



The Wondrous Extension and the Horizon of the Child’s Educational Adventure — The Stories of Kamil Kilani — Selected Models

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Received: 08/12/2025 accepted: 20/01/2026 published: 04/04/2026

Abstract:

Child-directed narrative is distinguished by an aesthetic and artistic particularity, in view of the nature of the addressed age stage, as it opens vast horizons possessing cultural and intellectual spaces, surrounded by the fringes of childhood related to imagination and adventures. The research paper is based on extrapolating the wondrous symbolic significations, and what they arouse of hidden intentions, which dominate the story collection “The Flying Carpet,” which grows within the range of value-based employments that unite to produce a directive effect for the child’s upbringing, and even the rectification of his behavior, in light of the modern changes that cannot be denied, especially the astonishing technical fields. With the increasing awareness of the message of children’s stories and their value dimension, work on the wondrous adventure and the anticipation of educational values has been consolidated, which addresses the following problematique: Is the task of the story directed to the child limited only to the aesthetic and entertaining function? Does the effectiveness of the wondrous extension, with cultural and civilizational reference, contribute to producing stimuli for the child’s innate talents?

Keywords: child; story; wondrous; educational; scientific.

Introduction:

Kamil Kilani seizes the gasp of the child’s emotional and imaginative captivation before inventions and the speed of information, in order to shape it into a creativity possessing patterns and forms that draw from wondrous scientific excitement so as to produce educational values interacting through Arab and world literatures and cultures in the components of narration and its styles, which shine in their eloquent language, sweet in wording; so do they contribute to developing the child’s perceptions toward forward-looking scientific innovations?

The truth is that children’s stories are an art among the arts of literature, seeking to develop the child’s mental and linguistic perceptions, as they are considered: “an art among the arts of literature that has its own characteristics, and the elements of its construction, and through it the child learns many arts of life, for it contributes to building the child’s personality, and it is an art that attracts the child’s attention and holds his interest, thus making him interact with its events and helping him to assume its characters,



therefore it leaves an effect in the building of his personality” (Khalaf, 2006, p. 35), by virtue of possessing a set of aesthetic and intellectual features that appeal to the reader or recipient, for it is:

“distinguished by its deep effect in human life, and childhood is considered the most important stage in the formation of the human personality, as its features and attributes crystallize, and ways of thinking, patterns of behavior, and many values and orientations are acquired therein, and within the framework of cultural upbringing directed to children, children’s stories emerge as one of the most important methods” (Jallouli, 2003, pp. 27–28), as a planning for building a child sound psychologically and balanced behaviorally and religiously, in order to achieve societal flourishing.

1. The Term of the Wondrous:

What is meant by the term of the wondrous according to Tzvetan Todorov, in his book *The Introduction to Fantastic Literature*, is: “the hesitation experienced by a being who knows only the natural laws, when he is confronted with an event apparently supernatural; the concept is therefore defined in relation to two other concepts, namely the real and the imaginary” (Todorov, 1993, p. 18), that is, the surpassing of the familiar and the inaccessibility of imagination.

2. Forms of the Wondrous:

Several forms emerge from the wondrous, which can be confined, according to Todorov, to:

2.1 The Exaggerated Marvelous:

It is based on “excess and exaggeration through magnifying the images of things and giving them other extraordinary images that surpass the human mind and thus shock it, because they are grounded on the extraordinary that is seen by the eye” (Khalifi, 2009, p. 64), thus it surpasses the familiar and the real by the act of exaggeration in order to arouse astonishment.

2.2 The Strange Marvelous:

It relies on the reader’s lack of knowledge of the nature and qualities of the place described by the novelist, thus “it is assumed of the reader that he is ignorant of the subject of the lands he describes, and on this basis he possesses no reason to challenge the correctness of the information of which he originally has no knowledge, and this second element is relied upon by novelists so that it may be an incentive in generating terror and hesitation, for what is foreign is necessarily strange and anomalous to the familiar” (Khalifi, 2009, p. 64), that is, the realization of its marvelousness is contingent upon the haziness and unknownness of the space of the course of events.

2.3 The Instrumental Marvelous:

It is that which is related to enchanted tools that leave an impression of the marvelous, such as the flying carpet, the apple, and the cap, the type that took its marvelous tools from science fiction literature as essential themes in its narration. (Khalifi, 2009, p. 65)

2.4 The Scientific Marvelous or Science Fiction:

It is a marvelous that penetrates the horizon of the future, taking science and its tools as a means in the events, a matter which makes them, within this horizon, seem acceptable and possible. (Khalifi, 2009, p. 65)



This type, the “instrumental marvelous,” invests scientific achievements and their developed tools, from which the novelist benefited.*

3. The Wondrous Extension and the Making of Educational Values:

Kamil Kilani is considered among the writers who worked in creative writing directed to the child, in an effort from him to indigenize educational values in an aesthetic spirit that takes the crutch of Arab and Indian popular heritage as a support for ideas combining pleasure and benefit, for: “If we want to educate the child, develop him, and raise him upon sound foundations, then we must offer him a dose of this popular heritage so that he may not grow up cut off from his past; thus we acquaint him with the customs of his society, its traditions, and its folk arts, for the child at this stage of his life is the most capable among the groups of society of absorbing this popular heritage because he is still at the stage of absorbing everything that is transmitted and delivered to him.” (Abu Ramta, n.d., p. 1)

The textual evidences bearing wondrous signs are distributed in their secret structure beginning from the cover, for the making of the child’s astonishment and the raising of his motivation and passion for reading, to the body text and then the ending.

4. The Marvelousness of the Title and its Educational Dimensions:

It is that which founds the seduction of the text, according to the description of Conger (Bennis, 2001, p. 91). Kamil Kilani titled his story collection “The Flying Carpet,” opening the way for the realization of two basic functions of the title, which Gérard Genette had stated among the four functions of the title, namely: the suggestive function, the alluring function, alongside the designative and the descriptive function (Belabed, 2001, p. 12), in order to arouse the child’s curiosity and produce marvelous signifiers possessing interpretive and imaginative dimensions that incite the discovery of its intents.

The marvelous formation in the title “The Flying Carpet” can be read according to the signifying structure, and the following semantic dimensions:

a. The title was built on two words, (Carpet), annexed to a word defined by “the,” “the Wind,” and they represent one side of predication, while the other side was omitted, which awakens questions in the child’s imagination: of what was it made? who rides it? how does it fly in the sky?

The storyteller relied, in titling his story, on the popular heritage, among it the tales of *One Thousand and One Nights*; such as the story of the magic carpet, and the unseen matters related to the world of the jinn that stir the child’s fascination because they contain powers surpassing the powers of man; it is a magic carpet roaming the worlds, as its mention occurred in the tales of Aladdin and the Magic Lamp, a carpet that stirs wonder and curiosity for adventure.

* See: Tzvetan Todorov, *Introduction to Fantastic Literature*, Paris, France, Éditions du Seuil, 1970, pp. 6.



5. The Visual Correspondence of the Cover:

5.1 The Front Cover:

The cover translates a world dense with visual symbols, which is considered one of the expressive methods, and artistic tools in the text (Fadl, 2002, p. 5), because of the advertising and alluring functions it performs for the story text. In the image, the drawings, and the colors, the visual discourse extends, forming an alluring pattern linking the story and the child's imagination, which begins to interact and interpret.

It is noticeable, at the level of the front cover of the story, visual indicators and figurative drawings charged with signs of the story and its characters, through which the marvelous characters appear in their acts, as it carries the child's imagination into the world of the story, interacting with its events that are shaped in accordance with its cover: the story of *The Flying Carpet*. In the image there appears an old man, in his dignified Islamic dress and with his long white beard, and these are interpretive signs in the popular religious heritage. He carries a lantern, hovering above an outspread carpet with ornaments, at the head of which there extends a great city; it is the city of India with an architecture inspired by the world of *One Thousand and One Nights*, without leaning or falling, enveloped by the stillness of the night whose sky is studded with a crescent, in a sign to the time of night, with tranquility and mental clarity, where the imagination prepares itself to receive the tales. This increases the motivation and the eagerness to enter the world of the story in search of realizing the pleasure of marvelous flying on the flying carpet in the company of this dignified, marvelous old man whose presence and described appearance charge the body of the story and draw its human educational dimensions derived from the masterpieces of the night-talks of *One Thousand and One Nights*, and among them this image of multiple semantic fields. Thus, the cover symbolizes the popular religious heritage of the land of India as the child imagines it when he hears the story; because the external image is a reflection of the internal image, or the imagined image, in the perception of things: "Cognitive semiotics looks at those mental images as expressing the perception of things" (Al-Habasha, 2010, p. 31), especially since Kilani opened his stories with a preface addressing the little reader, informing him of entering the world of the story. He says: "Little reader, how many are the marvelous relics, wondrous tales and reports, and superb legends and night-talks contained in the great land of India" (Kilani, 2018, p. 5), in the manner of the opening of the tales of *One Thousand and One Nights*.

- The violet color:

Among the dual colors, as it is a mixture between red and blue, and the dictionary of symbols has shown that among the meanings to which this color refers are emotion, intelligence, love, wisdom, and mystery (Chevalier & Gheerbrant, 1982, p. 1020). The choice of the violet color as a dominant color over most of the cover space was a prior intimation of the atmosphere of the tale, filled with warmth and stillness, shared by the blue color so as to intensify the signification and consolidate its effect in the child's imagination, since the blue color is linked in most heritage stories to "*the ogre, the jinn, and the negative powers on earth, and the light shade was linked to water and the sky, so it is suitable for calmness and innocence*" (Mukhtar, 1997, p. 40), as it reflects the color of the space overshadowing the world of the stories. It is the color of the sky studded with stars and adorned with the crescent, an intimation of the coming of the time of narrating the tale and entering distant dreamlike worlds adorned



by the light blue color, for entering into blue resembles a little Alice's Adventures in Wonderland, that is, entering from the other side in the mirror, light blue is delusions and waking dreams, it becomes the path of dream, the conscious idea leaves its place little by little for the unconscious idea exactly as the daylight turns little by little to become the blue nocturnal light of night (Ubayd, 2013, p. 82)

It is noticed in many of the visual indicators of the sky panel and the image of the shaykh flying on board the carpet a semantic mixture open to the stories and their characters with marvelous acts that stir the child's imagination and attract him to reading with curious eagerness for the content of the story, in search of the secret of the flying carpet, its function, and its magical marvelous advantages for man.

5.2 The Back Cover of the Story:

The back cover contained Kamil Kilani's presentation of his story collection "The Flying Carpet," so he included in it his amazement at the land of India and what it contains of wonders and oddities, and set forth the references of his stories, opening a dialogue with the child/reader in a brief discourse affected by the atmosphere of the worlds of One Thousand and One Nights and the tales of Scheherazade, saying "*And nothing is more gladdening to my heart than fulfilling your desire, realizing your wish, and answering your request..*" (Kilani, 2018), in an intertextual relatedness between the atmospheres of One Thousand and One Nights and the atmospheres of the world of The Flying Carpet. The iconic manifestations embodied in the pattern of the visual formation of the (front) cover, with its colors furnishing its image, since color is "*the visual stimulus that moves our feeling and our senses through interaction with the forms existing in the external world, as the number of waves, or the light rays falling upon the retina, is what determines what we feel of pleasure or discomfort*" (Al-Sa'id, 2000, p. 10), the author reinforced the presence of the two colors, light blue and violet so as to create an imaginary atmosphere that attracts the child's mind, captivating him with a discourse that came on the back cover in continuation of its seductions for him and making him imagine that he has not exited the atmosphere of the story in a final indication: this story is followed by:

- The Indian Shaykh.
- The Bunch of Grapes as seduction, suspense, and preparation for him to undergo the midst of a narrative journey after the manner of Scheherazade's narration.

6. The Marvelousness of the Characters and the Making of Educational Values:

The writer carries us by the force of imagination to dreamlike worlds laid open to the marvelous, as a supplementing of the quality of courage and adventure and an enkindling of the spirit of self-reliance, in that he underwent the adventure of flying on the flying carpet after he examined it, as "*Prince 'Husayn' stretched his fingertips toward the carpet, feeling it, and found it delicate in weave, light in the edges, as though it were silk or lighter than silk in touch, and softer in threads, while it undulated in the broker's hand, as though it was trying to escape from his grip, and twist into the air!*" (Kilani, 2018, p. 27).

The writer establishes the educational aspect that stimulates the child's personality through the act of astonishment by connecting it with the scientific given, due to its role in developing his cognitive abilities, for: "*the feeling of the need for knowledge among children is a part of their innate formation, because the instinct of curiosity arises with the child and grows with him, and the child's attempt to recognize his environment is considered among the important factors which, if treated wisely, leads to*



the development of what he may possess of potentials and abilities" (Abu Mu'al, 1984, p. 130). Thus Prince Husayn knew, through his roaming in the city of Bisanjar, that *"there is a man who spent his entire life in continuous experiments, by which he wanted to extract from the vapor of plants and herbs an ethereal substance: whose weight is lighter than the weight of air, capable of carrying things and proceeding with them in the air, just as the bird proceeds in space"* (Kilani, 2018, p. 20), so the determination of Prince Husayn strengthened to search for the truth of the discovery, and he devoted himself to all the information about flowers and the making of perfumes, as a support and reinforcement for the educational cognitive value through a wondrous extension that opens the horizons of sciences by the act of imagination.

To satisfy the instinct of curiosity in the child and inquiry, and to direct them positively toward the exploration of the unknown and awareness of the realities of the world around him, in pursuit of grasping the new and the developed, with the characters of the story "The Flying Carpet," travel and wandering were a source of culture and understanding the developments of the world. From the flying carpet in the atmospheres of space, after he murmured his desire to fly, to the beauty of temples, the strangeness of the dance of elephants, and the beauty of architectural ornamentation, the storyteller moves to Prince 'Ali to create another world more exciting for continuing the narration of the story with an increasing eagerness, after the prince settled in the enchanting Persian city of Shiraz, from what came in its description: "that the people of this city have excelled greatly in delicate industries, and foremost among the industries in which they excelled is the manufacture of glass in its refined types and its precious forms, for he witnessed in the markets colored glass panels, among them the green like emerald... and when light falls upon them they appear as though they are diamonds whose colors undulate, thus enchanting the sights and captivating the minds" (Kilani, 2018, p. 40). This increases the child's eagerness to continue reading, and by the act of imagination the adventure of travel and discovery of the world becomes the child's adventure, as the child assumes the guise of Prince 'Ali, so there is created in him the courage of initiative and bearing responsibility as a result of his attachment to the character of the hero, for: "the character of the hero in children's stories is a basic axis in the story, and this means that the character of the hero is considered the central element around which the events of the story revolve and develop through it" (Khafaji, 2001, p. 386). Thus the story "The Flying Carpet" contributes, through its heroic characters, to developing the value of heroism and adopting the trait of personality as a basic component in the artistic narrative construction and its narrative process at the level of the wondrous events entrusted to the actions of its characters, for: "the actions of heroes may reach the degree of the extraordinary, and may be merely ordinary actions, but in all cases they retain a degree of freedom that makes us feel admiration for the hero and sympathize with him" (Khafaji, 2001, p. 386). What the author aspires to, through the drawing of the heroes of his stories in their possession of intelligence and love of knowledge and adventure with which he furnishes the personality of his heroes, is in order to influence the reader/child by presenting these positive models and instilling the value of heroism as reinforcements for the most important component of the child's personality in this age stage, namely self-confidence and the ability to take initiative and make decisions responsibly. Therefore comes the decision of 'Ali, and before him Husayn then Ahmad, to accept the adventure of travel and bear the matrices of its results, among them the search for the locations of precious and wondrous artifacts.



The marvelousness of the situation comes with which the hero was confronted in the intensity of his astonishment at what he found in the city of Shiraz, yet his finding of the ivory telescope raised the wondrous extension to its utmost when: “*Prince ‘Ali seized the ivory telescope in his hand, and it quickly became clear that the broker was truthful when he saw his father, the Sultan, through its two lenses, while he was thinking of him - seated upon his throne ..*” (Kilani, 2018, p. 44). This extraordinary magical instrument opened a window onto surveying distant places and observing their details. The interaction of the marvelous with knowledge was a foundation for a future vision, namely the outcomes of science fiction, which the story with marvelous events sharpens, a story that educates and develops the skill of enjoyment and of being endowed with responsibility and scientific curiosity.

As for Prince Ahmad, he chose the city of “Samarkand,” penetrating Central Asia, famous for its luxuriant gardens and ripe fruits, and what stirred his astonishment was the existence of fruits and crops he had not known, and when he asked he came to know that: “the people of this rising city, by virtue of many experiments, mastered the arts of cultivating the land and sowing seeds, and perceived the secrets of plants and herbs and knew how to treat with them the ailments and diseases that befall them” (Kilani, 2018, p. 51). Thus the astonishing scene of the cultivated growths and the strange herbs in form and colors, possessing secrets that provoke scientifically, is reinforced. The marvelous slips into the events of the story of Prince “Ahmad” into the fruit of this city, which possesses extraordinary powers in healing, as the author conveys to us precise details in describing the wonder-apple with care and deliberation. The broker explains: “What I tell you is true, there is no doubt in it, for its maker was the sage of his time, and the unique one of his age and moment” (Kilani, 2018, p. 55), and he had devoted his effort and experiment to the study of herbs and plants for several years, until he was guided to compose it from those various rare herbs, according to a skillful and unique system, such that by it the dying man is healed whenever you bring it near to his nose, and the illness departs from him at once, and full and complete health returns to him” (Kilani, 2018, p. 54). Thus Prince “Ahmad” learned various kinds of new knowledges related to the types of crops, herbs, plants, and fruits, some of which he carried to his land, in addition to his winning the healing apple into which the sage infused the sap of life.

Thus the author extends the child’s imagination, through his sensory and affective perception of the described things, from their being without life to personification and the adoption of scientific experiments steeped in imagination, and the revivifying of what has no life, so it is as though he prepares for him new innovative truths not familiar in reality, relying upon the technique of the marvelous and the message of educational values, and the two of them in the stories of *The Flying Carpet* are linked to the author’s vision and the main idea of the story, and they involve multiple artistic and thematic significations, whose basis is the pumping of educational values and the cooperation of awareness and unawareness in accomplishing them.

7. The Marvelous Structure of the Ending and the Educational Overlapping:

The marvelousness of the ending is not founded upon the marvelousness of the end of the events, but rather upon the compositional paradox between the marvelousness of the interaction of the rare precious objects among themselves, so as to embody the deepest significations possessing educational dimensions based on the popular heritage of the tales of *One Thousand and One Nights*; from the



adventures of Sinbad, and the religious heritage from the stories of our master Sulayman, peace be upon him, “The Flying Carpet,” in an overlapping as the child/reader may imagine it, adorned with panels and drawings, appearing in a visual compositional pattern summarizing the course of events and condensing the signification that provokes inquiry and questioning about the nature of these civilizations and human cultures, and about the stories of the prophets, our master Sulayman, peace be upon him, and the miracles with which God, Glorified and Exalted be He, singled him out. It also carries other educational semantic contexts that look into the scientific and experimental development enveloped in the marvelous, and they are among the educational preliminaries for encouraging the child toward innovation and the making of scientific miracles that bring benefit to the homeland and the world. Therefore, their gathering at the end was to solve a medical dilemma by miraculous/marvelous/scientific means, we find: “*And no sooner had the princes settled in sitting upon the marvelous carpet, than it folded the space in a folding ... so they arrived in a short time which they imagined to be like the blink of an eye or the flash of lightning ... the first thing the intelligent prince did was to hasten to the princess ‘Nur al-Nahar,’ and he brought the healing apple near to her mouth and nose.. and only a few moments had not passed until the princess opened her closed eyes ... and she was cured from her illness*” (Kilani, 2018, p. 71), after they had seen her while she was dying, thanks to the ivory telescope that observes the minute and brings the distant near.

These wondrous objects contribute to creating cognitive curiosity in the child and expanding the horizon of his imagination and perceptions, so he surpasses the limits of the familiar toward the space of the marvelous, relying on transforming the real into the marvelous through magical details possessing scientific and cultural compositions, the aim of which is to transform the enchanting marvelous into a tangible reality, by the power of knowledge and scientific and technological experiments that make the irrational rational, and from dream and imagination a real achieved accomplishment.

Conclusion:

What the stories of *The Flying Carpet* arouse of astonishment and psychological captivation is connected to the excavation of imagination by the force of the dreamlike and imaginary cooperation that transcends the limits of reality, with the aim of unfolding the limits of ambition and perseverance to challenge natural and geographical constraints (the flying carpet, the healing apple, the ivory telescope), where ambitions meet with will so as to translate diligence into steps toward a bright future with scientific horizons through cultural interactions that draw from the multiple in order to root the renewal of technological innovation.

Kamil Kilani has followed, in his story collection, an inspiring narration with an imaginative structuring possessing a marvelous flexibility that leaps with the captivating astonishing toward exploring the world and challenging its unknowns with scientific lanterns of attractive educational foundations, most prominent of which are intellectual travel, scientific adventure, and the challenging of the hidden secret to build knowledge of benefit.

And finally, the flying carpet is a ladder of dreamlike adjacency to the stories of the Qur’anic and *One Thousand and One Nights*, where the marvelous atmospheres with a forward-looking scientific vision are based on indicators of educational values that he intended to root in the child’s thought, and it



is a journey for refining knowledge and imagination, with logical discoveries; for education is not care, it is the making of a human being who understands that his existence is sacred, starting from building principles and values and defining goals to make him bear the responsibility of his message in life; either you make a human being or a heap of complexes.

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