and Palestinian storytellers in particular over their identity and belonging despite their situation. The storyteller’s knowledge is twofold: mentioning the names of old villages is a way of resisting oblivion and an effort to reject Israeli demarcation of land and villages. It also attributes storytellers with authority and knowledge over history and geography, making them credible mediators of Palestinian memory.

4.1.2 Peasantry and Collective Identity

Peasantry as depicted in the folktales or in the para-textual materials relating to the folktales is a sign of unification and a vibrant site of memory work. Peasantry is, as Swedenburg (1990) suggests, “the symbolic site where intense Palestinian desires for unification for the sake of the struggle against the occupation are expressed, the ‘peasant’ has taken on mythical qualities” (ibid: 19). The figure of the peasant has been turned into a Palestinian national discourse aimed at remoulding memory to unify Palestinians, particularly the post-memory generation. To a great extent, the figure of the peasant, as seen in the folktales, “draws much of its emotive force from memories of the peasant as historical agent” (ibid). In fact, peasantry creates a unifying sense of belonging and promotes collective identity.

Village descriptions and peasantry are important to my discussion in this chapter, particularly when looking at the role of collective identity in shaping collective memory. In this regard, it is worth looking at the way Palestinian cultural identity and memory are evoked by social practices and communal values related to certain locations, such as the fields, wells and springs or natural features of the landscape. Reading folktales, I argue, is like reading a fusion of a memorial book and collective autobiographies. Davis explains how memorial books can be a form of collective autobiography. I go further: the Palestinian folktale is a tool combining shared collective stories, designed in a literary form, with history and collective memory work.
In tale 33, “Im Awwad and the Gouleh” \textit{Im `awād w al-ghūla}, the folktale begins by referring to women going “to wash their clothes at the spring on the edge of town” (M&K, 1989: 253). In the old days, as the compilers explained in a footnote, the women used to go in groups to wash their clothes then dry them on trees and bushes. The spring was a meeting point for women who performed their daily activities together. The recreation of the image of women together at the spring connects the site of memory, in this case the spring, with a harmonious collective past. The site of memory evokes memories of the past and nostalgia. Like the poem\textsuperscript{71}, names of places, natural landscapes and, as I will analyse later in this chapter, food, create a direct emotional recall. This image is one of many in this collection; others will also be selected for discussion.

Tales 20 “Lady Tatar” \textit{Al-sit tatar} and 41 “The Louse” \textit{Al-qamla}, deal with different plots and topics but share a peasant environment and customs, which the compilers thought worth pointing out. Not only does the footnote in tale 20 explain the practices of raising animals, but more importantly relates them to their cultural and social significance for Palestinian women:

\begin{quote}
In Palestinian villages families ordinarily raised animals in the yard. The mothers would designate a hen or two for each of her marriageable daughters so that they could sell their eggs to buy beads, thread, and other embroidery items in preparation for marriage. (M&K, 1989: 178)
\end{quote}

Raising hens is not just a means to earn a living or a hobby for Palestinians. Rather, it is a tradition practised, circulated and shared among villagers, mainly women, in preparation for their weddings. The sharing of experience transcends the physicality of description, where the individual’s experience is merged into a past tradition that everyone in the village might still relate to:

\begin{quote}
Palestinians story the places of their past through verse, personal recollections, collective histories, maps, and artwork. Representations of people’s activities transform the physical place- buildings of neighbourhood, the village square, or a tree- into meaningful spaces of village and communal life. (Davis, 2007: 64)
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{71} Poetry in Palestinian literature bears an emotive force, evoking vivid images and memories, such as Mustafa Khalil al-Sayf’s (1993) poem, “Trip in the ruins of Al-Walja”, this is a selection from the poem (al-Sayfī in Sa’di& Abu-Lughod, 2007: 65):

\begin{quote}
I am thirsty ...where are the springs and wells?
Nothing only wasteland and desert,
Nothing but murky wilderness
The earth of the fields covered in stones
\end{quote}
Similarly tale 41 describes the life of a louse and the chain of communication between different animals or insects, which all metaphorically stand for human interaction, communal life and collectivity, a point I will address in more depth shortly. My main observation here is that the compilers use the word *tasakhamat* in Palestinian Arabic (meaning ‘she smeared herself’) to refer to the louse who lost her husband, the flea. The louse is very sad upon the loss of her husband so she smears her face. The smearing of women’s faces in death is related to a mourning tradition in Palestinian villages. The act of showing grief in public, as the footnote describes, is meant to show her grief so that she is praised for her devotion. The cultural interpretation alludes to a shared past and tells the non-Palestinian of the existence of a collective history and tradition, while allowing the Palestinian reader to relive an idealised memory of a village life.

The folktale accurately portrays “a live descriptive movie of peasants’ houses, moves, fields, typical food and clothing” (Al-Sarīsī, 2004: 215). The living quality of the folktale, I think, can be linked to the use of photography in recording or even reconstructing a memory. Being a record and an emanation of a real incident, photographs, as explained by Marianne Hirsch (1996: 669) are “the medium connecting memory to post-memory”. Similarly, peasant sites, such as farms and valleys, recreate the setting, triggering the emotive memory power of a shared past:

> Wells, caves, valleys, hills, paths, plots of farmland, buildings, mosques, churches, trees, and stores embody this collective knowledge and are recorded, post-1948, as the essential components of the village or neighbourhood or town. (Davis, 2007: 54)

For example, most of the tales in group V *Environment* depict vivid images of rural life, agricultural rituals and peasantry lifestyle. Apart from the role of language in showing the interconnectedness of plot and characters within the frame of collective identity, which I will elaborate on shortly, the tales symbolise “acts of memory” (Nora, 1989). The active role of acts of memory comes, as Nora explains, to procreate experienced loss and ruptures, which Palestinians have endured and are still suffering from today. In this case, “purely material” sites (such as village sites and peasantry tools or lifestyle) become lieux de memoire “only if the imagination invests [them] with a symbolic aura” (Nora, 1989: 19). The art of storytelling and the folktale itself carry, I believe, the imagination and creativity needed to mobilise a sense of belonging and hence memory work over post 1948 generations.
Another powerful site for activating memory, I would argue, is the use of allegory, as is the case with many tales in SBSA. Allegoric tales, such as Tale 41 “The Louse”, play a powerful role in establishing a cultural bridge between older and younger generations. Allegory features as part of the genera of folktales, in which meanings, themes and lessons are transmitted to the reader through symbolism. According to Coleridge, “allegory always partakes of the reality which it renders intelligible; and while it enunciates the whole, abides itself as a living part in that unity of which it is the representation” (1971: 467-68). Allegory is an implicit form of representation of forms of reality upon which one deduces the embedded meaning. In his article, “Crabwalk History: Torture, Allegory, and Memory in Sartre”, Debarti Sanyal explains how particular violent historical acts are evoked through allegory: “the traumatic nature of experiences such as detainment, torture and extermination often prompt the displacements of allegorical inscription in order to become legible and transmissible” (italics added for emphasis Sanyal, 2010: 52). Allegory can be also seen as a tool of framing cultural and social codes so as to make them more legible and transmissible to children. For instance, in tale 38 “The Little She-Goat” Al-anza al-nayzīa, in group V Universe, the tale revolves around the adventures of the she-goat. Because the hyena cannot eat the kids of the she-goat, he wants to have her tail cut by the ant, as a form of disguise to trap the kids. The ant, however, says she will not “chop off [his] tail unless [he] goes to the threshing floor and brings a measure of wheat” (italics for emphasis). The significance of the threshing floor, known as baydar72 in Palestinian society, is allegorically related to what many Palestinians would see as a marker of their peasant-ness and collective memory. In addition to being an important space for villagers, the baydar plays an important social function. Families used to meet there during harvest time and spend the evenings singing, eating and chatting until dawn. It is for Palestinian villagers a folkloric feast where all neighbours get together, help each other and enjoy a collective seasonal celebration. The description of places within an allegorical frame exposes shared experiences and sentiments associated with “a nationalist idealization of peasant life” (Davis, 2007: 54).

The interconnection between collective memory and cultural identity not only features in nostalgic associations with specific sites, but can also be seen in the way Palestinian

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72 Conder & Reignier (1879: 259) describe the baydar in their work *Tent Work in Palestine*: “it is a broad flat space, an open ground, generally high; sometimes the floor is on a flat rocky hill-top, and occasionally it is an open valley, down which there is a current of air [...] The size of the floor varies, from a few yards to an area of perhaps fifty yards square, and rich villages have sometimes two such floors.”
folktales mobilise the roles of important professions, such as wood cutting, fishing, carpentry and blacksmithing. All of these portray a natural flow of life in the past. In SBSA we find many instances where the stories revolve mainly around the fisherman and barber (tale 37), the woodcutter (tale 36), the merchant (tale 34 & tale 25) and the shoemaker (tale 44). These trades and crafts were even used as titles for the folktales. Like village landscapes or landmarks, working and earning a living portray the normality of village life among Palestinians. In fact, each one has a role in revealing the fabric of society in operation and reinforcing the collectivity of Palestinians. According to Al-Sarīsī, the reoccurrence of professions in Palestinian folktales is meant to connect work life with landscapes, such as forests and shores, and thence to stable pre-1948 life.

In grounding the folktale in a Palestinian setting, the aim is to map the memory like a history book of the main locations then connect the latter to people’s collective knowledge and lifestyles. The purpose is also educational, aiming at raising national and international awareness of the true mapping of places before the Nakba as Palestinians carried out their professions, such as woodcutting in non-limited areas across Palestine:

The occurrence of woodcutting in Palestinian folktales and society is normal, bearing in mind that Palestine contains many mountains across the country (literally: from north to south). I have myself witnessed how Palestinian men and women use forests as spaces for woodcutting, such as Ḥarsh Bāb Al-Wād on the way to Jaffa-Jerusalem. (Al-Sarīsī, 2004: 216-17)

Likewise, the fisherman was a common profession among Palestinians, as Al-Sarīsī explains:

The fact that the fisherman is frequently mentioned in folktales, more than any other profession, is not surprising if we remember that the length of the Palestinian coast is over 230 Km. (ibid: 217-18)

Mentioning professions is a common feature of folktales, yet the distinctiveness of Palestinian folktales is, as Al-Sarīsī has pointed out, the emphasis on the richness and beauty of Palestinian landscapes, which helps to reduce identity erasure. Moreover, through the medium of the folktale each Palestinian seems to maintain a normal flow of

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73 Not as prominent as the fisherman or the woodcutter, the barber seems to have a notable social status within Palestinian villagers. Being confused, the fisherman in tale 37 went to see the barber to ask him for advice or explanation, following the mysterious cleaning that happened in the fisherman’s house. The barber in Palestinian popular culture is endowed with wisdom and knowledge. The barber’s opinion is of great importance among people: “The assumption is that the barber is reputed for his knowledge and wisdom. In the village economy of old the barbers performed several functions, including primitive surgery. They would know what was going on in the village better than anyone else” (M&K, 1989: 272).
life - where a fisherman used to fish, or in which forest a woodcutter used to practise his profession. Establishing a natural environment and plot for the fisherman or the woodcutter shows the importance of integrating such professions into human life in general and Palestinian in particular. Aspects of Palestinian harmonious social life, cultural norms and interaction will become more evident when I discuss the power of Palestinian dialect in revealing the strength of collectivity among families and neighbours. Through the medium of language the reader gains a better picture of how folk religion and official religion are intertwined in Palestinian society.

4.2 Memory and Identity: Language and Folk Religion in Society, Environment and Universe

Because language is related to collective memory and collective peasant identity, language, as I explained in Chapter Two, acts also as a cultural and national medium, if not the core of national identity for Palestinians. In order to revive memory, language is given importance as the bedrock of national language and cultural heritage. And by reviving linguistic heritage in literary, religious and historical texts, memory is strengthened and transmitted from one generation to the next. In such ways, both memory and language are key elements in constructing and maintaining national and cultural identity, and it is useful to consider this “triangle” of memory, identity and nationhood when dealing with the Palestinian context. In this section, I am interested in looking at how the interconnection between language and collective identity serves to reinforce Palestinian cultural identity and aid the preservation of memory. In the same vein, I will look at manifestations of religion in Palestinian dialect, which, I argue, reveal the distinctiveness of Palestinian cultural identity and collectivity.

The folktales under study, particularly Group IV Environment, demonstrate the role of language in expressing collectivity amongst Palestinians. Unlike other folktales in SBSA, this group of tales is referred to as “formula tales” (M&K, 1989: 290). Being formulaic, the compilers explain how those tales require “a verbal precision that becomes part of the content, there is little room in them for tellers to show individuality in weaving the narrative” (ibid: 290). Those tales are, in fact, circular in structure with the end contained in the beginning. In Appendix 4 at the end of this chapter, I show both Arabic and English versions of one particular folktale, entitled “The Old Woman and
Her Cat”\textsuperscript{74} Al-‘ajūz w al-bis. The interdependence of language and plot in this tale shows that the cat will be forgiven by the old lady, if he fulfils a different chain of requests. Formulaic language in these tales conveys “a harmonious interdependence with the environment, both animate and inanimate” (ibid). Both language and plot are structured in such a way to symbolise the importance of a balanced community, in which everyone has a role to fulfil. As discussed before, allegorical tales are effective and more transmittable. The combination of allegory and formulaic language empowers Palestinian dialect, giving rise to the artistic beauty of the folktale. In fact, one can argue that language, plot and allegorical integration reflect the Palestinian’s harmonisation with his/her environment and society.

The opposite is true if disharmony erupts, as formulaic tales reveal. In “The Dunglet”\textsuperscript{75}, disharmony is created when one of the links in the chain is disrupted, thereby “triggering a process of readjustment in all the other links until equilibrium is restored” (ibid). The missing harmony in society calls for stability and equilibrium, and the formulaic tale symbolises and highlights the importance of maintaining order and unity for Palestinians. Analysing this category of tales reveals that an action may appear inconsequential but can affect the whole chain and damage the entire community. In addition to the fact that Palestinian dialect reinforces national and cultural identity, it is noteworthy how formulaic language is highly structured in order to convey the collectivity of Palestinian social fabric. The formulaic tales are, in other words, tools for portraying ideal pre-1948 society and rituals among neighbours, which rely on cooperation, interdependence and the interconnectedness of human beings with nature. Reinforcing solidarity and cooperation among animate and inanimate creatures has a role in encouraging Palestinians to maintain national and cultural unity. The harmony between content and language in group III, Society, is not as prominent as the ones in group VI, Environment, yet the notion of collective identity prevails, in which actions revolve around neighbours’ interaction, solidarity and collective responsibility towards each other. The interaction of the fisherman with his society in tale 37 “The Fisherman” highlights neighbourly cooperation. Being aware that the fisherman lives by himself, one of his neighbours always cooks lunch for him. The spirit of solidarity and care was and still remains in some Palestinian villages, where neighbours may even replace

\textsuperscript{74} See Appendix 4 for the original folktale in Palestinian Arabic in Qul Ya Tayer (2001) and the English translation in SBSA (1989).

\textsuperscript{75} See Appendix 4 for the original folktale in Palestinian Arabic in Qul Ya Tayer (2001) and the English translation in SBSA (1989).
family members. Care for your neighbour is, in Palestinian popular culture, more important than your own home. Neighbours’ solidarity and care, as I will discuss shortly, are empowered by Palestinians’ religious beliefs.

As with the embodiment of a national and collective narrative of memory through the symbol of the peasant in Palestinian literature, religious beliefs highlight a sense of collectivity in Palestinian memory. Reflecting human interactions among Palestinians, the supernatural imbues them with an entirely ‘other’ apprehension of reality “based on the beliefs and superstitions of the folk” (M&K, 1989: 40). While analysing different tales, I found that all share universal themes, such as the supernatural influence of some creatures, the fusion of reality and fiction, and the notion of fate. Nonetheless, the present folktales maintain their distinctiveness to Palestinian cultural identity through their depiction of fate and religion. Through the medium of language, I argue, religious beliefs in folktales connect to Palestinian memory, reflecting an embedded cultural identity. Before analysing how specific religious references and narration formulas in the present compilation shape Palestinian identity and memory, it is necessary to explain the difference between official and folk religion in Palestinian society.

Palestine has long been associated with three religions, namely Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Because religion is predominant in everyday Palestinian life, official religion tends to be practised under the influence of folk culture, particularly among villagers. One can argue that religion has been adapted to culture, social interpretation and folklore, resulting in a blend of official religions with folk beliefs. As the compilers note in their introduction, “village peasants in Palestine do not distinguish between official religion and its teaching on the one hand, and the beliefs and superstitions of folk religion on the other” (M&K, 1989: 41). This means that the distinction between the two spheres in everyday life is not always clear, nor is it between the belief and the cultural interpretation of the belief. These categories shift back and forth in reality, and therefore also in folktales, since the teller of the folktale is a peasant of the same society.

For instance, in tale 19, “The Old Woman Ghoul” Al-ghūla al-ʿajūz, the female Ghoul, Ghouleh, cannot be seen but makes her presence felt. According to the storyteller’s description, the Ghoul can resemble a supernatural being, yet she can also appear in the form of an animal or human being. In tale 22, “Clever Hassan” Al-shāṭir hasan, the merging of folk and official religion is apparent in the storyteller’s
form of narration. In the tale, the Ghoul appears to be a religious saint who is trying to help clever Hassan to find the treasures in the cave, advising him on where to go and what to do. While narrating how Hassan follows the Ghoul’s advice, the storyteller says:

| Going right in, the youth filled a sack with watermelons, taking three extra melons for the aged sheikh. Pulling himself together, he came out of there fast. *A thousand* followed him (*in the name of Allah!* ) but they were unable to catch him. (M&K, 1989: 191 italics added for emphasis) |

The word *thousand* refers here to ‘devils’, but the storyteller avoids mentioning the name explicitly because, according to Palestinian folk religion, reference to devils serves to evoke them. Instead, one should allude to them indirectly and mention the name of Allah to drive them away, as she did.

In this regard, Al Sarisi observes the interconnectedness between language, religious and folk beliefs in Palestinian culture and how folktales are projected in Palestinians’ real life. He develops his argument by referring to a Palestinian folktale entitled *Qurūd Dara’ ma* (The Monkeys of Dara’ ma), in which a group of Muslim men would not have been able to defeat some Jinni had they not pronounced the name of Allah. According to Al Sarisi, the folktale refers to reality, as it happened in one of the villages in Palestine; moreover, some Palestinian families carry the surname *Dara’ ma*. He explains the connection to the fact that Palestinian daily life and beliefs are grounded in social reality and culture. It is common among Palestinian mothers, for instance, to ask their offspring to pronounce the name of Allah before drinking water in a dark place since they believe that Jinni can be in the water, making it harmful to children (Al-Sarīsī, 2004).

The shift between official and folk religion might create a mix in interpreting religious practices or beliefs but I consider the fusion to enrich Palestinian popular culture and empower their cultural identity, collectivity and solidarity. In tale 34, “The Merchant’s Daughter” the neighbour not only comes to the rescue of the merchant’s daughter when she is in danger, but he also assumes the father’s role in marrying her off (M&K, 1989).
The way religion is merged into Palestinian popular culture is clear in the following extract and the self-definition of the neighbour reveals this:

“"I am not related to her [merchant’s daughter]. I am not her paternal or maternal uncle. I am only her neighbour, and her father had entrusted her to my care. And the prophet himself bade us take care of our neighbour, and our neighbour’s neighbour, down to the seventh neighbour" (M&K, 1989: 258)

"أنا لا قريبها ولا عمها ولا خالها. أنا جارها، وأبيها وصاني و النبي وصّى بالجار و جار الجار لسابع جار. "

(M&K, 2001: 233-34)

The neighbour’s comment is backed up with the compilers’ footnote:

This is a very well-known and often-quoted hadith (saying, or tradition) of the prophet. A popular proverb also confirms this concern: “Ask about the neighbour before you ask about the house” is ’āl n al-jār qabl al-dār. The cultural importance of neighbours is accurately reflected in the tale. Because people tended to live in the same house for generations, they had the same neighbours for many, many years [italics added for emphasis]. Hence, neighbours were sometimes closer to a family than their own relatives, sharing sorrowful and joyous occasions. (inverted commas in original, ibid)

The combination of the neighbour’s comment and the compilers’ footnote reinforce the interconnection between cultural identity and memory. Based on the argument I put forward in Chapter Three about the fusion of “Intergenerational memory” (Hirsch, 2008) and “trans-generational memory” (Hirsch, 2008), daily beliefs and folk culture are transmitted through social and familial interaction, perpetuating a specific cultural identity. The level of communicative memory is transformed then into cultural memory through compilers’ efforts to document and convey society’s self-image to Palestinians and non-Palestinians. As I will elaborate in more depth, the institution of religion is strongly embedded within Palestinian popular culture and society. The overlap of popular culture and religion is productive because helping and caring for neighbours becomes a collective duty undertaken by the whole society in order to maintain harmony.

The repetition of many in Muhawi & Kanaana’s footnote is only available in the English compilation. This is, in my opinion, meant to emphasise the concordance of time and identity with collective memory. Reference to time, as I explained in Chapter
Two, is linked to narrative, alluding to human thought, intention, and positioning because, as Ricoeur (1984) argues in his third volume *Time and Narrative*, “our being-in-the-world” and our very “within timeness” is achieved or completed in the narrative experience of time (ibid: 35). In other words, the narrative is realised through a process of telling or reading, through which our relation to time is marked. In this example, the compilers situate Palestinians’ long established social structure within a rooted past, affirming the narrative of collective memory. Raising awareness among Western readers about the longevity of Palestinian culture is deemed important by the compilers. The folklorists’ voice in this case rectifies, reconstructs and frames memory in line with reinforcing collectivity and cultural identity.

The overlap between folk religion and official religion is also seen in the way protagonists concretise the spiritual, including different forms of the supernatural, even the divine. For instance, childless women, in four different tales in *SBSA* (1989) and *Qul Ya Tayer* (2001), namely tale 1 “Tunjur, Tunjur”, tale 8 “Sumac! You Son of a Whore Sumac!”, tale 13 “Sackcloth” and tale 40 “Dunglet”, address God directly asking for a baby, and their wishes are fulfilled. In Palestinian folk religion, God can be imagined as a physical being, who can be seen in the brilliance of the light shining from ‘the gates of heaven’ (Canaan, 1927). At the moment of childbirth, for instance, it is believed that ‘the gates of heaven’ bawābat al-samā’ are supposed to open and all wishes come true; moreover, all the bad deeds of the mother are forgiven. It is also believed, according to the compilers, that at midnight on the twenty-seventh of Ramadan, or what Muslims refer to as the ‘night of destiny’ laylat al-qadr, people stay up late and villagers claimed to see a “door in heaven open and a strong light emanate from it” (M&K, 1989: 42).

In addition to the overlap between folk religion and official religion in folktales and real life, the events and development of characters’ actions in the tales find their source in Palestinian social reality. Despite being controlled by supernatural forces, action is rooted in Palestinian approach to, for instance, rewards and punishments and the doctrine of predestination in Islam. Language, once more, plays a major role in unfolding the action in the tales, which follow a blend of folk and official religious beliefs. Here, my discussion will focus mainly on language as a shaper of Palestinian

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76 Muhawi & Kanaana (1989: 40) expand on this point, saying: “Sometimes the supernatural takes specific shape in the form of jinn, ghouls, giants, or other supernatural beings (e.g., Tales 5, 6, 8, 16, 17, 18, 19, 22, 29, 30, 32, 34, 35, 36, 37, 40); at other times it remains an abstract force, such as chance or predestination (e.g., Tales 13, 14, 28, 32, 42, 43, 44, 45). In some tales the supernatural helps the action along, whereas in others it presents obstacles to be overcome so that the desired result, such as the completion of a quest or the ridding of an evil influence from the community, may be achieved.”
cultural identity and memory, as studied, among other examples, in the last category of folktales: group V *Universe*. The tales in this group share one central theme, namely God's wisdom and the acceptance of His will as manifested on a day-to-day basis. The heroes and heroines in this particular group exhibit a continual trust in God no matter how onerous their life becomes.

In tale 43 “The Rich Man and The Poor Man”,77 the wife of a rich man was greedy and not contented with her wealth, but consumed by envy of her poor sister when she also became rich. The envy or evilness of the rich man’s wife led to her end, and her metaphorical punishment was to be eaten by scorpions and serpents. The opposite happened to the wife of the poor man, whose acceptance of her lot in life and good relationship with her husband led to her being rewarded with wealth. Wisdom of character and advice can be seen when the rich husband advises his wife not to be greedy and imitate her sister, upon the latter’s sudden wealth, saying:

| “Listen wife!” said the husband, “Allah has blessed us with more than we need. We are content in our life, and we don’t need anything more. Your sister was a poor woman, may God help her! Why don’t you just forget about this?” (M&K, 1989: 305) | “يا مرة الله منعم علينا و مفظل علينا و قاعدين و مبسوطين و مش معتازين. هذيك أختك كانت فقيرة. الله يساعدها. شو بدك بهالشغله؟” (M&K, 2001: 274) |

Contentment with one’s lot and satisfaction is expressed through religious phrases in Palestinian dialect, which are culturally embedded in everyday language. The weight of *Allah mina ‘am a ‘alyinā w mfażil (mufaḍil)* (literally: Allah has blessed us and is very generous with us) is part of people’s beliefs and is used on a daily basis to express satisfaction with one’s destiny no matter what. In my opinion, not only does Palestinian dialect relate to Palestinian communicative memory on a day to day basis, but its power is also imbued with the presence of religious expressions, highlighting the religiosity of Palestinian folk culture. The role of language creates bridges between communicative memory and cultural memory. Assmann (1995, 2006) allows, as I explained in Chapter Three, for a transitional memory work between inter-generational memory and intra-generational memory (Hirsch, 2008).

77 See summary of the tale in Appendix 5 (number 1).
Another prominent example showing the power of language is seen in tale 41, “The Woman Who Fell into the Well”. Both the man and the woman, who fell into the well, accept God’s will and welcome what befalls them. Fate in this tale is in full control of the plot and sequence of actions. The concordance between time and fate is harmonious since events unfold in a meaningful and chronological order. In fact, one action inevitably leads to another, until the woman is reunited with her brothers. Before and upon falling into the well, both the woman and the man express wisdom, strength and equanimity through language. It was a common practice for merchant-salesman travelling in remote villages in Palestine to stop by and ask for food at private homes (M&K, 1989), and the tale starts with this:

“Of course,” she said, and reached for the bread, giving him what Allah put within her means to give—a loaf, maybe two. And, by Allah, on his way out of the house, he stumbled over a dog tied to a tree. Startled, the man fell backward, and behold! He ended up in a well that happened to be there. It was a dry well and held no water at all.

“There is no power and no strength except in Allah!” exclaimed the woman

“O sister,” the man cried out, “lower the rope and pull me out!” Throwing him the rope, the woman started to pull him out but when he almost reached the mouth of the well her strength failed her. His weight grew too heavy for her, and she fell into the well with him.

“There is no power and no strength except in Allah!” exclaimed the man.

“But don’t worry sister. By Allah’s book, you are my sister!”

(M&K, 1989: 297 italics added for emphasis)

For a translator, the most difficult aspect of working with the Arabic language is how to translate religious expressions into the target language. One solution, according to James Dickens, in Thinking Arabic Translation, is either to omit the expression or

For a translator, the most difficult aspect of working with the Arabic language is how to translate religious expressions into the target language. One solution, according to James Dickens, in Thinking Arabic Translation, is either to omit the expression or
explain it in a footnote (Dickens, 2002). One of the problems with this approach, however, is a loss of the spirit and identity of the language, especially when translating folktales in colloquial Arabic. The compilers, being folklorists as well as translators, opted deliberately for a literal translation. “In rendering colloquial Arabic into English, the translator must decide on the linguistic level, or tone, that best conveys the spirit of the original” (M&K, 1989: 51).

Opting for a literal translation could be the safest option if faithfulness to the language protects its cultural identity. When the woman offered some bread, giving him what Allah put within her means to give for tanāwlat alī allah qadarhā ’alīh, the translation could have been avoided and it would not have affected the flow of the plot or meaning, however, the compilers deemed it important since it reflects the way Palestinian religious beliefs are fundamental to cultural identity and ways of thinking. The same is observed with the abbreviated expression lā ḥwlā w lā which stands for (lā ḥwlā w lā qūwata ilā biallah) meaning literally ‘there is no strength or power but with God’s help’. The expression, used frequently in situations that are beyond individual control, is popular in other Arab Islamic countries. The distinctiveness of the religious expression, I think, lies in the way it is embedded by the storyteller in Palestinian dialect and context to convey the way Palestinians perceive and should perceive hardship. Finally, the man promises to respect the woman’s honour, which in an Islamic and conservative context is interpreted as to disclaim any sexual intentions. He even makes a binding declaration of honourable intent, saying intī ukhtī fī kītāb allah. The expression carries the weight of an oath and it means literally ‘you are my sister by/according to the book of Allah’. Because Palestinian villagers are quite conservative, it is very unusual to find a woman and a man alone in the same place, hence the man feels it important to reassure the woman.

Language plays a very important role in shaping the plot of this tale, connecting the actions with fate. When the woman marries the man, she bears three children, named Maktūb, Kuṭba and Muqaddar. The names’ meanings are “variations on the theme of fate” (M&K, 1989: 299). The first name means ‘that which is written’; the second refers to the writing itself (fate); and the third means ‘that which is decreed’. The names allude to the unfolding of actions according to fate. Language is used in the form of puns which anticipate the fate of the woman, who is reunited with her brothers at the end. The fusion of folk religion and official religion in this particular case is apparent. It is a common belief among Muslims that one’s fate ‘is written on the forehead’ maktūb a ’l
jibîn or ‘what is written on the forehead will be seen/lived’ alî maktûb a ’l jibîn mā tishûfo ilâ al’-âyn. Both sayings express the notion of a pre-existing order, in which human life from birth till death is traced by God. This belief is embedded in Palestinians’ interpretation of daily actions and therefore becomes indispensable in their communicative memory. The compilers, in this regard, explain in their introduction:

As we study plot structure and the meaning of action, we observe a congruence of the traditional, predominantly Islamic Palestinian worldview and the significance of action in the tales. The equation we make between the concept of plot in art and the doctrine of predestination in life may be verified from the metaphor alluded to, "It is written on the forehead," that is used to express the notion of a pre-existing order. Life from birth to death is like a story authored by God, who breathes life into the soul at conception and sends the angel of death at the end. (ibid: 48)

The abovementioned tales, share universal themes of reward and punishment or predestination found in many other folktales; yet the specificity, distinctiveness and power of actions in relation to fate lie in the language. The power of language, as mentioned in Chapter Two and at the beginning of this chapter, empowers the notion of national and cultural identity, giving prominence to Palestinian cultural memory. In this regard, cultural memory has the capacity to formalise communicative memory, turning the latter into a cultural system, or “a system of values” (Assmann & Czaplicka, 1995: 131). The latter represents a form of knowledge that cultural memory tries to safeguard. Cultural memory is, according to Assmann, “formative in its educative, civilising and humanising functions and normative in its function of providing rules of conduct” (italics in original, ibid: 132). Thus, religious beliefs, via the medium of language, maintain a sense of continuity, knowledge and affirmation, giving voice to the heritage of a nation.

Woven with fictional images and supernatural forces, the plot, characters, themes and actions of folktales translate Palestinians’ reality, constituting a unitary whole of the moral outlook of the community (M&K, 1989). A good example which shows the way language controls folktales and community outlook features also in the storytellers’ opening statements. The opening formulas, used by the majority of storytellers in SBSA, reflect a unified and collective vision of God. Here are some common expressions adopted by the tellers:
| Teller (f): Testify that God is One!  | الزاوية: وحدوا الله  
Audience: There is no God but God.  | الحضور: لا إله إلا الله  
(M&K, 1989: 55) |
|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|
| Teller (f): Allah has spoken, and His word is a blessing.  | الزاوية: قال الله و قال خير  
Audience: Blessings abound, Allah willing!  | الحضور: خير إن شاء الله  
(M&K, 2001: 139) |
|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|
| Teller (f): Once upon a time but first a prayer of peace for the virgin.  | الراوية: كان يا مكان عالعذرا صلاة السلام  
Audience: Peace be to her!  | الحضور: عليها السلام  
(M&K, 2001: 171) |
|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|
| Teller (f): Once upon a time ...O my listeners, let him who loves the Virgin hail with blessings of peace!  | الراوية: كان يا مكان يا مستمعين الكلام، اللي يحب العذرا يرمي عليها إشارات السلام  
Audience: Peace be with her.  | الحضور: عليها السلام  
(M&K, 2001: 230) |
|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|
| Teller (f): Once upon a time, O my listeners ... but not until you bear witness that God is One.  | الراوية: كان يا مكان يا مستمعين الكلام، حتى توحدوا الله  
Audience: There is no god but God!  | الحضور: لا إله إلا الله  
(M&K, 2001: 208) |
|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|
| Teller (f): May Allah bless the prophet!  | الراوية: صلى على النبي  
Audience: Allah bless him! (ibid: 241)  | الحضور: اللهم صلى عليه  
(M&K, 2001: 218) |

The six opening formulas contextualise the folktale in two monotheisms: Christianity and Islam. The importance of the opening formulas, in my opinion, consists in creating a collective sense of agreement of God’s blessings and oneness. The opening formulas invite the listeners to look at the folktale as one of God’s blessings to unify people upon believing in his greatness. The second formula in particular, according to the compilers, carries profound significance:

First it glorifies the power of speech by attributing it to a divine source; second, it equates material blessings (kher) with the Logos, the divine word; and third, it demonstrates the importance of folktales to the community, since the formula implies that telling them is a blessing. (ibid: 148)

In my opinion, the blend of official and folk religion can empower collective belief and wisdom. The belief in God’s strength and will reunites the community under the context of folk telling. In addition, the combination of Christian and Islamic formulas, in examples three and four, emphasises the diversity and tolerance of a harmonised community. The constant reference to the three monotheistic religions in Palestinian folktales is aimed at relating the religious history of Palestine, as the sacred land and the
cradle of religions to Palestinian memory and to the richness of their cultural identity across time and space.

Folktales not only articulate desires, wishes or/and social reality, but also consolidate underlying attitudes which people hold about the meaning of life, about being pre-destined and about the acceptance of one’s fate. One of the roles of the folktale, I argue, is to reveal the religious beliefs and practices which represent a shared system, among the majority of Palestinians. Whether folk or official religion, superstitious or simplistic, Palestinian folktales, via the medium of language, are reflexive of “the self-image of the group” (Assmann & Czaplicka, 1995: 132). Reflexivity characteristic of cultural memory, discussed by Assmann, is not optional in the Palestinian case, but a necessity in order to preserve Palestinian heritage and to strengthen communal bonds in the midst of increasing denial. The existence of Palestinian memory, whether collective or cultural, depends mainly on nurturing the specificity of Palestinian national identity. In fact, “national identity requires both having a heritage and believing it to be unique” (Gillis, 1994: 4). In the same vein, the following section highlights the cultural significance of food in relation to memory, which, like religious expressions, symbolises versatile cultural and social realities as well as a long established heritage.

4.3 Food and Memory

In its predominantly rural setting, Palestinian society used to rely heavily on labour-intensive agriculture on limited land, “in which the size of an individual household could be thirty or more” (M&K, 1989: 37). Food was the main resource at the family’s disposal (ibid). It is clear that Palestinian village life before 1948 revolved around the cultivation, consumption, storage, sale and distribution of food. As the compilers explain in their introduction:

[food] is the family’s primary concerns and it takes up the greatest portion of their time. It is therefore not surprising that food assumes such an important role in the tales, and not merely as nourishment but as motivator for the action in some and a source of metaphor and symbol in others. (ibid)

The question raised, in this case, is how food can be linked to memory. If so, how can the former reinforce the latter? The folktales, as discussed so far, connect the Palestinian peasant to his/her land and rural setting, revealing how connected and collective the notion of identity among villagers is. The peasant and the agricultural setting described
can be considered as national signifiers (Swedenburg, 1990) as well as sites of memory (Nora, 1989). Along these lines, I will look at the way food and related rituals can present vivid sites of memory in Palestinian popular and oral literature in general and in SBSA (1989) and Qul Ya Tayer (2001) in particular. My aim in this section is to shed light on the way food features as an essential component of Palestinian cultural identity, mainly in the way it nourishes the preservation of collective memory. In order to do so, I will base my discussion on notions such as prospective memory (Sutton, 2008), and sensuous and sensory memory (Holtzman, 2006).

The development of food studies and journals such as Food, Culture and Society and Food and Foodways reveal a heightened awareness concerning the role of food and its connection to memory and identity. The question, according to Sutton, is “to what extent can food be a key mediator of social relationships, a symbol of identity and a marker of difference” (Sutton, 2008: 159). In his works, mainly Remembrance of Repasts, Sutton built on his analysis of food in relation to memory following his observations on the Greek Island of Kalymnos. Sutton noticed, for example, how the seasonal food cycle shapes “prospective memory” (ibid) as people look forward to pears in August. In other words, memory appears through the nostalgia of performing particular rituals related to food. More significantly, people develop an active sense of nostalgia realised in looking forward to the next ritual practice. Sutton explains how outdoor ovens in Kalymnos are created by Kalymnians during Easter in particular in order to make “prospective memory or active planning to make Easter celebrations memorable in the future” (Sutton, 2008: 164).

Through prospective memory people actively plan to remember meals, their taste and most importantly project the habit and desire onwards over future generations. Prospective memory, I argue, has the power not only to reinforce the memory of a particular food ritual or food experience but to also regenerate the desire to recreate past occurrences. Not only is the folktale an artistic and literary tool, it is “a chunk of Palestinian culture” (Kanaana, 2012), which portray Palestinian life, social interaction and daily routines. References to food and food rituals, as I will show, are prominent in the majority of tales. Once more, my analysis of food references will look at the way they feature in the folktales as well as in the para-textual elements.
4.3.1 Prospective memory

In his discussion of prospective memory, Sutton, as mentioned above, looked at the way the people of Kalymnos engage during Easter time in cooking a traditional dish of lamb. His analysis involved looking at people’s discussions, rituals and expectations prior to and during the cooking process. The effort and “active planning” (Sutton, 2008) of people to make the experience memorable also connects people to past, present, and future. According to Sutton, this is seen when “people complained of their hunger in the present while reminiscing about previous Easters and looking forward to the upcoming celebration” (italics for emphasis, ibid: 164). “Reminiscing” and “looking forward” are key phrases which I would like to reflect on when looking at the way food features in the folktale collection under investigation. My aim is to discuss particular food references in specific tales as I believe that they are active agents and sites of Palestinian cultural identity and the essence of collectivity among Palestinians.

Food is very much present throughout the folktales. According to M&K, it is “the basic motivator of action in all the Environment tales and it figures prominently in several others as well (e.g Tales 1, 9, 14, 15, 27, 29, 34, 36, 45)” (M&K, 1989: 37). References to food are seen in different ways: in some cases food is the focus of social gatherings and celebrations; in other cases food takes the form of symbols and metaphors whether in the story titles or in the actual tale. In all these cases, as I will discuss in more detail, food and food rituals enlighten the reader as to various cultural, religious and national elements of Palestinian identity. Memory, as I have analysed, is mainly collective and sustains its presence within social contexts (Halbawchs, 1992; Naravex, 2006). Connerton (1989), however, sees social memory as “an implicit rule that participants in any social order must presuppose a shared memory” (p.65). Although it is true in the sense of memory as an establishing social system in a well-settled society, Connerton’s argument could be questioned in the case of Palestinians, for whom social memories are the product of interactions with the humans, objects, religion, history and institutions. Palestinian memory is intertwined within communicative and cultural memories (Assmann, 1995). The paradoxicality of Palestinian social collective memory lies in the bittersweet sense of nostalgia, which at one end fixates on the past and creates a narrative of escapism from the present; at the other end, however, it can be a form of reminiscence, and hope in a better future.
To understand how nostalgia and aspiration can consolidate Palestinian cultural identity, I will be looking at food in the folktales as sites of memory in the same way I looked at rural imagery. Food space within Palestinian society is versatile and culturally nurtured. Because food is important to the confines of the extended family, traditions related to food express values of Arab culture, hospitality and generosity. For instance, there is a constant reference to the concept of the madâifa or “guesthouse”, where Palestinians expressed their hospitality, mainly towards strangers. The guest would stay for at least three days, during which he/she was well fed and looked after by the host family. The guesthouse “was a feature of Palestinian villages and towns well into the period of the British Mandate” (M&K, 1989: 39). Reference to the origin of the guesthouse concept by the compilers in their introduction merges history with memory and nostalgia on one hand. On the other, it extends the knowledge, more specifically the culture, related to hospitality to Palestinians in the Diaspora or post-memory generations, who had not had first-hand experience of such settings and traditions.

Along the same lines, food is used to express many cultural and social aspects of Palestinian society. It is shared among Palestinians in birth, circumcision, death and “possibilities of nasab (in-laws) and sulha (reconciliation) between two families” (ibid: 40). Food can also entail less noble motives as it can be used among villagers to compete for recognition and wealth. In other words, the more you spend on food the wealthier and more prestigious your social class. Like other societies, Palestinian families prepare huge feasts of food in order to “seek for recognition of their generosity” (ibid: 39). The folktale and its framing by the compilers reveal society as it was, and still is, projecting the consequences of such beliefs on the disturbance of the harmony of the society. Even when food was not plentiful, favouritism is criticised in the society, and hence in the folktales. It leads “to envy, jealousy, and conflict. Those who conspire in this favouritism are considered traitors to the collective interests of the family and thieves” (ibid: 38-39). Food representation in SBSA (1989) and its Arabic version, whether within the tales or in the framing, emphasises the bond between food, memory and ethnic identity. I base my observation on the works of Brown & Mussel (1984) and Comito (2001) among others, who discussed the way ethnic identities, American in particular, are preserved and performed through food, for instance to validate ethnic identities during festivals and celebrations.

One of the main characteristics of popular culture, as I discussed in previous chapters, is ‘resilience’ against a particular regime, ideology or institution. Popular art and literature
express in this way the voice of the masses in fighting or opposing oppression. In the
case of the present folktales, I argue that food, in all its forms, is used as a means for
resilience against the melting pot of other identities or cultures. Palestinians, both the
masses and the intellectuals (in our case the compilers), use food not only as a memory
site or platform for affirming their past, but also to resist amnesia and Israeli’s denial of
Palestinian nationhood. Moreover, the power of reminiscence or nostalgia in Palestinian
popular culture is a form of activating memory in the present and future, as I will
elaborate shortly. The following quote by Muhawi & Kanaana lies at the heart of my
discussion of the interconnectedness of social and collective memory with ethnic
identity and food:

The sharing of food, in short, is a regular and very important feature
of Palestinian social life, forming an important link in the bonds that
give the society its coherence and its distinctive character” [italics for
emphasis]. (M&K, 1989: 39)

The words regular, coherence and distinctive convey the main characteristics of
Palestinian memory, in my opinion. Regularity alludes to continuation and existence
throughout time and space. In fact, sharing food, as I will discuss in the coming section,
is not confined to festivals or celebrations in Palestinian society but is seen as a
transition from the individual to the collective, creating a coherent social harmony.
Sharing food is also seen as symbol of a distinctive identity or even used explicitly in
the creation of a national identity (Bellasco & Scranton, 2002; Anderson, 1983;
Hobsbawm, 1983). As a cultural marker and symbol of identity, food features in the
folktales not just within gatherings or solemn social occasions. Food and its processes—
from growing and storing it, to eating and then defecating—are meant to generate
metaphor and symbolism that reflect specific social and cultural attitudes within
Palestinian society. The way food is referred to in some of the tales in the present
folktales compilation draws attention to how food is connected to notions such as
prospective memory, triggering the individual’s particular food related memory or
sensation to be reproduced again in the future. In other words, the desire for the
experience is projected onto the future. For instance, food is used in Palestinian culture
and society as sign of love. In tale 14, “Sackcloth” A ’bû al- labābīd, and tale 15,
“Shahin”79 Shāhīn, female characters interact with male characters over sharing food
together. In “Sackloth”, the lady disguised in sackcloth is being asked to take dinner to
her master, the prince. Suspecting her disguise he says:

79 See summary of tales 14&15 in Appendix 5 (number 4&5).
“Come sit here with me,” said the prince, closing the door. Let’s eat the dinner together.”

“Please, master!” she protested, “Just look at my condition. Surely it will disgust you.”

“No. Do sit down! I would like to have dinner with you.”

(M&K, 1989: 130) قالتها: تعالى أقعدي أتغذى أنا و إياك
قالتله: يا سيدي أطلع كيف حالي. يترف مني
قالها: لا أفعدي بدي أتغذى أنا و إياك
(M&K. 2001: 124)

In “Shahin”, the king’s daughter, along with the daughters of the ministers and dignitaries of state, wanders about until they found the house of a young man. The latter usually prepares food for his forty brothers, who go out to hunt every day. The king’s daughter is attracted by the young man and the following conversation starts:

“What’s your name?”

“Shahin,” he answered.

“Welcome, Shahin.”

He went and fetched a chair, and set it in front of her. She sat next to him, and they started chatting. He roasted some meat, gave it to her, and she ate. She kept him busy until the food he was cooking was ready.

“Shahin,” she said when the food was ready, “you don’t happen to have some seeds and nuts in the house, do you?”

(M&K, 1989: 131-32)  هو اسمك ؟
قالها: شاهين
قالتله: أهلا وسهلا شاهين
راح جابلها كرسي و حطها قدمها. قعدت حده وصاروا
هذولا يتعرفوا وصار يشويلها نحم و يطعميها. و هي توكول. ظلت تعاقب بيه تخلص الأخلك. لمن خلص
الأكل قالته: شاهين كن في ندلق?
(M&K, 2001: 125-26)

The daughter’s king steals all the food he has prepared for his brothers. The young man seems vulnerable to her attraction so the same trick happens to him three consecutive times. According to the compilers, the young man is naive to the extent that he cannot resist the wittiness and charm of the princess, who fools him three times. My point of interest here is to look at how rituals of love within Palestinian culture, though seen within an imaginative plot, are often associated with food. Not only does reading the folktales foster the reader’s literary pleasure and imagination but essentially it invites the reader to project their memory of ‘the grilled meat’ or ‘the eating of seeds and nuts’ onto the desire to relive the same experience of sharing food with their loved ones. Hence, one can see that prospective memory in relation to food rituals is often associated with particular feelings and emotions, such as love. These feelings are vividly entwined with a past that is longed for and looked forward to experience again.
Prospective memory, like post-memory (Hirsch, 1996, 1997, 2008), gives room for the future existence of past memories, past food-related rituals and even social and religious beliefs. Although consumed collectively, food remains the property of the patriarch (M&K, 1989). His permission is even sought before distributing food among the extended family. The patriarch’s authority, according to Muhawi & Kanaana, can extend to controlling the mother’s milk. In this regard they explain in their introduction:

The wife may not nurse another woman’s baby without his [the husband’s] permission. (Actually, the concern here may be less over the loss of the milk than over the fact that milk siblings, who will likely be first cousins, are forbidden by religious law from marrying each other). (ibid: 37-38)

From a religious and cultural point of view, this belief not only existed in the past but persists still in many villages in the West Bank and amongst Palestinians living in Israel. The fact that breast feeding can be problematic is also related to the traditional family structure in villages, being patrilineal, polygynous and endogamous. Even food distribution follows particular structures and social hierarchy to which many Palestinian families relate to today. For example, the patriarch tends to be given the best slice of meat or biggest portion of food (M&K, 1989). The family may wish also to honour its head by serving him first. Those cultural traditions related to food distribution may be interpreted as favouritism or even discrimination among members of the family. The folktale, in its educational and cultural mission, has to be faithful to the social system it is reflecting, in this case the Palestinian one. I am not in a position to disagree with a whole social system at this stage; however, I argue that the folktale is a vehicle for expectations to be fulfilled in the present and activated to persist in the future - through the concept of prospective memory - or for future generations to be raised and educated to follow the same pattern - through post-memory.

As I have discussed in Chapters Two, Three & Four, I aim to show how Palestinian memory is dependent on collectivity and social interaction. Within the arena of food studies and memory, one can argue the fusion of individual and social memory; otherwise referred to as ‘intimate’ and ‘public’ memories. It is not my intention to go over the differences between individual and social memory at this stage. However, I agree with Holtzman that we need to look at the power of food for memory by “intrinsically traversing the public and the intimate” (Holtzman, 2006: 373). In other words, the joy of eating and tasting has deeply private characteristics but at the same time it is transacted through collective ways of sharing or social ritual. As he argues:
“One might consider the significance of this rather unique movement between the most intimate and the most public in fostering food’s symbolic power, in general, and in relation to memory, in particular” (ibid). Thus there is an overlap or criss-crossing between the ‘public’ and the ‘intimate’, which I will analyse in more depth in the coming section.

I find the interaction between the intimate and public spheres apparent in most folktales in this collection, particularly tales in group IV, Environment. As discussed at the beginning of this chapter, the tales in this group are also known as ‘formula’ tales since they require a verbal precision that becomes part of the content (M&K, 1989). In my discussion of collectivity at the beginning of this chapter, I argued that language and content in this particular category of tales, such as “The Dunglet” or “The Old Woman and Her Cat”, complement each other, showing interdependence between the animate and inanimate worlds. The tales, in fact, symbolise the interconnectedness of Palestinian society and how that equilibrium can only be achieved if communal effort is maintained amongst people. Food within these tales is also a major marker, showing people’s dependence on nutritious elements which are associated with Palestinian villagers in particular. In tale 40, “The Dunglet” Ba ḍirūn the woman, who cannot bear children, prays one day to God, wishing even for a “piece of dung!” (M&K, 1989: 285) Her wish is fulfilled and the dunglet helps his father, the plowman, by taking lunch to him. Dunglet is, however, very greedy so devours everything he finds, even his father, mother and aunts. Apart from the fantastical element in the tale, the repetition of yogurt and bread as part of the formulaic language of the tale gives the reader, particularly the westerner, an idea of the main food elements in Palestinian villages. The compilers chose to add a footnote in the English compilation (but not in the Arabic one) on the significance of yogurt and bread, saying:

Yogurt is a major item in the peasant diet. With bread it makes a whole meal, and village families rely on the combination, together with olive and fresh vegetables, for sustenance, especially during the summer months. (ibid: 286)

The fact that the plowman’s lunch consists of yogurt and bread, among other elements like olives, introduces the reader to ethnic and national food markers for Palestinians in the past and present. Like rural imagery, as I highlighted in the first part of this chapter, food can be a marker for collectivity amongst Palestinians. The village turns ‘peasant-ness’ and related food consumption into national dishes (Swedenburg, 1990).
Furthermore, the folktale, in both English and Arabic versions, reflect normality within the daily life of people, who go to work while their wives prepare lunch for them. The children, who play the role of facilitators and support for Palestinian families, carry food to their fathers in the field, then help other members of the family with the washing. The cycle of order and normality is related to the harmonious sharing of food or help in food-making and delivery. Based on this example, it becomes clearer how the folktale and the compilers’ framing turn the intimate sites of food's relation with the individual into a wider and more public sphere, reflecting the interaction, order and collective roles of family members among each other.

When disharmony is produced, there is also an observable translation into the public sphere. This happens, as we saw at the beginning of the chapter, in this particular group of tales, “when one of the links in the chain of relationships is upset, thereby triggering a process of readjustment in all the other links until equilibrium is restored” (M&K, 1989: 290). The ‘readjustment’ the compilers refer to symbolises accordance and harmonisation within all members of the society. In the “Dunglet”, the disorder happened when the dunglet started devouring everyone and the only way to destroy him is to pierce his belly. The images related to the big belly and devouring are common beliefs in Palestinian folklore, symbolising greed and dissatisfaction with one’s lot. In fact, this tale has an educational function, according to the compilers, used by Palestinian mothers “to teach lessons about the metaphorical significance of ‘devouring’” (ibid: 292). Thus, greedy people cause harm to social integration and damage the collective union each individual strives for.

Likewise, in tale 39, “The Old Woman and Her Cat” Al- ’ajūz w al-bis, the old woman’s milk has been taken by the cat. Being angry, the old woman cuts off his tail, as a result the cat has to find milk in order to get his tail back. To restore order, the cat has to go through a chain of conditions made by the tree, the plowman, the baker and the cobbler, among others. From the above examples, one notices the integration of the intimate and public in order to show the distinctiveness of food in relation to Palestinian peasant identity. Moreover, food related symbols and actions are used in the folktales to reveal how social harmony is dependent on respecting fair shares as well as through asking for help to achieve social balance.
4.3.2 Sensuous Memory

Similar to Connerton’s (1989) notion of bodily memory, and Stoller’s (1995) emphasis on embodied memories, Sutton (2000, 2001) discusses the sensuality of food, which causes it to be a powerful medium of memory. Because eating involves both physical and emotional experiences, provoked by the smell or the taste, the experience of food, according to Sutton, evokes recollection. For example, Giard (1998) interprets the everyday practice of eating as making “concrete one of the specific modes of relation between a person and the world, thus forming one of the fundamental landmarks in space-time” (ibid: 183). In the same manner, Powles (2002) argues how the collective memory of displacement for refugees in Zambia is constructed through their common experience of the absence of fish. Thus, references to food, food practices and even absence can generate strong bodily memories and nostalgia, and foster prospective memory.

Based on Sutton’s useful discussion of food, I argue that food is perceived as the engine or motivator of not only bodily memories but also collective memory. At the beginning of the chapter, I discussed how the relations of peasantry to imagery in the folktales reinforce the sense of collectivity and highlight the distinctiveness of Palestinian rural identity. The reference to particular peasant items and rural landscapes helps, as I explained, to instigate a sense of active remembering. Along the same lines, reference to food in some of the folktales in SBSA (1989) and Qul Ya Tayer (2001) serves to inform the Western reader of Palestinian food markers, which relate culture to identity and memory. In addition, food references for the Palestinian reader are meant to activate his/her bodily memory and thus nurture his/her nostalgia.

If we take tale 8, “Sumac! You Son of a Whore” Sumāq yā ibn (...), sumāq, the story revolves around a complex plot, but the main element needed for the hero to regain his lions and caravans is to guess the content of one of the loads, which is ‘Sumac’. Because Sumac is a popular spice used in Palestinian cuisine, the compilers deemed it necessary to explain it:

*Summaq*, the crushed red fruit of a non-poisonous plant of the cashew family (genus Rhus), is used extensively in Palestinian cuisine; the leaves, fruit, and bark are also used in tanning and dyeing. (M&K, 1989: 98)

This spice is commonly used in making a very popular dish named *musakhan* in the countryside. For the majority of Palestinians, this spice is connected to the making of
Msakhan. The storyteller could have replaced the spice with other kinds of spices; however, the integration of specifically Sumac into the folktale provides a more authentic, ethnic as well as national level to the understanding of Palestinian cuisine, and hence its relevance to Palestinian cultural identity. Moreover, reference to the spice stimulates the Palestinian reader to recollect memories related to eating Msakhan and the pleasure of sharing it with others, since it is always eaten in a group. Like tale 8, tale 12, “Jummez Bin Yazur, Chief of the Birds”, has reference to food in the title. “The fruit Jummez, is a type of fig (Ficus sycamorus) that hangs down in branches more like cherries than figs” (M&K, 1989: 117). According to the compilers, the use of fruit and other foods symbolises sexuality. However, I am more interested in the combination of this particular fruit with a village called Ya’zūr. Ya’zūr is the name of a Palestinian village which, prior to 1948, was located on the coastal plain close to Jaffa. The fact that the title combines a fruit with the name of a historic village from pre-1948 Palestine has the power to trigger the sensuousness of old memories, which carries a sentimental weight for first and second generation Palestinians. In this particular example, sensuous memory and collective memory, are combined, inviting the Palestinian reader to associate the name and existence of this type of figs to a pre-Nakba land.

In fact, the bond between the land, the trees and fruits and Palestinians is strong and vivid. As Bardenstein (1999) describes in her article on the link between trees and forests in the shaping of Israeli and Palestinian collective memory, Palestinian literature, such as the works of Fadwa Tukan, Mahmoud Darwish and many more, rely on vivid descriptions of land, fig trees, olive trees and orange blossoms in order to express and transmit the power of their collective memory to coming generations:

When this bond is recalled or imagined as intact, as “the good old days” before its disruption, or the glorious days to come with its restoration, it is portrayed as a state of almost cosmic harmony; trees thrive and flourish in affirmation of Palestine peopled by Palestinians as the natural order of things. (Inverted commas in original, Bardenstein, 1999: 150)

The way nature is portrayed in Palestinian literature gives the impression that nature is in sympathy with the Palestinians. In a more particular sense, fig trees, for example,

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80 The village or the land belongs now to Israel, According to the Palestinian historian, Walid Khalidi: “two village shrines remain standing. One is made of stone and its roof is topped with a dozen domes clustered around a more prominent dome at the center. A number of other structures and houses also are still intact; some are utilized for various purposes”. (Khalidi, 1992: 234)
stand for idealised time and state. The sensuousness of tasting a fig or having a fig tree encapsulates for Palestinians a lost paradise, which is reactivated continuously, as sites of memory, due to loss and dislocation.

A similar example is seen in tale 13, “Jbene” Jbīna. Jbene, a very beautiful girl, goes one day with her friends to collect some fruit from shajarat al-dūm (the dom tree). The compilers feel the need to explain the dom tree in a footnote in both Arabic and English collections. Based on the study of Crowfoot and Baldensperger (1932) on folklore of plants in Palestine, the compilers quote:

*Dom*, or Christ-thorn (Zizyphus spina-christi), is a wild tree bearing edible fruit. Tradition has it that Christ’s crown of thorns was made from the branches of this tree. Some specimens are centuries old and have attained considerable size. [italics in original] (Crowfoot and Baldensperger in M&K, 1989: 122)

The dom tree is renown among Palestinians for being similar to the palm tree in terms of strength and longevity of life. The dom tree can also survive in very dry conditions but maintain a shiny green colour throughout the year. As I have discussed in previous chapters and this chapter, the storytellers were able to ground the tales within Palestinian society and culture as well as landscapes and food. The choice of this particular tree rather than others, in my opinion, raises questions on the symbolism of this tree in Palestinian culture. Being a national symbol in Palestinian culture, related images and metaphors to fig trees and olive trees are prevalent in written and oral literature. Trees are not only used to call upon a longing for a homeland but are also used to assert Palestinians’ *sumūd* (steadfastness) in the face of adversity (Swedenburg, 1990). Trees, like *jumīz* and *dūm*, are immortalised, standing for Palestinians’ rootedness and heritage, which in spite of the odds will not vanish.

Oral literature, in this case folktales, address the whole society, both young and old which, I argue, means that it can deliver a stronger message than written literature. Oral or popular culture discourse is not confined to particular social classes or linguistic registers; on the contrary, the speech is earthy, direct and potentially more powerful. Being a source of pleasure, particularly if experienced collectively, storytelling and folktales can be more effective in reinforcing Palestinian collective memory among younger generations. Palestinian children, both in Diaspora or in occupied Palestinian territories, can become familiar with the significance of particular trees or fruit in the construction of their belonging and cultural identity. Trees, like the olive tree or fig tree,
become “the repository for Palestinian collective memory, which will live on to bear witness to the details of Palestinian suffering long after the human beings who experienced it are gone” (Bardenstein, 1999: 155-56). Hence, the occurrence of trees or fruit in Palestinian oral as well as written literature is seen as a powerful spiritual metaphor, serving to symbolise the strength of Palestinian collective memory as well as encouraging future generations to outlive the present unnatural order of things.

Food references, as we have seen, represent a marker for national identity and collective memory. In addition to all of the above-mentioned points, food references can also trigger gustatory nostalgia (Sutton 2000, 2001). In tale 28, “Chick Eggs” Bayẓ faqāqīs, the father is ashamed of his daughter, who became pregnant from eating eggs, and wants to get rid of her. Fearing disgrace among the others in the village, he decides to leave her somewhere remote and not come back for her. The pregnant daughter, unaware of her father’s intention, waits for him to come back and get her, saying:

"Father, you’re taking so long to crap  
The thyme has started to sprout!"  
(M&K,1989: 231)

"يا بوي ما أطول خرائاك  
نبّت الزعتر وراك"  
(M&K, 2001, 209)

The Palestinian reader would find the Arabic funny since Palestinian folkloric humour tends to use body parts or defecation in jokes or old sayings. The Arabic version sounds like a proverb in the Palestinian vernacular, meaning idiomatically that ‘her father is taking ages / a long time to come back’. The deliberate mixing of humour and food reference, namely za’tar (thyme) is explained in a footnote by the compilers:

Thyme is a component of za’tar زعتر, which may be considered the Palestinian national dish. The herb, together with other herbs as well as solid ingredients such as roasted wheat and garbanzo beans, is ground into a fine powder. Bread is dipped into oil and then into the za’tar زعتر, all being accompanied by fresh green vegetables. Although this meal is usually eaten for breakfast, it forms part of the staple diet in the Palestinian household. (ibid: 231)

If read separately, one would think that this footnote or description is taken from a cookbook. The information given by the compilers aims at introducing this particular dish as unique to Palestinians. In fact, za’tar marks their national identity and is perceived as crucial in any Palestinian house. The purpose of the footnote is twofold. If read by Westerners, the information will highlight the importance of za’tar in Palestinian cuisine, in general, and its national characteristic, in particular. Now when
Palestinians read, either the Arabic or the English, particularly Diaspora generations, there is what Sutton (2000, 2001) refers to as “gustatory nostalgia” being triggered. Humorous language is also perceived as a medium for relating laughter with food in order to recreate a pleasant memory.

Nostalgia in this sense is seen as a form of memory, in food-centered nostalgia studies. In this regard Sutton, for example, has analysed the longing evoked among diasporic communities by particular smells or tastes of a lost homeland. The power of nostalgia, in his opinion, is central to the creation of memory since sentiments of longing foster diasporic communities’ sense of belonging to a specific nation. In other cases, gustatory nostalgia relies also on “a lay notion of sentimentality for a lost past, viewing food as a vehicle for recollections of childhood and family” (Holtzman, 2006: 367). Because nostalgia usually emerges after displacement, individuals, including Palestinians, make continuous efforts to establish a shared past they can relate to and nurture. Loss, according to Davis, results in identity discontinuity, “which nostalgia can repair by creating a shared generational identity to mend the lost one” (Davis quoted in Milligan, 2003: 384). Echoing Davis’ argument, the sensuousness of food in oral literature, as I explained, is a site for memory activation and work in the Palestinian case; the power of food can be construed as a vehicle for Palestinian memory in the past and today.

4.3.3 Food and Women: Agents of Memory

Food references not only represent sites of memory in the folktales of SBSA, but can also allude to the role of agents of memory, namely Palestinian female storytellers. Palestinian women, as I discussed in Chapter Three, play a vibrant role in the transmission of collective memory, both as storytellers and main characters in folktales. I extend my argument in this chapter to suggest that Palestinian female storytellers have gendered the tales through the medium of food to give rise to a feminine form of memory. In this regard, a number of studies have discussed the existing interconnection and relationship between women, food and memory. Meyers (2001), for example, sees “food heritage” as a gift transmitted from mother to daughter; it can, in her opinion, help in reinforcing or correcting dysfunctional relationships between mother and daughter. Blend (2001) interprets tortilla making, a ritualised act, as reinforcing the role of Latina women in creating a gendered cultural identity, seeing: “Tortilla making as a woman-centred, role affirming communal ritual that empowers women as the carriers of tradition” (Blend, 2001: 47). Some even consider the kitchen as a repository for
memory, in which the woman exercises her power. Christensen (2001), for instance, describes his mother’s experience: “to open the skin of a garlic and dice its contents into grains allowed her to become a daughter again, to re-enter the female world of her childhood” (ibid: 26). I am therefore interested in looking at the way Palestinian women, both as storytellers and principal characters in the folktales, mediate collective memory at the social and cultural level through food.

In the realms of individuality versus collectivity, the way in which women transfer individual memories into a broader sphere of collective memory is significant. Each Palestinian female storyteller in the collection under study has a mature approach to life, society and narration, and hence has earned her credibility and power. In studies conducted on oral history, scholars like Middelton and Edwards (1990) noted that “the study of remembering in conversation affords unique opportunities for understanding remembering as organised social action” (p. 43). Based on this, Graham Smith (2007) analysed how talking in groups allows experiences to be shared and the emotional context of remembering to be transmitted. The force of communication, he argues, lies in the concept of transactive memory:

Transactive memory can be defined in terms of two components: (1) an organised store of knowledge that is contained entirely in the individual memory systems of the group members, and (2) a set of knowledge-relevant transactive processes that occur among group members. Stated more colloquially, we envision transactive memory to be a combination of individual minds and the communication among them. (Wegner quoted in Smith, 2007:79)

In his study, Smith showed how women in groups shared individual experiences, safe in the knowledge that the others will relate to them. Hence, the process instigates a communal ground of shared emotions and experiences, which they enjoy reminiscing about together. The notion of transactive memory is relevant to my coming discussion on the way Palestinian female storytellers, endowed with experience and knowledge, transfer Palestinian cultural values, traditions and beliefs to another group of people: young male and female audience, who all share the aftermath of Nakba and quest for identity affirmation. Through references to food, one can understand social and cultural aspects of Palestinians through the ‘feminine’ lense.

As seen in Chapter Three, the role of women is central to every folktale, as the motivators of actions and as main characters. At this stage, I am interested in analysing how references to food are used by women or about women in SBSA to portray the
Palestinian culture, hence also engendering a feminine form of memory both cultural and collective. One of the first elements that caught my attention is the title of some folktales in *Speak, Bird, Speak Again* (1989) and *Qul Ya Tayer* (2001). Tale 1, “Tunjur, Tunjur”, tale 12, “Jummez Bin Yazur, Chief of the Birds”, tale 13, “Jbene”, tale 28, “Chick Eggs” and tale 35, “Pomegranate Seeds”. These tales express in one way or another Palestinian women’s desire, roles and wishes in a culture which would not usually allow women to express their sexuality and other aspects of their experience.

In the case of tale 1 “Tunjur, Tunjur” Tunjur, the title is the name of the heroine:

The name of the tale is an onomatopoeic derivation for the sound of a rolling cooking pot (*tunjara*). The feminine ending of this word helps to establish the equation of “pot” with “girl”. In the translation the neuter “it” is used when the pot is perceived as an object. (italics and inverted commas in original, M&K, 1989: 55)

The tale, as discussed in Chapter Three, revolves around the wish of a woman to become pregnant after a long wait. Her desperate desire for offspring made her pray to have a female child, even if she was a cooking pot! Her wish comes true and she has a cooking pot called Tunjur, who helps her mother by providing food and goods for the household. The importance of having children in Palestinian society is a recurrent theme in the tales. According to the compilers, “the tale demonstrates the economic value children have in Palestinian society” (ibid: 82), particularly females.

Conversely, food is used as metaphoric symbols to make women conceive, such as in tale 6 “Half a Halfing” Nūs nṣīṣ, when the sheikh advises the husband to get his wife pomegranate seeds, as it is believed to increase women’s fertility in Palestinian culture and folklore. I will shortly discuss in more detail the symbolism of pomegranate in Palestinian society. Similarly, tale 28, “Chick Eggs” Bayẓ faqāqūṣ, the young lady buys eggs - believed to help women conceive- from the market. Being unmarried, she starts craving things till the father realises that his daughter is pregnant and decides to get rid of her, as explained previously. In this case, pregnancy is not favoured at all, even strictly prohibited socially and religiously in a conservative Palestinian society. In fact, Palestinian society considers unmarried pregnant woman a disgrace to the family’s honour. In both “Chick Eggs” and “Tunjur, Tunjur”, food symbolises the metaphoric desire to become pregnant or bear children. In spite of the importance of offspring in Palestinian society, shared in both tales, there are social, religious and cultural constraints which prevent unmarried Palestinian women conceiving a child. Women’s
memory is transmitted through a formative and educational role to younger generations, signposting the difference between acceptable and non-acceptable conduct.

Along similar lines, the cultural weight of pregnancy is also seen in the way Palestinian society perceives the cravings of pregnant women. In tale 43, “The Rich Man and the Poor Man” Al-ghanī w al-faqīr, there are two sisters, one married to a poor man and the other to a rich man. One day, the wife of the poor man visits her sister. Being pregnant, the wife of the poor man had cravings for a Palestinian popular dish her sister was making, called malfūf (stuffed cabbage), but, her sister did not offer her any. The storyteller says:

Now the wife of the poor brother had recently become pregnant and she craved the food. When she smelled the cabbage, she sighed, “Alas!” she thought in her heart. “Would that I had even one of those cabbage ribs to eat!” (M&K, 1989: 302)

In this particular tale, I believe that different notions of memory and food are combined. Firstly, the reference to malfūf ‘stuffed cabbage’ triggers the reader’s sensuous memory of the dish and gustatory nostalgia among Palestinians; furthermore, it invites the Western reader to discover more about the Palestinian cuisine and culture, particularly following the compilers’ footnote:

Stuffed cabbage (malfūf) is one of the most popular of Palestinian dishes. The description of its preparation it abbreviated in the tale. The cabbages are first boiled and then separated into leaves from which the ribs are removed. The boiled ribs are popular as snacks for the children while the meal is being cooked, or they may be inserted under or among the rolled leaves in the saucepan. The stuffing consists of minced lamb, rice, ghee, and condiments (salt, black pepper, and turmeric and/or cumin), and whole cloves of peeled garlic are added among the stuffed leaves. Stuffed cabbage, when cooking, has a characteristic aroma. (ibid: 302)

The detailed footnote draws also on prospective memory as it activates what I would call ‘productive nostalgia’, generating the desire to relive and look forward to the experience in the future. The compilers even describe the ‘in-between’ process, in which children eat the boiled ribs as snacks before the meal is ready. Hence, the joy of eating is the joy of sharing collectively the traditions related to it, which affirm social
and cultural ‘Palestinian-hood’. The feminine discourse of memory exemplified in the medium of food finds its main force from memories of pre-Nakba lifestyle and customs. Referring to food can be seen as a nostalgic technique used to “foster affiliation or stronger social bonds” (Sedikides, Wildschut, Gartner, Routledge & Arndt, 2008: 231). As I discussed throughout this chapter and the second chapter, nostalgia, though complex and ambivalent, can act as a social mobiliser, unifying people who shared the same experience. Food’s role, representation and symbolism, I argue, are twofold: It reinforces women’s discourse of memory within the private sphere, empowering women’s cultural and national voice as storytellers and protagonists. Moreover, food is a tool for activating collective memory through the medium of nostalgia, the latter helps in reinforcing social bonds within the public sphere. The compilers do not content themselves with the abovementioned footnote, but explain further the importance of cravings in Palestinian society. Consolidating their argument through Hilma Granqvist’s insight on craving in Palestine, they quote from her work Birth (1936):

> Regarding smell, she says, “The same woman had once cooked something which gave a very strong smell and then a woman relative said to her, ‘Do not forget! In the next house dwells such and such a woman and she is in a certain condition thou must give her some of the food!’ She at once took some down to her”. In general, says Granqvist “if a person cannot satisfy his desire for a special food this harms him. If he can see the food, it is also harmed and in that way they who eat of it. People are afraid to eat food which another has longed for. They say that his soul is in it.” (Inverted commas in original, Granqvist quoted in M&K, 1989: 302)

Craving in Palestinian society thus transcends the physical or bodily desire for food. There is, I think, a craving culture among Palestinians, whether among pregnant women or in simple longing for food. The belief might look superstitious or simplistic; however, I regard such cultural beliefs as essential in establishing a distinctive cultural identity for Palestinians. More importantly, it encourages solidarity, compassion and collectivity by emphasising the social role of sharing and helping. The collective sense of responsibility towards craving pregnant women is also seen in tale 2, “The Woman Who Married Her Son” Iliy tzawajat ibinhāa, in which the mother, who is disguised as the wife of her son, gets pregnant. She starts craving sour grapes, so asks her servant to get some from the neighbours, saying:
Craving can be considered a powerful tool to draw the attention of neighbours, family and husband. Everyone in Palestinian society is expected to fulfil the cravings of a pregnant woman no matter how hard to realise. Since the storytellers are women, the tales, as I explained at the beginning of this section, are told and construed through their lens. Through storytelling Palestinian women not only communicate their embedded cultural values, but most importantly they seem to regulate or veto specific social practices thanks to their endowed authority and wisdom. Hence, the Palestinian reader or listener of the folktale would relate to the collective duty towards pregnant women and subconsciously inherit the cultural perception. Thus, the folktale gains its momentum through women’s transmittable desire to share their individual experiences, rooted cultural customs and memories across generations.

Food references are also used by women in the folktales to symbolise sexuality and beauty. In tale 12, “Jummez Bin Yazur, Chief of the Birds”, tale 13, “Jbene” and tale 35, “Pomegranate Seeds”. The titles of the tales refer to the heroines in tale 13 and 35 while the title of tale 12 refers to the hero. In “Jummez Bin Yazur, Chief of the Birds”, the bird, explain the compilers, connotes male sexuality (M&K, 1989). As mentioned before, the first part of the title refers to a particular type of fig in the village of Yazur. This tale is one of those in SBSA addressing women and men’s sexual awakening and desires, as classified by the compilers, among group I, Individuals, in the third sub-group Sexual Awakening and Courtship. The young lady in the tale is looking for the best man to marry so asks her father to bring her from pilgrimage the chief of birds, Jummez Bin Yazur, who is symbolised by the bird.

In the same sub-group of tales, there is tale 13 “Jbene” ِ jbīna. Jbene, which is the diminutive of Jibne (cheese), is the name of the heroine. It is unusual to name a girl Jbene but because the mother had wished to conceive a beautiful girl with a fair complexion, her wish was fulfilled:
One day, when a cheese vendor passed through, she gathered herself and cried out, “You who ask, your wish be granted!” May Allah grant me a daughter with a face as white as this piece of cheese!” (M&K, 1989: 122).

The mother as a result gave birth to a girl with a fair complexion and round face like the cheese she was craving. The compilers sought to explain the connection between food and culture, as follows:

The cheese referred to here is made from sheep’s milk. It is white and comes in slabs (qraas, sing: qurs) of about three inches square by half an inch, with rounded corners, that are stacked in brine. Thus, the mother is asking for a daughter with fair complexion and a round face.

As in “The Rich Man and Poor Man”, the compilers evoke the readers’ sensuous and transactive memory, explaining beauty culture, particularly in Palestinian villages, where food, animals and landscapes shape people’s standards of beauty. The heroine, Jbene, turns out to attract the attention of many neighbours, who are captivated by her beauty. Cheese, hence, is culturally construed among Palestinian villagers to symbolise beauty and later sexuality, being very attractive. Once again themes of conceiving and craving are raised in this tale, which highlights the importance of having children in Palestinian society. As I discussed in Chapter Three, a woman who does not conceive in rural conservative Palestinian community usually loses her authority at home and would expect to become a co-wife or even a divorcee.

In addition to the sexual connotation of fruits in the folktales, naming girls with fruit names can have a religious interpretation, such as in tale 35, “Pomegranate Seeds” Ḥab al-rumān. It is not usually common to name a girl Pomegranate Seeds, but for the sake of conveying a particular message, it is used as a symbol. The image of pomegranate seeds is associated with deep redness and ripeness and hence refers to health and beauty (M&K, 1989). Crowfoot and Bladensperger (1932:111) describe in an account of Palestinian lore about the pomegranate that “brides are often compared to pomegranate for beauty”. Canaan (1927), as the compilers quote in a footnote, says that “every pomegranate has one seed which has come from heaven” (ibid: 166). In the same vein, Plant-lore adds that city Muslims “take great care not to drop or lose any of the seeds, since that might be just the one which came from paradise” (Plant-lore cited in M&K,
In Palestinian folklore, there is even a proverb that goes “Pomegranates fill the heart with faith” al-rumān bīmlī al-qalb īmān. Similarly, in the fusion of folk and official religion discussed at the beginning of the chapter, the imagery of pomegranates stands for highly respected beliefs in Palestinian culture and religion. Pomegranates represent beauty and holiness, and thus have positive connotations. Transactive memory does not confine itself to the transmission of personal or social memories but more importantly reinforces community beliefs about beauty, for example, which in Palestinian society is mixed with folk religion.

Food references also bear various cultural, religious, folkloric and social layers of meaning, which would have vanished if the tradition of storytelling among Palestinian women had not existed. The voice of women as storytellers and heroines in the folktales, seen in the themes or titles, plays an essential role in framing, transmitting and preserving Palestinian memory, engendering a feminine form of Palestinian memory. The abovementioned tales and footnotes, among others, reinforce my argument of the successful integration of para-textual elements within and around the tales. The consistency and harmony of cultural elements, storytelling, Palestinian dialect and compilers’ elaboration render SBSA (1989) and its Arabic version not only a scholarly and comprehensive work on Palestinian oral literature but also gives readers a solid image of Palestinian national and cultural identity.

Conclusion

In the present chapter I discussed the interconnection between Palestinian cultural identity and memory in SBSA (1989) and Qul Ya Tayer (2001). Throughout the discussion, I argued that the folktales and their framing play important roles in safeguarding Palestinian cultural identity as well as transmitting collective and cultural memory across generations. Being a dynamic picture of a vivid, stable and harmonious pre-1948 culture, the folktale mobilises memory work and collectivity by highlighting the national significance of rural settings and peasantry. In this regard, Palestinian dialect is important to highlight, as it is embedded with many religious expressions which in Palestinian society are associated with a versatile interpretive folk culture and social system. Throughout the chapter, it is argued that language represents a major

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81 Other examples of proverbs, idiomatic expressions and cultural set phrases, the metaphor “mouthful of happiness” luqmat al-sa’āda has been commonly used in a number of folktales in this compilation. The set phrase alludes to the food newlyweds eat in wedding feasts or their first breakfast together, as we see at the end of many folktales in this compilation.
landmark for analysing the manifestation of identity, the desire for regeneration and nostalgia, hope and social unity among Palestinians. Among other anchors of Palestinian cultural memory and identity, I have analysed the representation of food in some folktales, whether in its metaphorical senses and symbolism or as an interactive mediator among people. The discussion has revealed the multiple layers existing in the food culture in Palestine, portraying and perpetuating rooted and inherited cultural, social and religious Palestinian values. Finally, it was important to highlight the role of Palestinian women in gendering the discourse of memory in the folktales, particularly through their integration of food symbolism and references. Via the medium of transacive memory, Palestinian women, I discussed, mediate their personal experiences into a larger cultural and social dimension. Food references in the folktales are used to symbolise sexuality and beauty or allude to cultural beliefs related to pregnancy or craving in Palestinian society. Palestinian women have, in fact, empowered the discourse of memory and reinforced the transmission of a distinct Palestinian heritage across time and space.
Conclusion

1. Research Questions Revisited

As I mentioned in the introduction, the constant threat of denial and falsification which overshadows Palestinian heritage under Israeli occupation has engendered a sense of urgency among Palestinian folklorists. Nonetheless, the majority of folklorists’ approaches to gathering, recording and analysing oral folktales suffer from various problems. Some lack scholarly analysis of the folktales; others disregard the role of storytellers or only address a specific audience. Knowing that it is difficult to find the balanced approach in presenting and analysing Palestinian folktales, I argue that Muhawi & Kanaana’s compilations, both English (1989) and Arabic (2001), have successfully bridged the cultural gap between Palestinians and the West at a time when Palestinians were fighting for recognition and true representation. Through a combination of anthropological and literary analysis, the Palestinian folktale has also gained academic weight within the study of Middle Eastern folklore at Arab and Western Universities. It is through the efforts of some folklorists, among them Muhawi & Kanaana, that the Palestinian folktale has gained recognition, not just as Palestinian but as universal: “As oral products of the creative spirit of the human mind, they [Palestinian folktales] belong not just to the Palestinian Arab community but to all humankind” (Dundes in M&K, 1989: xiii). In order to highlight the compilers’ contribution and to understand the distinctiveness of the folktale genre and its power in framing Palestinian memory, the main research question I sought to answer in this study is:

*How do Speak, Bird, Speak Again (1989) and Qul Ya Tayer (2001) frame Palestinian memory and identity?*

While not pretending to be comprehensive or final, this study is perhaps a necessary step in analysing an essential constituent of Palestinian literature, namely oral and folkloric literature. The latter has lacked academic scrutiny and analysis within the field of memory studies. As with other world literatures, Palestinian literature, particularly oral, should be considered worthy of academic and critical evaluation. This is
particularly important when forms of orality, such as narratives of oral history, are under constant threat.\textsuperscript{82} To address the gap and to highlight the importance of Palestinian orality and to see what these folktales have achieved for Palestinians who suffered and are still suffering from a national trauma, my question was broken down into four sub-questions that informed and structured the chapters of the thesis.

The first sub-question addressed in this study is:

\textit{What are the devices used by Muhawi & Kanaana to frame Palestinian memory in SBSA and Qul Ya Tayer?}

As discussed throughout this thesis, Muhawi & Kanaana’s compilations are not mere artistic records and translations of some Palestinian folktales. The presentation of the 45 folktales is rather consolidated with extensive framing devices, known as paratexts. In Chapters One and Two, I sought to provide an overview of the concept of framing and one of its manifestations, ‘the paratext’. Establishing a breakdown of the framing devices used by these distinguished Palestinian folklorists and anthropologists was aimed at highlighting their scholarly contribution, which has turned the Palestinian folktale into a learning site about Palestinian heritage, family, society and culture within Western and Arab universities. Most importantly, the framing devices are essential tools in understanding the need to preserve oral literature and documenting folktales, which for Palestinians symbolise the protection of collective and cultural memory and identity. As seen in Chapters Three and Four, the discussion over Palestinian cultural identity and memory not only analyses the folktales but is supported when necessary by the compilers’ folkloric, literary and anthropological annotations, which help to provide a critical or consolidating ground for the argument put forward.

The second sub-question addressed is:

\textit{What are the main constituents of Palestinian identity and memory?}

In order to analyse the folktales within their political, cultural and historical contexts, I

\textsuperscript{82} Zua’bi (2014) “the theft of the shari’a court registries in Acre to the ransacking of the Palestinian Research Center archive in Beirut in 1982 and the archive of the Arab Studies Society in Orient House in Jerusalem in 2001—have a significant role in the marginalization of the Palestinian historical narrative and in putting in place numerous obstacles to the documentation and writing of Palestinian history.”
sought in Chapter Two to examine the main markers of Palestinian memory and identity. I started by questioning then analysing the complex interconnection between memory, history, historiography and narrative within the frames of time, self and space. This discussion paves the way for a better understanding of the nature of the Palestinian discourse of memory and the importance of oral sources within Palestinian historical narratives following the destruction of official archives after 1948. The discussion revealed the entanglement of history and memory in relation to which the Palestinian narrative of orality is seen to produce “the counter subaltern historiography in the face of the dominant and hegemonic Israeli historiography” (Firro, 2014: 8). Although the scope of the current study concerns Palestinian oral literature, particularly folktales, and not oral historical narratives, oral literature can be seen as a form of resistance against the narrative of denial and forgetfulness.

Based on this introductory analysis, in Chapter Two I argue that Palestinian collective memory features within the discourse of oral history, language, nationalism and the Nakba. The interconnection between nationhood, language and forms of orality within the Palestinian context is strong, as past and present political instabilities have reinforced the urge to protect collective memory. Language plays a crucial role in moulding Palestinian national identity. In my discussion of the folktales in Chapters Three and Four, I put forward the argument that Palestinian dialect in oral literature and folktales is put deliberately into writing in order to highlight the distinctiveness of Palestinian culture and to highlight Palestinian vernacular (urban madani vs rural falahi). I also showed how the use of Palestinian dialect reinforces the collective sense of identity, protects the cultural transmission of memory, and endows women storytellers with authority, wisdom and credibility.

Within memory and trauma studies, the Nakba still suffers from a lack of representation and responsible evaluative analysis of its aftermath. The Holocaust, unlike the Nakba, has international recognition and is the focus of many studies. Throughout my discussion of the Nakba narrative, I stress the importance of carrying out studies to understand its manifestation in literature in general and folk narratives in particular. I also argue that the Nakba narrative should not be compared to other traumatic historical events since Palestinians have not yet reached a closure. The Nakba has, in fact, created a narrative of continuous struggle while triggering a painful trauma, which can prevent Palestinians from accepting their present realities, instead living in escapism and denial.
Instead of romanticising the pre-\textit{Nakba} narrative, I attempted in this study to reveal how the folk narrative genre, specifically in \textit{SBSA} and \textit{Qul Ya Tayer}, creates a narrative of cultural resistance and identity affirmation across time. The desire for life and regeneration has never ceased for Palestinians before or after the \textit{Nakba} nor can long established heritage be altered, as I showed in this study. The aftermath of the \textit{Nakba}, in spite of its sentimental weight, encourages ordinary people and folklorists (in this case) to reinforce cultural continuity, collectivity, transmission and preservation across generations. My discussion of post-memory, prosthetic memory and communicative/cultural memory among others helps to explain how a narrative of continuity is established, particularly among generations which do not have first-hand experience of pre-1948 Palestine or have not lived in Palestine. Moreover, as the third and fourth chapters show, the actions of folklorists and storytellers reveal their agency in activating and transmitting cultural identity and memory.

Hence comes the third sub-question of this study:

\begin{center}
\textit{How can women engender Palestinian memory and identity in SBSA and Qul Ya Tayer?}
\end{center}

As I mentioned previously, Palestinian oral history in general and oral literature in particular suffer from a lack of organised archives and scientific methodology. Within the field of oral history, for instance, Palestinian historians were only “preoccupied with political issues and the history of political elites” (Zu’bi, 2014: 3) from the \textit{Nakba} until the 1990s. This not only neglected the role of Palestinian popular culture but also disregarded women as witnesses of history within the social and cultural spheres. For decades, women’s historical narratives or history have been associated with politics and nationalism (Kassem, 2011). In the case of Palestinian oral literature, Palestinian women have suffered even more from a lack of representation, with barely any mention of their roles as storytellers. The focus has always been on epic or legendary tales narrated by men at the \textit{dīwān}.

This study has aimed to address, not comprehensively, the gap in women’s representation and role within Palestinian oral literature and memory studies. To do so I looked at Palestinian women both as storytellers of and protagonists in the folktales in Chapter Three. My discussion of women’s roles and social interaction as daughters,
mothers, sisters and wives within the folktales analysed the position of women storytellers, who command authority, wisdom and respect in Palestinian society. In fact, storytellers’ linguistic mastery of narrative skills and humour, I argued, are educational means for transmitting Palestinian cultural values and traditions to younger generations. I also showed how women’s roles within the extended family underline the mechanism and limitations of individual identity vis-à-vis collective identity and vice versa. For instance, women’s narration of marriage institutions, courtships and sexual awakening in rural Palestine discloses their desires, conflicts and character development within a patriarchal and conservative society. Throughout Chapters Three and Four, I sought to unfold women’s feminine, family and social narratives, which mediate Palestinian cultural identity, collective- and post-memory. I go further, arguing that Palestinian women both gender and engender memory discourse through, for instance, the medium of food. The discussion revealed how women’s storytelling tradition relates to transactive memory (Smith, 2007), through which women promote essential cultural values in Palestinian society. Through food references, whether in the titles, social gatherings, symbolism, or practices, Palestinian women regenerate and strengthen the discourse of cultural memory.

The final sub-question I addressed is:

*How can peasantry, food and religion narratives in SBSA and Qul Ya Tayer activate Palestinian memory?*

Since my discussion throughout this study has related memory, mainly cultural and communicative, to cultural identity, it was important to analyse the manifestation of some forms of Palestinian cultural identity: the examples chosen were peasantry, religion and food. My aim was to see how these three discourses work to activate and reinforce Palestinian collective, cultural- and post-memory. The discussion revealed how particular references to rural and pre-1948 settings help to relocate a particular place to its original (pre-1948) name. Like maps, the folktales, I argue, help the Palestinian reader and listener to recreate and mobilise their memory of geographical locations. Through the storyteller’s account of a pre-1948 village or landscape, they are attributed with the power of knowledge, which resists fabrication and refutes forgetfulness. Peasantry discourse, I showed, is also a means of reinforcing social bonds
and collective identity among neighbours. For a better understanding of the interconnection of concepts such as communicative/cultural memory and post/collective memory with cultural identity, I sought to look at how Palestinian dialect encompasses religious practices and beliefs. Ranging from everyday expressions to opening formulas by the storytellers, Palestinian dialect reveals the interweaving of folk and official religion. This, I argue, is essential in enriching the distinctiveness of Palestinian cultural identity which, as I showed in Chapter Four, empowers people’s collective identity and acts as a unifying social and ethical system. Finally, food culture and references in the folktales act, I argue, as active sites for affirming social identity and collectivity. In some cases, food references reveal and perpetuate long-established cultural and religious systems in Palestinian society. In other cases, food references are sites for triggering nostalgia; the latter is seen as a vehicle for recollection and affirming a shared past. Moreover, references to particular fruit or trees have national significance, such as jumīz and dūm which stand for Palestinians’ rootedness and heritage.

2. **Areas for Further Research**

Within the limitations of time and space, this study has attempted to contextualise the Palestinian folktale and its framing in *SBSA* (1989) and *Qul Ya Tayer* (2001) within the field of memory studies. This study has also underlined the necessity of carrying out organised, responsible and intellectually rigorous documentation of the Palestinian folktale. Further research could be carried out to highlight the need to preserve Palestinian memory and identity within the discourse of orality and folklore amidst constant Israeli attempts to fragment and divide the Palestinian people and culture. This could be achieved either by establishing comparative studies, language and translation analysis or by analysing different paratextual materials.

2.1 **Establishing a comparative study between epic stories and folktales**

Given the fact that this study focused on folktales, which as I discussed in Chapters One and Three are attributed to Palestinian women, it would be enriching to look at epic stories told by Palestinian men at *al-dīwān*. Adopting a similar theoretical framework, that of memory studies, one could compare men’s narrative with women’s vis-à-vis storytelling skills, themes and agency under the discourse of national and cultural identity. The comparison would highlight the differences and/or similarities within Palestinian oral narrative, as folktales are more related to the domestic sphere of women
whereas epic stories are linked to the public sphere and incorporate themes of chivalry, battles and historical events. In this sense, it would be useful to better situate the position of epic stories and folktales within the entangled relationships of history, historiography and memory.

### 2.2 Analysing epitexts and illustrative paratexts

In the current study I focused solely on *SBSA* (1989) and *Qul Ya Tayer* (2001) and their paratextual elements, such as footnotes, introduction and afterwords. Within framing studies, it would be interesting to look at the way compilations and their editions— the French edition of *SBSA* in 1997\(^{83}\) and the children adapted version *Qul Ya Tayer* 2010\(^{84}\) - are received in the Middle East and the West. This could be done through an investigation of other forms of paratexts, namely “epitexts” (Genette, 1997). The latter are messages which are situated, at least originally, outside the book and “generally with the backing of the media (interviews, conversations), or under the cover of private communication (correspondence and private journals)” (ibid: 55). By merging concepts of framing, paratextuality, epitexts, and reception theory, the discussion could address the way each compilation was and is still perceived by its audience and reviewers. In the case of the latest edition of *Qul Ya Tayer* (2010), we find drawings and images, known as “illustrative paratexts” (Genette, 1997), accompanying the folktales. It would be insightful to see how illustrative paratexts, aimed at children, along with the blend of MSA and Palestinian dialect frames cultural identity and reinforces memory within Palestinian children’s literature.

Finally, there is more room for linguistic analysis of the tales and their translation, particularly the translation of allegory, symbolism and Palestinian humour, since they represent important markers for understanding Palestinian culture and identity. The role of the folklorists, anthropologists and historians should be highlighted, and these need to pool their skills and make the effort to methodically record and gather Palestinian folktales. For instance, more projects are needed to observe, document and analyse the transmission of folktales and to situate the position of orality nowadays within Arab-Israeli and Palestinian diasporic communities under the sphere of memory studies. In addition, the role of Palestinian women as cultural mediators and active agents in preserving and transmitting Palestinian cultural identity and memory should be given


\(^{84}\) Muhawi, & Kanaana (2010) *Qul Ya Tayer(Qul Ya Tayer: Speak Bird, Speak Again: Children Tales from the Palestinian Popular Heritage)*, Beirut: The Institute for Palestine Studies.
more importance in the fields of memory, folkloric and oral studies. The combination of food and memory studies in Palestinian contexts is still at a very early stage, and requires more attention if we are to develop a richer analysis of Palestinian heritage and identity. In a word, I think that efforts to preserve Palestinian identity and memory will not cease as long as birds can sing!
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Journal of Palestine Studies
Appendix 1- Interview with Dr Sharif Kanaana

Interview with Dr. Sharif Kanaana, co-compiler of *Speak, Bird, Speak Again* (1989) and *Qul Ya Tayer* (2001)

Date: 4 July 2012

1. Context, Motives and Choice of Literary Type

Farah: To start with, could I ask what motivated you and Ibrahim Muhawi to embark on this project?

Sharif: Actually, the project was my project. Ibrahim was not at Birzeit when I started collecting the folktales. I am an anthropologist, folklorist by training. When I came back to the Palestinian University of Birzeit, back home, I started to go more towards folklore rather than anthropology (maybe we could talk about it later). I had been gone to the States for 15 years and I would say it was a combination of guilt and nostalgia. Upon my return, I wanted in a sense to make up for what I missed and what I did not do. The 15 years of absence made me very nostalgic, 15 years made the whole difference. When I left, I just wanted to run away, I revoluted against society, the culture and the occupation. In my mind, I wanted to make up for the 15 years I was away as well as to revive the old days. I started working on two projects in 1967, which to a great extent I am still working on. Both projects reveal both trends of guilt and nostalgia. One of the projects is about folklore in general and folktales in particular. Having been the head of the research centre at Birzeit University for 5 years, I started working on my second project, entitled “The Palestinian Destroyed Villages”. The product of the project is seen in Walid Khalidi’s book, entitled *All That Remains*.

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85 The interview with Sharif Kanaana was conducted in English. It was realized through the use of audio-visual communication (Skype).
86 With Kanaana’s permission, I took slight liberties in correcting grammatical mistakes when needed. I have also structured the interview according to thematic sub-headings.
87 He elaborates: “I am from the Galilee, which is in Israel, and not the West Bank. I graduated from school in 1954 which means 4/5 years after the 1948 catastrophe. I worked then as a school teacher till 1961. The situation was so bad that I could not take the work at school. At the time, things were even worse for Arabs inside Israel. I had actually run away! I was not keen on studying, getting degrees or studying Anthropology. So I wanted to escape from that situation and gradually I started to feel guilty about doing that. Escaping meant leaving the situation and of course leaving behind a big family and relatives etc. As a matter of fact, I learnt that there was a shield court of Anthropology. So I started to look for a way to connect again, to go back to the situation. I saw an advertisement by Birzeit University in the publication of AAUG (American University Graduate associated with the States) that they were changing from a two year college to a 4 year degree granting university. I wrote to them and the first thing I mentioned was that” “I had never the chance to serve my people and my country thus I would like to make up for that by working in the Palestinian University””. This is how I sincerely felt.”
The project was both funded and edited by Walid Khalidi. Both projects are related in the sense that both go back to the root: One is about physical danger/material and the second is on reviving cultural heritage.

Farah: In much of your work you seem to favour the folktale as opposed to other literary and popular genres, such as short stories or novels. Can you explain the rationale for this preference? What attracts you to the genre of folktale?

Sharif: I would not compare the folktale with the short story or the novel because they are invented or written by an individual and that I do not care about. It is true that they reflect something about the society but for me as an anthropologist, I would have to collect all the short stories and glean something from them. The folktale represents the whole society which participated in forming it. Therefore, I think that the folktale reflects the whole society, a whole system and not the viewpoint of one or a few individuals, this is why I prefer it. Maybe the comparison can be made with relation to other types of folkloric elements; such as the folk song, the legend or the fairy tale. My favourite among these types is the folktale. Now why the folktale? The answer is that the folktale is a coherent and distinctive chunk of the culture, it gives a setting and what takes place within that setting. It is more comprehensive, it gives a more complete picture than a folk song or other folkloric types. You have to collect a pot of folksongs to have something equal to one folktale. What made me lean towards the folktale more than other genres of folklore is my affiliation as an anthropologist rather than a folklorist\(^89\). I was instead looking for chunks of that culture and since I understand culture, all I needed is that picture which I could convey to others. I did not feel that I needed to collect. I wanted pieces of the culture that bring these things together in order to acquaint others with this culture, with this society. The folktale, as I said, to me is the most comprehensive, precise, self-contained chunk of the culture that I could transmit, I would say explain or translate to other people in other cultures.

Farah: I agree with you. Folktales, as you said, are vivid pictures of a society like the one we have.

Sharif: It gives you a picture, which is complete, of one setting that you can carry and show to the rest of the world.

\(^{88}\) To know more about the project see: http://palestine-studies.org/books.aspx?id=591&href=details

\(^{89}\) Kanaana elaborates: “I am by training an anthropologist; I never took a course on folklore but went towards it as a result of nostalgia. Moreover, I am an anthropologist and I didn’t want to do what anthropologists do in foreign cultures”.

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2. *Speak, Bird, Speak Again*\(^90\) and *Qul Ya Tayr* قول يا طير: 
**Editions**

**Farah:** I agree. Reading the folktales in the Arabic compilation *Qul Ya Tayr* قول يا طير gives the reader a sense of cultural unity also because the tales are kept in the Palestinian dialect. I noticed that the new Arabic edition of SBSA, the one published in 2010 and addressed to children, contains less Palestinian colloquial and more standardized Arabic. Is there a reason for that?

**Sharif:** To be honest, I was not happy with the new Arabic edition. The agreement with The Institute of Palestine Studies was that one page should be in the original Palestinian slang/colloquial facing or opposite a simplified version in Modern Standard Arabic. However, the new edition has only one page with simplified MSA. I was very disappointed since the whole point was to reinforce the cultural bond Palestinians have through the Palestinian dialect. My aim was to keep the spirit of Palestinian culture and its identity through the telling of Palestinian folktales in Palestinian dialect! Another problem I have with this new edition is related to the way characters and trees are portrayed. For example, the Ghouls’ representation was alien or different from the one we, Arabs and Palestinians, are familiar with. Since pre-Islamic history, Ghouls, both in Palestine and the Arab world, are portrayed as ugly human beings with the body of a monkey. In the new Arabic edition of SBSA, the Ghoul’s illustration was completely different. Moreover, some fruits and trees were not portrayed in the same way Palestinians know. Our audience for this edition are children, Palestinian children, so I wanted them to learn about their culture through authentic representations and illustrations.

**Farah:** Back to the main activators of your project, namely guilt and nostalgia. How are they linked to the appearance of the English publication in 1989 before the Arabic one in 2001? In other words, why did the English translation precede the Arabic version? In fact, the Arabic collection appeared 10 years later. Could you tell me the reasons for this delay?

**Sharif:** I connect this with what I said before, related mainly to the guilt part not the nostalgia. It was my national desire, which was trying to emerge. I was trying to pay back to the culture, to the society, to the people and to the village I am from. The feeling I had was not addressed to Arabs, but the message and the way we presented the

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\(^{90}\) Hereafter *Speak, Bird, Speak Again* can be found as *SBSA*.
folktales were for non-Arabs. The message is for those who do not know Arabs, don’t know Palestinians. The purpose is to give others a picture and image of the culture and of the society. It is in a way meant to advocate for the Palestinian cause, not by complaining about the Palestinian cause, but by saying indirectly: here is Palestinian society. SBSA does not have anything political; the only political statement maybe is found in Alan Dundes’s\textsuperscript{91} preface to the collection.

**Farah:** Was the publication of SBSA in 1989 timed with the first Palestinian Intifada in 1987?

**Sharif:** Actually, it is not connected to the Intifada or to any specific incident. The project reflects the Palestinian cause altogether because, as I said, I started collecting the data in 1977-1978. The project took longer than expected in order to turn it into a book. It might have been a conscious decision by the publisher to publish it around that time but as far as we are concerned, the project is the fruit of 10 years of work.

### 3. Palestinian Folktales: Past and Present

**Farah:** To what extent do you think that Palestinian folktales are able to represent Palestinian society and aspirations, both in the past and today?

**Sharif:** As I said the book does not include anything political, there are no political statements. The political statement is in producing the book, writing this book for the Palestinian cause and in order to acquaint the world with Palestinian culture. This is the political statement of this book! But as you know the book is mainly cultural and folkloric in nature.

**Farah:** In the middle of Palestinian hardships and political upheavals, how would you describe the state of Palestinian folktales and storytelling today?

**Sharif:** Folklore of course never stops, it evolves and changes. Some of its aspects are more responsive to socio-political changes as well as economic. Folk songs in weddings reflect the moment, the joke and humour; all of which are very responsive. For example, I have been working on Palestinian political humour since the beginning of the *Intifada* and I can confirm the direct connection between political humour and rising conflicts. Folktales, however, are not responsive types of folklore since it takes a long time to concretize them. As a matter of fact, folktales lag in time about 60-70 years behind

\textsuperscript{91} Alan Dundes, a Jewish anthropologist at the University of Berkeley in California, wrote the foreword of *SBSA* (1989), also translated into Arabic in *Qul Ya Tayer* (2001).
present reality. Folktales in SBSA, in fact, definitely lag 50 to 60 years in time. For example, the story of the old woman and the cat, where the woman, while sweeping the floor of her room, found a *bislılık* or *mesīdia* in Arabic. The word *bislılık* is originally a Turkish word used to refer to particular currency coin during the Ottoman Empire and in the transition period to the British mandate. In fact, some of those folktales are two to three thousand years old and some of them can be traced back to the Egyptians or other cultures, with modifications of course. The folktales are expected to represent the spirit of the culture not temporary or passing events; the folktales are the essence of the culture, flavour not incidents.

Back to the situation of folktales, it is a worldwide phenomenon that folktales have been committed to books. People stopped telling them orally because of media influence, which is the case for Palestinian society as well. The existent part of the storytelling tradition goes back to pre-1948 where Palestinians made the effort to collect, tell stories and listen to them. But at the present time, I don’t think there is any Palestinian family gathering in the evenings to tell folktales, which is sad.

**Farah:** Some Palestinians in the Diaspora, however, use the collections as a cultural reference, a resource for reviving Palestinian collective memory. The second and third generations - our parents and parents of my generation - try to maintain this link with the homeland by telling stories.

**Sharif:** As I said the message is for non-Palestinians; it is for the outsiders. I did not think that Palestinians needed a book like our project. However, I found out afterwards that Palestinians and Arabs need them too. When I started my project in the seventies, there were still storytellers and the tradition was more popular at the time and more circulated. But since then, I noticed that Palestinians, in particular Palestinians in the Diaspora, again are the ones who are happy to tell them. Telling and reading Palestinian folktales are like a compensation for what Palestinians lost; it is a form of retrieving some of what they lost. I was myself surprised that the book was very well received in Arabic and that many people told me that they read the stories to their children mainly because they have forgotten them! Second and third generation Palestinian parents do not know them by heart. In my role, I was urging them not to read those stories from the book but to make the effort and learn them by heart hence tell them orally (without reading).
**Farah:** In comparison to other Palestinian folk narratives, how would you situate your work?

**Sharif:** The answer to this question is found in Alan Dundes’s foreword to our book. He says that the book introduces Palestinian folktales and culture to the rest of the world. The Arabic works on Palestinian folk narratives which don’t include the social message we have in our project, mainly because our book is directed to the West. Had I written the book for Arabs, I would not have written it that way because I would have assumed that Arabs know and understand, but would have just added more stories.

**Farah:** While reviewing other works on Palestinian folk narratives, I noticed that some works rely on analysis more or others had more space for tales than their explanation. Your work; however, establishes a balance between both. This leads me to ask you about the criteria for selecting these tales? What is distinctive about the 45 folktales chosen? Is it anything to do with how old they are thought to be? Is the age of the tales important? What about the storytellers? Content? Setting?

**Sharif:** At the time I didn’t pay much attention to the criteria. I just selected the ones I liked more, the ones I thought would get my message across more. I cannot really say there was a hidden criterion, with the exception that stories present a coherent picture of individual, familial and cultural aspects of the society. The question I was trying to answer was how much a foreigner can understand and appreciate the collection on its own terms. How can I invite, in other words, the foreigner to the culture through the folktale? I did not want to translate the culture but wanted to allow the tales to be a gateway for the foreigners to see the culture.

### 4. The Role/Power of the Folklorist

**Farah:** Do you think that the folklorist has the power to change the role of folktales in society?

**Sharif:** Yes, of course the compiler or editor is an author at the end of the day. The folktales do not speak for themselves. They do but they need elaboration, explanation and translation, making a huge difference to the way they get received by the audience.
Farah: You, Muhawi, and Patai have combined different roles ranging from the compiler, or anthropologist to the folklorist and translator. Would you agree that the compiler has the power to construct the real in the name of the fantastic or vice versa?

Sharif: Stories have some fantastic elements but they are very real. Quite often, the picture drawn of reality contains some fantastic elements only to portray something real but not necessarily described. For example, al-ghūl can represent inner feelings which are real and existent in us. The stories do not have the quality of describing feelings or emotions; there is no use of descriptive adjectives for instance. The folktales tend rather to show actions that make you understand how the person feels and the fantastic is quite often simply a representation of the intangible emotions or feelings that are real in the human nature.

Farah: Would you see yourself as a “cultural translator”?

Sharif: I do not really like the word translator. I try to invite foreigners, as I said, into the world of these stories. I do not really translate. Ibrahim Muhawi is better positioned than me in this regard. He, Muhawi, has lived in both cultures so his linguistic capacities in working towards coherent and well described tales were more evident. I did discuss this issue, I remember, with him. I did not want to beautify or change anything. I did not want to assimilate to the other culture. On the contrary, I wanted other people to see elements of my culture as they are. I was against giving the tales an American/European flavour.

Farah: I meant cultural translation or mediation, which is not necessarily linguistic.

Sharif: Maybe I am a mediator but I consider myself more as an anthropologist whose role is to unveil facts, not translate.

Farah: Prior to 1948, Palestine was a unified nation with stable social structures. After the Nakba, however, Palestinians were scattered around the world, carrying with them their pain, history and folktales. Did the established tradition and stock of folktales undergo any changes as a result of these developments? If so, do these new versions of folktales, in spite of diasporic existence and displacement, authentically represent Palestinian national identity?

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92 The study started by comparing and analysing SBSA (1989) and Qul Ya Tayer (2001) with Raphael Patai’s compilation, Arab Folktales from Palestine and Israel (1998); however, the focus changed throughout the research hence excluded Patai’s compilation.
Sharif: The collection of folktales I collected belonged to a pre-1948 society, a normal and harmonious society. One of the reasons why Palestinians stopped telling those stories is because these stories stopped being relevant, stopped conveying the situation of Palestinians today. Palestinians have become preoccupied with other stories. Refugees and Palestinians started telling a lot of stories about the 1948 Nakba, about what happened in that period and how they were forced to leave Palestine. Women told the stories through the style of a folktale. Other stories were told again by men, following men’s traditional form of telling usually about themes of war, heroism and epic adventures. I found that the legend is taking over the folktale. Palestinians living in Ramallah, for example, hear daily contemporary legends. The legends contain many fantastic elements, told with an exaggerated style. Those stories are popular now. Moreover, we find that in the West Bank and Gaza, the political joke and humour is becoming very popular, whether in defence of Palestinians, or criticism of and/or attack of others. People will never stop telling political jokes since they are suitable in particular situations and subject to time change.

5. Framing Folktales in SBSA

Farah: In presenting the folktales to the reader, you have framed them by using an extensive amount of paratextual elements (material around the text/folktale) such as footnotes, introduction, afterwords, etc. Can you explain why, and how these elements allow you to fulfil the objectives of your project?

Sharif: I would define those materials in three groups: The 50-60 page introduction, comments on folktales and folktale motif type. Starting with the 3rd category, the folktale motif type connects the folktales to the world, making them used and accessed by all scholars. Our aim was to render the collection a scholarly and international piece of work similar to the Grimm Brothers’ collection. With regard to the introduction, I am an anthropologist and my aim is to acquaint the rest of the world with our culture. I did not make any political publicity; my aim was to present the Palestinians’ culture to the whole world. I did dictate the introduction on a tape and Ibrahim Muhawi gave it the final shape in terms of writing and editing the English. The introduction is used to help the reader interpret the folktales accordingly.

Farah: So you are saying that the paratextual elements helped you fulfil your project.
Sharif: The aim is to appreciate the folktales. The comments and footnotes are connected to the cultural aspect of the introduction, which is mainly to provide a ground for the tales to be interpreted.

Farah: After selecting the 45 tales, you organized them or classified them according to: Individuals, Family, Society, Environment and Universe? Is there a reason for this specific classification? With hindsight, would you do it differently now?

Sharif: To start with we needed a frame or a structure; we couldn’t just pile them up. Since the tales follow by themselves the formation of a family, from the individual to the family and society, we thought it was suitable to classify them in that order as the tales are about the lives of families. Being also a feminine art, the tales revolved around the lives of women in the family. Women were the main actors and their lives were centred on bayt al-’aylā known as ‘the extended family house’, where the daily affairs of a family happened. So I assumed it was natural to follow the natural stages of the formation of the family, then gradually merge with society and the outside world.

Farah: I agree with you. The family is considered as the corner stone of the society or the principle unit of its formation and development.

Sharif: Especially women as they represent the core of the family and society.

6. Framing in SBSA in Relation to National Identity and Collective Memory

Farah: Among other purposes, apart from introducing the culture and the folktales, do you see the framing of the tales as relating to contemporary issues of national identity and collective memory in the Palestinian context today?

Sharif: At the back of my mind, I thought that by preserving and interpreting those folktales, I could give a picture of the culture at one particular stage. That stage, the pre- Nakba time, is connected to, what I referred to earlier, as notions of guilt and nostalgia. That period was the moment we left the country hence the trunk of culture was cut off!

Farah: In other words, you tried to revive the tradition of folktales as well as safeguard it.

Sharif: I do not think I was interested in reviving the folktales per se. I wanted to use the folktale as a tool for the preservation of culture, like keeping a set of pictures from
an occasion or a wedding. To me those folktales were the pictures taken from the wedding at that particular stage (pre-1948).

**Farah:** For years, there have been attempts to falsify Palestinian history and to question the existence of a distinct Palestinian culture. This extends to undermining the authenticity and relevance of folktales, given their intimate link with Palestinian national identity and culture. Driven by a strong political agenda, the objective behind such attempts is to present a manipulated and distorted version of Palestinian reality. In your opinion, what role does cultural production, including the kind of work you and Muhawi have been doing, play in challenging such attempts and asserting Palestinian nationhood?

**Sharif:** Prevent! - I do not think we will be able to prevent the Israelis from falsifying the culture. For example, the existing archive at the University of Haifa has several thousand folktales, not just Palestinian ones but others from all over the Arab world. Arab folktales were carried around by Arab Jews from different Arab countries, and then ended up being called Israeli folktales. I have personally received several complaints from some Israeli scholars because I was mentioning the original name of the place or the village where the folktales in my collection were narrated. Most of the names of those places happened to be part of what is known nowadays as ‘historical Palestine’ or ‘pre-1948 lands’ and now have different names since the establishment of Israel. We can’t stop them, but the presence of an authentic picture or representation may at least make other people from other societies know about the specificity of our culture. If there were no stories preserved or documented then there is nothing to compare with, nothing to declare or authenticate from one side or the other.

**Farah:** You would agree that efforts by Palestinian intellectuals are needed mainly today in order to document, preserve and authenticate oral materials.

**Sharif:** Definitely true. I will put more emphasis on Palestinian scholars educated in Israeli universities. These people can, not intentionally but by training, fight the Israeli purpose to falsify some of the cultural aspects. I personally noticed that some Palestinian graduates with Israeli passports from Haifa University or Tel Aviv University tend to reproduce the same academic research or path of their Israeli lecturers, which is more harmful. I think they should be proactive and alert about the risks facing their original culture. Responding to Israeli scholars, at the end of the day, is not my priority.
Farah: Your project is a very good response, I believe. The message can come across through authentication, documentation and honest representation, as you mentioned before.

Back to framing, which can also involve the choice of pictures, colours and titles in a text, can you explain the layers of meanings embedded in the title of your collection, *Speak Bird, Speak, Again*?

Sharif: Yes - it is symbolic of course. The title comes from a tale in the collection entitled *Al-tayr al-akhḍar* “The Green Bird”. It is the story of a boy who was killed by his step-mother then fed to the father. The sister managed to save the bones which made the boy come back in the shape of a green bird. The bird represents Palestinians and *Speak Again* refers to revival, regeneration and also to hope.

7. **The Representation of Women in SBSA**

Farah: Finally, how do women feature in the Palestinian national struggle, beyond the question of taking up arms or speaking in public to promote the national cause? What role do they play in private rather than public spaces? Is this connected to the roles they play in the genre of the folktale?

Sharif: Women are the carriers of the culture and the tradition of storytelling; they are the ones to transmit from one generation to the other, especially in our society. Women have the power to perpetuate the whole cultural system more than men. In the Palestinian traditional society, men have less influence on the upbringing of children since most Palestinian men spend their time at the *diwan*, which is a social gathering place for men only. That explains why Palestinian folktales are about women and children mainly. The folktales have two levels, in fact, one for children under the age of 12-13 who grow up exposed to the telling of the stories. The second level is about Palestinian women and their role in transferring/transmitting the culture to next generations. I would say that women play a much bigger role in the Palestinian society; they are the core of our society.

Farah: Women are also expert storytellers, as you mentioned in the introduction of your collection. Do you think women tell stories for wish fulfilment?

Sharif: I think it is true to some extent, especially when it is related to sexual references which are considered taboo in our society. Older women usually feel more comfortable
in telling stories with many sexual references as they seem to become asexual. There is also a projection of their inner feelings and desires to the world of fantasy and imagination, which can represent real feelings as we mentioned earlier.
### Appendix 2 - Table of Footnotes

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Appendix 3- Summaries of Tales in Chapter Three

1. **Group I Individuals – Tale 2 “The Woman who Married her Son”**

While the son was performing pilgrimage rites, his mother threw her son’s wife out of the house. The mother then buried a sheep in a grave she dug in the palace garden. She dyed her hair and changed her appearance so that she looked like her son’s wife. When the son came back, the disguised mother or fake wife told him that his mother was dead and that she was buried in the palace garden. He believed her, thinking that she was his real wife, until he made her pregnant. The disguised wife, or mother, started craving grapes so servants were sent to ask for some from the neighbours. The unhappy real wife was living at the neighbours' house so whenever a servant would come asking for grapes, she would ask for scissors to cut the servants' tongues, until one day the son went himself to ask for grapes and found out the truth.

2. **Group I Individuals – Tale 7 “The Orphan’s Cow”**

This is the story of a father of two children (a girl and a boy) from his first wife, who passed away. The father remarried and got another two children from the new wife. The two children from the first wife had a cow and wandered about with it every day. The cow, a supernatural creature, would feed them, as the step-mother wasn’t feeding them properly. One day the step-mother noticed that the boy and the girl had rosy cheeks while her children were pale. She asked her son to follow them in order to find out the secret. The brother and sister fed her son from the cow and asked him to keep it a secret, which he did. The step mother then sent her daughter, who disclosed the secret to her mother. The step-mother decided to get rid of the cow with the excuse that its presence was making her ill. The father fulfilled her wish by slaughtering the cow. Being angry and sad, the brother and sister from the first wife decided to run away. During their journey, the brother was thirsty so the sister asked a shepherd for water. He told her to drink from the lower spring not from the upper one, because if he drank from the latter, he would turn into a gazelle. The brother, however, drank of the upper spring and turned into a gazelle. The sister was very upset because of what had happened to her brother; at this point she was found by the Sultan’s servants, who took her to see the Sultan. The latter welcomed her, liked her and asked her to marry him. Once married, she became pregnant, which coincided with him setting out on the hajj. He asked his sisters and mother to look after his wife and slaughter a lamb once she gave birth. They decided to
get rid of the wife as she would be the centre of attention later on. They dropped her into the well and slaughtered the lamb and ate it. The gazelle, the brother, fed her whenever they fed him by throwing the mouthful of bread to his sister. Upon his return, the Sultan found out what happened and followed the gazelle that was very skinny. He then found out the truth and got her out of the well. Finally, he punished his mother, sister and servant by burning them.

3. **Group I Individuals** _Tale 9 “The Green Bird”_

This is the story of a man whose wife died leaving him with a son and daughter. The father had a neighbour who was using his children in order to convince him to marry her. The father was trying to postpone the marriage until his daughter could bake, cook and clean. In the end, he married the neighbour who started treating the children very badly. One day the father asked his wife to make stuffed tripe (a traditional Palestinian dish) but the woman ate it all before her husband got back from work. She then decided to kill the son and cook him instead. Once back, the wife and the unknowing father ate the son. The sister was very upset and sad but could not say a word as the step-mother threatened to do the same to her. The sister hid the bones of her brother and buried them. One day there was a wedding, everyone left except for the daughter. She decided to have a look at the bones since no one was around. While digging she found a marble urn full of jewellery and suddenly a green bird flew out of it. The daughter put on a very nice dress and all the jewellery she had found. Everyone at the wedding was impressed but no one recognized her even when the green bird started singing sadly about what happened to him and how much he loved his sister. People were puzzled and were saying “Speak, Bird, Speak Again!” He said, only if his step-mother opens her mouth, and he dropped nails and needles into it so she died. They asked him again to speak, he said, only if his father opens his mouth, and the same thing happened to him and he died. They asked him to speak again; he said only if this girl (the sister) opens her lap. The bird landed on it and he returned to his previous form.

4. **Group I Individuals** _Tale 6 “Half-a-Halfing”_

This is the story of a man who is married to two women, his cousin and non-relative wife. Both wives could not bear children so the man went to the sheikh, looking for a solution. The latter advised him to see the *ghūla* (wife of Ghoul) and gave him pomegranates to feed the wives with to become pregnant afterwards. Going through many adventures, he manages at the end to get two pomegranates, but ate half of one of
them as he was hungry. He decided to give the remaining half pomegranate to his cousin and the full one to his other wife. As a result, the wives got pregnant: the stranger got Hassan and Hussain and the cousin got half a human being. Half-halfing was more courageous and had better luck with hunting unlike his two brothers. One day, they went hunting and Half-halfing managed to catch a deer, so Hassan and Hussain asked him to give them the deer, he accepted on one condition, which was to heat a brand and brand each of them on the backside. Hassan and Hussain went back home with the deer and the mother cooked it and then threw the bones at doorstep of the first wife. The latter started crying, asking Half-halfing “why can you not do the same?” He told her it was him and asked her to see the brand on the backsides of Hussain and Hassan. The following day they went hunting again, and saw the ghūla, who fed them and was nice to them. Half-halfing heard her sing, saying she wanted to eat the brothers while they were asleep. He started playing tricks on her until the sun had risen and then woke his brothers up and told them to escape. The father was very pleased and to prove he was cleverer than the two brothers, he asked Half-halfing to kill the ghūla, which he did.

5. Group I Individuals_Tale 12 “Jummez Bin Yazur, Chief of the birds”

This is the story of a father, who on his way to Hajj, asked his three daughters what they wished for. Each one asked for a particular thing, except for the third daughter, Sit al-ḥusun (which literally means Miss Beauty in Arabic), who was the most beautiful among her sisters and whose mother was different from the others. Sit Al-Ḥusun asked her father to bring her Jummez Bin Yazur, chief of the birds. Being an enchanted bird, Jummez Bin Yazur would turn into a handsome man at night during which Set Al Hussn enjoyed his company without her father’s knowledge. Jealous of Sit al-ḥusun, the sisters tried to hurt Jummez Bin Yazur by injuring him as a bird, during the day, with the glass of a broken window. The enchanted bird was very ill and no one could heal him. Sit Al-Ḥusun found out what her sisters tried to do against her and he went looking for the bird in order to heal him. His sisters, however, imposed on her very difficult tasks to prove her love and devotion to him first. She managed at the end to fulfil all their tasks and was thus allowed to marry Jummez Bin Yazur.
6. Group I Individuals_Tale 16 “The Brave Lad”

This story revolves around a lad’s desire to marry the king’s daughter; however, he is too poor to propose. The only condition to marry the daughter of the king is to be able to kill the Ghoul in their town. The lad’s quest is motivated by the Ghoul’s wife, who wanted to marry her first cousin, but could not as the Ghoul took her against her will. The Ghoul’s wife offered to help the lad get rid of the Ghoul by plucking three hairs from him, and as a result, he died. After the Ghoul’s death, the lad managed to marry the king’s daughter and the Ghoul’s wife married her first cousin.

7. Group II Family_Tale 22 “Clever Hassan”

The first part of the tale concerns Hassan’s relationship with his mother, who married a servant without Hassan knowing. The mother, in agreement with the servant, was trying to get rid of her son. She would ask her son Hassan to bring her edible fruit from very dangerous places where no human being survived before, but her plan failed as he was exceptionally courageous and strong. One day, she asked him to bring her the water of life, which he managed. However, on his way the daughter of the king took the water of life and replaced it with another type. The mother then found out the secret of his strength, which lay in seven specific hairs. She plucked them all, killed him, cut him up and threw the pieces of his body into the river. The daughter of the king found out what had happened to him and saved him with the water of life she took from him before. Being brought back to life, he went back and killed his mother and the servant. One day the king asked his daughter if she wanted to get married, to which she assented. The day came for her to choose a husband. She wanted Hassan, who was disguised, wearing very old and dirty clothes. The father, as a result, was not happy and decided to reject her. When the king was at war with some enemies, Hassan disguised himself and killed all the enemies (over three times) until the king found out who the warrior was in reality. He finally reconciled with his daughter and thought her decision was ideal.

8. Group II Family_Tale 23 “The Cricket”

This is the story of a cricket who wanted to get married. She asked her mother to give her advice on whether to marry a camel or a bull, to which the mother declined. The third suggestion was a mouse, to which the mother agreed as he was the right one in terms of size. One day, both the cricket and the mouse wanted to wash their clothes. Having found the right spot, the mouse went to get some soap while the cricket fell in a
small hole. The cricket pleaded for help and asked a man to look for her husband the mouse. The mouse, hence, was told by the man and hurried to rescue her.


This is the story of a man who had three previous marriages, in which the wives cheated on him. As a result, he lost his trust by the time of the fourth marriage. One day, the fourth wife made an innocent comment on how her black bag matched her white skin. He, however, interpreted it to mean that she wanted to be with a black man. Being angry, the husband asked his wife if there was any other man more handsome or stronger than him, she said there wasn’t. He then kept on beating her, until one day her female friends found out what the husband was doing to her. They advised her to say yes if he asked her again, presuming that the husband would go away for few days, leaving her to look for the man who was more handsome and stronger than him in the Valley of Vermilion. On his way, the husband saw the ghoul, who asked him about what happened to his first three wives and on what basis he was accusing the fourth one. Only later, did the husband realize his mistake and he went back and apologised to her, but the ghoul had already taken her away from him as a punishment.

10. **Group II Family_Tale 24 “The Seven Leavenings”**

This is the story of an old lady who successfully managed to help a woman who was beaten up by her husband because she could not bear children. The old lady made the husband stop beating his wife by telling him that she was pregnant. She lied and replaced the supposedly new-born baby with a toy. The old woman also helped another couple in Aleppo in Syria, as the husband was suspicious of his wife’s behaviour, thinking she preferred a black man over him. Likewise, thanks to the old lady’s wisdom, she helped the poor woman who was also being beaten by her husband.

11. **Group II Family_Tale 27 “Im Eshe”**

This is the story of Im ‘Aysha who went to visit her daughter ‘Aysha with her husband, Abū ‘Aysha, when their daughter gave birth. One day, Im ‘Aysha was washing the baby’s head but without realizing killed the baby with hot water. So Im ‘Aysha ran back to her house, asking her husband to open the door for her. He did not open the door for her, afraid of her angry reaction for slaughtering the chickens. She did not mind and asked him again to open the door but he refused as he had the oil. She did not mind again but he told her that he had also asked the cow to feed him but she did not so he
killed it. *Im ‘Aysha* reassured him that she would not hurt him or be angry with him; she just wanted him to open the door. Convinced she would be very upset, he told her that the camel ate his penis. She said she could accept the loss of everything except his penis.

12. **Group II Family Tale 31 “The Woman Whose Hands Were Cut Off”**

This is the story of a sister and her brother whose parents passed away, leaving them with only a chicken. Both brother and sister were relying on the eggs laid by the chicken. One day the girl found money under the chicken so asked her brother what would he do if they found money, he said that he would buy a cow and a camel. Then she waited a few years and asked him again, and he said that he would get married. She then told him the story and started to look for a bride for him. Having found a wife, she helped him to get married, using the money their parents left. The wife, however, turned out to be a ghoul who was eating the brother’s offspring and then accusing the sister of doing so. Being naïve, the husband believed her and cut his sister’s legs and hands off. Sad and very disappointed, the sister wished that a needle would go into his foot and never come out. The wish came true and the brother was in pain and no one could take the needle out of his foot. Years later, he discovered the truth and found out about the wife’s identity. While still looking for someone to take the needle out, he came across his sister’s house, knocked on her door and apologised. She in her turn forgave him and took the needle out.
Once there was an old woman who had a cat. One day she brought some milk home, and the cat came and lapped it up. Feeling angry, she cut off his tail.

"Meow! Meow!" he cried. "Give me back my tail."
"Give me back my milk," demanded the old woman.
"And how am I going to bring back the milk for you?" he asked.

"Go bring it from that ewe over there," she answered. Going to the ewe, the cat said, "Ewe, give me some milk, and the milk is for the old woman, and the old woman will then sew my tail back on."

"Bring me a branch from that tree over there," said the ewe, "and I'll give you the milk."
So to the tree he went and said, "O tree, give me a branch, and the branch is for the ewe, and the ewe will give me some milk, and the milk is for the old woman, and the old woman will then sew my tail back on."

"Go tell that plowman over there to come plow under me," replied the tree.

To the plowman then he went and said, "O plowman, come plow under the tree, and the tree will give me a branch, and the branch is for the ewe, and the ewe will give me some milk, and the milk is for the old woman, and the old woman will then sew my tail back on."

"Bring me a pair of shoes from the cobbler," said the plowman.

He went to the cobbler and said, "O cobbler, give me some shoes, and the shoes are for the plowman, and the plowman will plow under the tree, and the tree will give me a branch, and the branch is for the ewe, and the ewe will give me some milk, and the milk is for the old woman, and the old woman will then sew my tail back on."

"Bring me two loaves of bread from that bakerwoman over there," answered the cobbler.
The cat then went to the bakerwoman.

"Bakerwoman," he said, "give me two loaves of bread for the cobbler, and the cobbler will give me some shoes, and the shoes are for the plowman, and the plowman will plow under the tree, and the tree will give me a branch, and the branch is for the ewe,
and the ewe will give me some milk, and the milk is for the old woman, and the old woman will then sew my tail back on."

"Bring me a bucketful of manure from that pile over there," said the bakerwoman.

So, bringing a bucket full of manure, the cat gave it to the bakerwoman, and she gave him two loaves of bread. Taking the bread, he gave it to the cobbler, and the cobbler gave him the shoes, which he gave to the plowman, who plowed under the tree. The tree then gave him a branch, which he gave to the ewe, who gave him the milk. Taking the milk with him, he went running back to the old woman.

"Meow! Meow!" he cried. "Why don't you sew my tail back on?"

The old woman took the milk and sewed the cat's tail back on, and they became friends again.

The bird of this tale has flown; are you ready for the next one?
قصة 39 _ العجوز و البس

هاظًا في هالعجوز. عندها هالبس. رايمة هالعجوز جايمة هالحليبات. اجا هالبس نقين اجت هذيك من الحراق قطمت ذنبته.

قالها: "مو أبو أعطني ذنبتي" 
قالته: "أعطيني حليبتك؟" 
قالتله: "منين بدي أحيلك حليبتك؟" 
قالته: "روح جيب من الشاه هذيك" 
راح. قالها: "يا شاة، أعطني حليب، و الحليب للعجوز و العجوز تقفيلي ذنيبي" 
قالته: "روح جيبلي قصيفة من هذيك الشجرة بعطيك حليب" 
راح قال للحراش: "أعطيني قصيفة، و القصيفة للشاة و الشاة تعطيني حليبات، و العجوز للعجوز تقفيلي ذنيتي" 
قالته: "روح للحراث هاظاك بحرث تحتي" 
راح للحارث: "يا حارث، احرث تحت الشجرة و الشجرة تعطيني قصيفة، و القصيفة للشاة و الشاة تعطيني حليبات، و العجوز للعجوز تقفيلي ذنيتي" 
قاله: "روح جيبلي مباس من عند الإسكافي" 
راح للسكافي قاله: "يا سكافي أعطني مباس، المباس للحارث و الحراش يحرث تحت الشجرة و الشجرة تعطيني قصيفة، و القصيفة للشاة و الشاة تعطيني حليبات، و العجوز للعجوز تقفيلي ذنيتي" 
قاله: "روح جيبلي رغفين خبز من الخبازة هذيك" 
راح للخبازة: "أعطيني رغفين، و الرغفين للسكافي، و السكافي يعطيي مباس، و المباس للحارث و الحراش يحرث تحت الشجرة و الشجرة تعطيني قصيفة، و القصيفة للشاة و الشاة تعطيني حليبات، و العجوز للعجوز تقفيلي ذنيتي"
قالتله: "روح جيبلي قفة زبل من هالمزبلة هذيك"

راح جاب قفة هالزَّبل و أعطاه للاخبازة تْرَّبِل فيه الطابون، و الاخبازة أعطته رغيفين خبز، أخذ الرغيفين الخبز للسكافي و السكافي أعطاه مداد، و المداد أعطاه للحرّاث و الحرّاث حرث تحت الشجرة و الشجرة أعطته قصفة، و القصفة أخذها للشاة، و الشاة أعطته حليبات، أخذ الحليبات و راح يركظ للعجوز: "مو مو اقطبيلي ذيلي" قطبتلوا ذيله و رجعوا أصحاب. و طار طيرها و علیكو غيرها.
Tale 40. Dunglet

Once there was a woman who had no children. Her husband was a plowman, and every day they had a hard time finding someone to take food out to him. They had a few sheep, and one day, as the wife was sweeping out their pen, she cried out, "O seeker, your wish be granted! May I become pregnant and have a boy, even if it is a piece of dung!"

It was as if Allah Himself had spoken with her tongue. When she gave birth, she delivered a pile of dung. All those present at the birth gathered up the dung and threw it outside, but lo! a piece of it rolled under the wardrobe. The woman became very, very sad.

One day, while kneading the dough, the wife called out, "O Lord, if only you had given me a son, he would have taken the food out to his father!" And behold! the piece of dung jumped out from under the wardrobe and said, "Mother, I'll take the food to my father."

The woman set to preparing the food, bringing together some yogurt and seven loaves of bread, and she gave it to Dunglet, who carried it to his father.

"Welcome!" said the father when he saw him in the distance. "Welcome, Dunglet, and the path that led Dunglet, who's bringing his father the yogurt and the seven loaves!" And behold! Dunglet answered, "Death to Dunglet and the path that brought Dunglet, who ate the yogurt and the seven loaves and has come to follow them up with his father and the yoked oxen!" He then devoured his father and the oxen.

Going back home, he found his mother kneading dough.

"Welcome!" she said. "Welcome, Dunglet, and the path that led Dunglet, who's coming to help his mother with the kneading!"

"Death to Dunglet," he answered, "and the path that brought Dunglet, who ate the yogurt and the seven loaves, finished off his father and the oxen, and has now come to follow them up with his mother and her dough!" He then devoured his mother.

The next day he went to visit his father's sister, and found her patching her roof.[8]

"Welcome!" she said. "Welcome, Dunglet, and the path that led Dunglet, who's coming to help his aunt with the patching."

"Death to Dunglet," he answered, "and the path that brought Dunglet, who ate the yogurt and the seven loaves, finished off his father and the oxen, his mother and her dough, and has now come to follow them up with his aunt and her day!" He then devoured his aunt.
The following day he went to visit his mother's sister, and found her doing the laundry. "Welcome!" she said. "Welcome, Dunglet, and the path that led Dunglet, who's coming to help his aunt with the washing."

"Death to Dunglet," he answered, "and the path that brought Dunglet, who ate the yogurt and the seven loaves, finished off his father and the oxen, his mother and her dough, his aunt and her day, and has now come to follow them up with his second aunt and her laundry!" He then devoured his second aunt.

The next day he went to visit his grandmother, and found her spinning.

"Welcome!" she said. "Welcome, Dunglet, and the path that led Dunglet, who's coming to help his grandmother with the spinning!"

"Death to Dunglet," he answered, "and the path that brought Dunglet, who ate the yogurt and the seven loaves, finished off his father and the oxen, his mother and her dough, his aunt and her day, his second aunt and her laundry, and has now come to follow them up with his grandmother and her spinning!" He then devoured his grandmother.

On his way home he ran into a wedding procession.

"Welcome!" people said. "Welcome, Dunglet, and the path that led Dunglet, who's coming to help us celebrate the wedding!"

"Death to Dunglet," he answered, "and the path that brought Dunglet, who ate the yogurt and the seven loaves, finished off his father and the oxen, his mother and her dough, his aunt and her clay, his second aunt and her laundry, his grandmother and her spinning, and has now come to follow them up with the bride and groom!" He then devoured the bride and groom.

As he was walking down the street, he met two blind men who were trying to cross it.

"Welcome!" they said. "Welcome, Dunglet, and the path that led Dunglet, who's coming to help us with the crossing!"

"Death to Dunglet," he answered, "and the path that brought Dunglet, who ate the yogurt and the seven loaves, finished off his father and the oxen, his mother and her dough, his aunt and her clay, his second aunt and her laundry, his grandmother and her spinning, the bride and the groom, and has now come to follow them up with the blind men!"

One of them pulled a little knife out of his pocket and gashed Dunglet's belly. All the people he had devoured came tumbling out, and everything went back to normal.
قصة 40- بعيرون

في هالمرة، مالهاش أولاد، و كل يوم بتعجل مين يبعتله أكل. في عبدهم هالغنمات.

يوم قاعدة بتكنّس تحتهن، قامت صارت تدعى لربها: "يا غالبة يا طالبة، إني أحم و أجيب ولد ولو كان بعه".

قام الله نطق علسانها. لما ولدت، جابت كوم هالبعر. صاروا هالحاضرين يلموا في هالبعر و يكوا فيه، وإلا هالبعرة دخلت تحت الخزانة.

حزمت هالمرة كثير كثير. يوم و هي قاعدة بتعجن، صارت تقول: "يا ربي لو إنك أعطيني ولد كان أخذ الأكل لأبوي".

وإلا هي هالبعرة نطن من تحت الخزانة وقالت: "أنا يا معا باخذ الأكل لأبوي".

قامت المرة حضرت الأكل و حطت مخمر اللبان و سبعة الرغفان و حملتهن لبعيرون.

راح بعيرون تيودي الأكل لأبوي، شافه أبوي من بعيد.

صار يقول: "أهلاً أهلاً بعيرون، ودرب جابت بعيرون، للي جاب أبوي مخمر اللبان و سبعة الرغفان".

وإلا هو بعيرون قاله: "قطعن بعيرون ودرب جابت بعيرون، للي أكل مخمر اللبان و سبعة الرغفان، و جا يلحقه على أبوي و الفدان".

روّح لقي إمه بتعجن. صارت تقول: "أهلاً أهلاً بعيرون. ودرب جابت بعيرون، اللي اجا يساعدة إمه عالعجين".

قالّها: "قطعن بعيرون ودرب جابت بعيرون، اللي أكل مخمر اللبان و سبعة الرغفان، و أب و الفدان، و جا يلحقه على إمه و الاعجان".

ثاني يوم، راح عند عمته، لقيها يبعتهن قامة قالتله: "أهلاً أهلاً بعيرون، ودرب جابت بعيرون، اللي اجا يعاون عمته عالعجين".

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قام قالها: "قطعن بعيرون، ودرب جابت بعيرون، للي أكل مخضر اللبان وسبعة الرَغفان، و أبوه والفدان، و إمه والإعجان، وجاي يلحق على عمه والطيبان " قام أكلها.

في اليوم الثاني راح عند خالته، لقاها بتغسل. قالت: "أهلاً أهلاً بعيرون، ودرب جابت بعيرون، اللي جاي يعاون خالته عالغسيل".

قام قالها: "قطعن بعيرون، ودرب جابت بعيرون، للي أكل مخضر اللبان وسبعة الرَغفان، و أبوه والفدان، و إمه والإعجان، و عمه والطيبان، وجاي يلحق على خالته و الغسلان" قام أكلها.

ثاني يوم راح عند سته، لاقاها بتغزل صوف، لما شافت، صارت تقول: "أهلاً أهلاً بعيرون، ودرب جابت بعيرون، اللي جاي يساعدني عالغزل".

قام قالها: "قطعن بعيرون، ودرب جابت بعيرون، للي أكل مخضر اللبان وسبعة الرَغفان، و أبوه والفدان، و إمه والإعجان، و عمه والطيبان، وجاي يلحق على سته و الغزلان" قام أكلها.

و هو مروح. لاقى هالعرس. صاروا الناس يقولوا: "أهلاً أهلاً بعيرون، ودرب جابت بعيرون، اللي جاي يغني معنا في العرس".

قالهن: "قطعن بعيرون، ودرب جابت بعيرون، للي أكل مخضر اللبان وسبعة الرَغفان، و أبوه والفدان، و إمه والإعجان، و عمه والطيبان، و خالته و الغسلان، وسنته و الغزلان، وجاي يلحق عالعرس و العرسان "أكلهن.

و هو ماسي في الشارع، لقي اثنين عميان، بدهن يقطعوا الشارع، قالوه: "أهلاً أهلاً بعيرون، ودرب جابت بعيرون، اللي جاي يقطعنا الشارع".

قالهن: "قطعن بعيرون، ودرب جابت بعيرون، للي أكل مخضر اللبان وسبعة الرَغفان، و أبوه والفدان، و إمه والإعجان، و عمه والطيبان، و خالته و الغسلان، وسنته و الغزلان، و العرس و العرسان، وجاي يلحق على العمان".

قام واحد منهن طال هالموس من جيبته، و بط بعيرون، وطلعوا كل هالناس من بطنه، و زيد كل شي زي ما كان.
Appendix 5- Summaries of Tales in Chapter Four

1. Group V Universe - Tale 42 “The Woman who Fell into the Well”

This is the story of a group of salesmen who stopped for food, following their custom of knocking on people’s doors asking for sustenance during their travels. One of the salesmen called at a house and was given two loaves of bread by a young woman. A dog barked at him on his way out and this caused him to fall into a well. When he asked to be rescued, the young girl extended a rope into the well to help him out. She, however, also fell into the well. The young lady’s brothers were all out harvesting and no one was available to help them. They waited until one harvester passed by the well and heard them shouting. Once he got them out, the young lady asked the harvester to keep the incident a secret because if her brothers knew what had occurred they would question her reputation and honour. She even offered to give him extra money, as a form of compensation, once the harvest was complete.

The man promised to do so and received the money. His wife, however, did not believe what happened. She insisted on knowing until he told her. She then spread the news among other neighbours until the brothers of the young lady found out what happened. Being very angry, they wanted to kill her. She escaped and found refuge at the salesman’s house where his mother looked after her. As result, the young lady married the salesman and left the village. She eventually had three children with him, called Maktub, Katba and Mukaddar. One day, the brothers happened to be walking by her house so they knocked at her door seeking a place to sleep. The husband welcomed them, offered them food and told them the story of the well. The brothers did not know who he was nor did he know about the brothers, until the wife came out of her room.


This is the story of two sisters married to two brothers, one very poor and the other very rich. One day the poor one went to visit her sister who was making malfūf (a traditional Palestinian dish). The poor woman was craving this kind of food as she was pregnant but the sister did not offer her any. When she returned home she told her husband about her craving. Being very poor, the husband told her he would save money for a whole week so he could buy the ingredients. He then bought them and decided to invite the minister to eat with them. They invited the minister and while the wife was serving the food, she farted. In complete embarrassment, she wished that the earth would open up
for her to hide. The wish came true and the poor woman found herself in a big market. She was looking for the fart, as were all the people. Everyone laughed at her until they found him (the fart) well dressed in a cafe. People asked why the fart had embarrassed the poor woman in front of the minister. The fart said that he was not happy where he was so he went out and made himself clean. People however asked him to go back to make it up to the woman. To redeem himself, he made the woman drop golden coins every time she opened her mouth. Once she was back and telling the story to her husband, these coins kept on dropping out of her mouth. The couple hence became extremely rich and bought a castle with servants.

The rich sister two days later went to visit her sister after realising that she had not offered her any of the *malfūf* she cooked last time. She could not find her, however, and was told by the neighbours that the poor sister was living in a castle. In disbelief, the rich sister insisted on knowing what happened. Being greedy, the rich sister wanted to do the same thing but the husband discouraged her as they were already rich. Nevertheless, she copied the poor sister and farted deliberately in front of the minister. The rich sister ended in the same situation looking for the fart. However, the fart, unlike the one before, was not happy to be forced to leave its new abode. Her punishment was thus to have scorpions and snakes come out of her mouth.

3. **Group I- Individuals-Tale 14 “Sackcloth”**

This is the story of a king who wanted to marry his own daughter after the death of his wife. Being scared, she escaped. To protect herself, she disguised herself in a sackcloth and left the king’s castle. No one knew her and everyone thought she was a poor man who could not do much. One day there was a wedding so the woman waited until everyone left and took her sackcloth off and put on her jewellery and nice clothes. She went to the wedding and danced with the prince. The same incident happened three more times until the son followed her one day and discovered her true identity. It is, according to the compilers, the Palestinian version of Cinderella.
4. Group I- Individuals-Tale 15 “Shahin”

This story is about women’s playfulness and intelligence in dominating men. It starts with a girl’s adventure as she wanders about with her friends, until she happened to knock on Shahin’s door. The girl made Shahin cook for her and then stole all the food he was cooking for his forty brothers. The young lady, who was taking the food to her forty friends, managed to trick Shahin more than twice, she even tricked his brother. Women’s desire in this tale is to initiate marriage and seduce males. As a result, the solution to all these tricks was for the forty brothers to marry the forty women. At the end, women’s desire is fulfilled no matter what. The tale shows the juxtaposition between the social status granted to men by society and their weakness in facing women’s cunning.