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***Representations of the popular culture in Palestinian***

***Children's literature since 1967***

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**Representations of the Popular Culture in the Palestinian Children's Literature Since 1967**

**Abstract**

Throughout the stages of its development, the process of Palestinian children's literature has been accompanied and affected by political, social and cultural events. The Palestinian writer of children's literature turned to the Palestinian heritage of popular culture and employed it in his texts. Besides, here vivedit and its artistic components through employment of new modernist styles that are based on the principle of getting away from the traditional style of writing. This approach revived the spirit of the heritage popular culture and contributed to the creation of a new literary text, which is intended for children. The new text broke through the traditional molds of 'classical text' by adoption of a modernist perspective that unites, connects and interacts with the popular culture according to the needs and requirements of the writer's experience of creativity in the new work.

The study of the sample texts revealed that the Palestinian popular culture has been one of the most important sources of inspiration to the Palestinian writer, who employed it in a new form that carries symbolical indications of the lived reality.

The Palestinian writer employed the popular culture and its general structure in order to create new literary texts that are based on the recalled and retrieved texts from the past. However, the writer did not copy the text but subjugated it to change and modification through employment of high techniques that are suitable to the concepts of the child.

This employment is prominent mainly in the period that started at the beginning of the eighties of the twentieth century and reached its peak in the First Intifada in 1987, which is an event constituted the climax of the Palestinian national movement. The signs of the beginning of the formation of unity among the Palestinian people began practically after 1967 but its public appearance started after the 1987 as a result of the danger that the Palestinians confronted after the First Intifada, which was the dissolution of the Palestinian identity and its loss.

Consequently, the Palestinian writer paid attention in a serious way to the importance of preserving the Palestinian popular culture in that period, protecting the collective memory of the Palestinian people and reinforcement of Palestine's cultural identity, especially among the growing generation who lived under the reality of occupation and in the Diaspora. Thus, the retrieved literary text from the popular culture since the First Intifada became a new literary text that burst with its latent energies of symbolic indications.

The study is divided into two main parts. **Part One**, which is a the oretical part, and **Part Two**, which is an applied part. Part One introduces a theoretical background for Part Two, the applied part, and it consists of three chapters. **Chapter One of Part One** is an entrance that deals with the theory of children's literature and points out that the theory of intertextuality in children's literature differs from the intertextuality theory in adult's literature. The relationship between the components of intertextuality in children's literature is a relation of: writer/ text/ reader-text/ reader/ context, which are considered special components when we deal with the *theory of intertextuality in children's literature.*

**Chapter Two** of **Part One**, the theoretical part, introduces a historical review of the development of the Palestinian children's literature since the British Mandate on Palestine in 1917. The Palestinian children's literature is divided into **three periods** that deal with: the local Palestinian children's literature after 1948 till today; the children's Palestinian in the Diaspora after 1948 and the development of the children's Palestinian literature in the West Bank and Gaza Strip after 1967.

This chapter also observes the increase of awareness and interest in the popular culture as a phenomenon that is strongly connected with the political factors and social events that affected the development of the Palestinian children's literature.

Through this division, the study revealed that writing for children differs according to the place of residence of the Palestinian writer. This difference in writing became clear after 1948, the year of the establishment of the State of Israel. The local Palestinian writer, who lived in Israel, found himself under the rule of the control of the military rule till the beginning of the sixties. Consequently, his writing was exclusive to textbooks for schoolchildren. The Israeli authorities controlled education and put educational policies that suit their goals. This reality reduced the opportunity of writing to children far from those policies.

At a later stage, specifically after the 1967 War, the Palestinian children's literature in Israel was isolated from the developments that were taking place in the Arab world. The literary movement did not witness any change in writing for children for a long period. This is a due to the fact that the Palestinian writer turned to writing for adults. Consequently, there had been no publications for children till the beginning of the seventies of the twentieth century.

In this period, especially after the occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip in 1967, the possibility of knowing about the publications in the Arab world about children's literature expanded. The outlook of the local Palestinian society about the child and childhood changed. This change led to increase of interest in the child, who started to occupy a significant position in people's life and their social, cultural and educational activity.

New voices began to call for writing local literature that deals with the issues of the local reality and problems that are derived from the local environment and circumstances. Through following up of certain samples written by Palestinian writers in Israel and intended to children, the writer of this study found out that some of them focused on documenting the local reality, connection and belonging to the village, nature, traditions, customs and respect for fathers and forefathers.

One of the writers who was prominent in this approach is Mustafa Murrar, who wrote short stories that are derived from the Palestinian rural life and reality before 1948. In my view, Murrar's focus on the past is an important feature in his writing for children, especially in his use of local words and phrases. At the beginning of the eighties of the twentieth century, the Palestinian writer began to feel that the Palestinian popular culture was in danger of extinction and he was called to make Intifada against this possibility. This awareness led to the appearance of the political trend in children's literature, which is prominent in the writings of Abd al-Latif Nasser, whose words bear political denotations.

During this period, we notice that there was further interest in the Palestinian popular culture and attempts to employ it in children's stories. The Palestinian writer felt that there was danger that this genre was likely to get lost and children's literature in Hebrew might dominate the Palestinian children's literary scene. The Palestinian writer wrote stories inspired by the Palestinian popular culture, in which he used spoken and colloquial words and expressions. Such stories are characterized by easy and simple vocabulary and the narrative style of popular literature, especially at the beginning of the nineties of the twentieth century.

As we have seen, this period was characterized by a lot of changes in the structure of the Palestinian society in Israel socially, economically and culturally, which led to a large increase of interest in children's literature.

The Palestinian writer was able to break the barrier of fear from the spoken language and employed it in his fiction. Thus, he wrote stories in spoken the Palestinian dialect and wrote more about subjects that express his love for his homeland and yearning to the past. Such subjects are characterized by national and patriotic tendency through which the writer expressed the degree of his strong connection to the Palestinian heritage in an attempt to connect between the present and the past.

In addition to direct expression about love to homeland and yearning to the past, there was a noticeable increase in employing the Palestinian popular culture in the short stories that are intended to be read by children through the original spirit of culture with emphasis on its Palestinian aspects.

The purpose of the Palestinian writer in Israel in his employment of the Palestinian heritage was to emphasize the Palestinian identity and internalize it the children's souls and consciousness as a way of preservation of the Palestinian roots. This phenomenon is found in the works of the Palestinian writer who left his homeland or was evacuated from it and forced to live in the Diaspora after 1948 and the establishment of the State of Israel. The majority of the Palestinian writers left or were forced to leave and live in the surrounding Arab counties, where they had to accept different educational, cultural and intellectual curricula and systems that prevailed in those countries despite their contradictions.

Despite the new circumstances, the Palestinian writer continued to produce and publish his works. However, the financial abilities of the writers differed and a new generation was born in the Diaspora. This period was characterized by less production because of the hard conditions that the writer lived separated from his homeland.

The defeat of the Six Day War in June, 1967 had a clear effect on the Arab literary movement but no attention was paid to children's literature because a large number of the writers who lived in the Diaspora wrote about and to adults only due to the political conditions.

This study discovered that the establishment of al-Fata al-'Arabi Publishing House (1974) was a breakthrough for the Palestinian children's literature in the Diaspora, which led to reconsideration of all fields of life and within that frame, the Palestinian writer *paid* attention to childhood and children's literature.

Through reading a good deal of books that were published by this publishing house, the writer of this study found out that Dar al-Fata al-'Arabi supported the literary works that dealt with the issues of freedom and patriotism. Most of the stories that it published introduced the Palestinian cause and the armed struggle in a symbolical style. This stage constituted the beginnings of interest in the Palestinian popular culture and its employment in the children's literature by the Palestinian writer in the Diaspora.

However, due to the political conditions in that period, interest in the patriotic and national values became the writer's main occupation. He tried to embody new concepts in his stories and thus, he inserted the racial tendency against the occupier, the value of homeland and whatever it involves that deepens the feeling of belonging on the one hand, and points out the elements of heroism and will of liberation, on the other.

The stage of the beginning in the eighties of the twentieth century started with the accompaniment of the activity of Dar al-Fata al-Arabi and attention to the growing generation. This stage paved the way for the attention to the Palestinian popular culture, which the Palestinian writer carried with him from his homeland. He took upon himself the mission of documenting the Palestinian history out of fear that this history will be lost and extinct.

This study found out , too, that the outbreak of the First Intifada was the first spark that encouraged the Palestinian writer to embody the Palestinian suffering through his interest in the Palestinian popular culture in children's stories and publishing stories that are derived from the events of the Intifada, its history and the stories of children's heroism from the reality of the Intifada.

In addition, the study found out that writing in that period was characterized by obsession of yearning to Mother Homeland and returning to it and acquaintance of the Palestinian child with Palestine 1948 and creating hope that he will return to it on some day.

However, with regard to children's literature in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, it has a different characteristic because the political and social events contributed to the development of children's literature in a direct way. This change coincided with the everyday life reality of the Palestinian people – the reality of occupation and suppression.

Through analysis of the samples, the study found out that the Palestinian writer started to regain his literary energy at the end of the seventies in the last century. The writer's approach in that period was to document the Palestinian reality and describe the suffering of the Palestinian people through realistic stories, which were characterized by daring treatment of reality, revealing it to the children and pushing them directly or indirectly into contribution to change that reality. The national patriotic issue occupied a wide space of the real and concrete reality which carried the tragedy in its folds. Consequently, these stories carried indications of war, murdering the enemy and the spirit of jihad.

The sharpness of suffering that the Palestinian writer lived increased on the outbreak of the First Intifada, which was clearly reflected in children' stories. Thus, we see two prominent characteristics in the stories that appeared in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, focusing on childhood on the one hand, and focusing on the issue of the conflict with the Israeli occupation in a clear direct way in a context that is characterized by violence, on the other.

In view of this, the concept of children's literature adopted a different direction after the First Intifada and the Palestinian writer poured in it his political thoughts and attitudes. Thus, a lot of motifs of war and its images appeared in the children's literature. These images include: martyrs, occupation, arrests and resistance.

Besides, the stories described the children' confrontation with the occupation, focusing mainly on the image of the violent-occupier versus the image of the Palestinian as a victim, hero and resistant, which was introduced in a positive way. The main effort of the writer was to show the character of the Palestinian child through his stories.

Thus, the child turned into the resisting hero. Besides, the writer focused in this period on the importance of preserving the collective Palestinian memory through children's literature. Therefore, he wrote stories that were drawn from the reality of the Palestinian life in its patriotic, national, economic, social and religious levels. The image of 'land' appeared in his writings in its symbolic meaning, which expresses one's belonging and perfection of the national identity.

However, in the recent period, especially at the beginning of the nineties of the twentieth century, the employment of the Palestinian popular culture started to increase and that increase took place in coincidence with the Oslo agreement in 1993.Their opinions were reflected in some of the works, in which the "other" started to impose his presence on the agendum of many stories, especially the local Palestinians and the returnees from Diaspora following the Oslo Agreement.

Consequently, the Palestinian writer wanted to draw a new image of the Palestinian child, who became a clever forgiving open child onto the world and a lover of nature. Besides, a number of educational institutes encouraged the Palestinian writers to resort to his popular culture to select what is suitable to children through crystallizing the character of the Palestinian child, deepening his education and strengthening the value of citizenship and love to home land through displaying aspects of the Palestinian cause.

The study revealed that the Palestinian popular culture at the end of the eighties of the last century assumed a prominent modernist feature. The popular culture intermingled with the text and raised its artistic level and by doing so, the Palestinian writer revived his popular culture and preserved it from extinction. In this way, he communicated with the child through a new text.

**Chapter Three of Part One,** which is the last in the theoretical part, continues to deal with the development of the popular culture through studying its emergence, growth and directions. The study mentions in this chapter that the scientific study of folklore started at the beginning of the nineteenth century as a result of the appearance of the Romantic and the national movement in Europe, which was called then as: the National Romantic School because its approach focused on the popular culture. The European writer started collecting popular stories, songs and traditions that reflect the past in order to rebuild the ancient life through this heritage.

In the sixties of the last century, interest turned to popular culture through studying texts through the theory of peoples' culture, which was established by the Russian folklorist and scholar Vladimir Propp (1895-1970), which affected specifically the school of narration, which is interested in studying linguistics through studying popular texts.

The theory of the Russian folklorist Propp led to development of the theories and methods of Formalization. The study of folklore was integrated within the context of the theory of Post-modernism, and finally, the science of folklore took a new direction in studying the issue of collective identity from the point of view of minorities.

This chapter introduces also a historical background about interest in popular culture among the Arabs. The study found out that the political causes, especially after the series of defeats of the Arab countries and the political changes that took place, encouraged the writers to show interest in their heritage as an important source of inspiration because of its connection with the real life and due to its consideration an important national heritage.

The chapter also shows that the increased challenges that the Arab countries were exposed to in the period of the sixties of the past century made these countries increase their financial and moral support to the local public efforts to preserve the cultural and educational identity of the Arab society. Thus, the countries turned to preserve the local popular culture for fear that the country might lose something significant of its history.

Finally, this chapter also defines the most important forms of the popular culture and its characteristics and discusses the most important forms of Palestinian popular culture that are common in Arabic literature in general and children's literature in particular.

**Part Two, which is the Applied Part,** attempts to prove what is introduced in **Part One**, the **Theoretical Part** and to confirm that the phenomenon of the employment of the Palestinian popular culture in children's literature increased after the First Intifada and became very common at the beginning of the nineties of the past century because of the political and social changes in that period.

Therefore, the **Applied Part** is divided into three chapters. **Chapter One** is the longest chapter and it introduces the writer's argument that the Palestinian *popular tale* is the most important source that inspired the Palestinian writer. It shows, too, that the writers increased their employment of the characteristics of the popular tale in an unprecedented way and degree.

**The chapter** also tries to give answers to several queries, mainly: Does the new story benefit from its relationship with the popular culture styles in a modernistic way, in form and content, through blowing up the traditional narrative structures and opposing their styles? Does this method of story make it fall in the aspect of repetition and stereotyping? The Chapter attempts to give answers to these queries through reviewing selected samples that are appropriate to the objectives of the study, which shows that the Palestinian writer rewrote the Palestinian popular tales without interference in the text except in specific cases.

The Palestinian writer started to look for the roots of the popular tales, to polish them and to adapt them to children. For example, the writer Nimer Sirhan showed a great interest in rewriting the Palestinian popular tales and employing their features in children's literature and polishing them in a way that made those features look coherent with the new text. He increased the use of the techniques of the traditional "opening" and the "ending" of the popular tale in his stories. His aim was retrieving the popular tale, rewriting it and rereading it to the new growing generation. It is one form of returning the image of homeland and retrieving it back into the collective memory.

This employment was used through imitation of the *traditional opening expression* in the folk tale " *Kanya ma kan, kanyamustami'n al-kalam, kanhunak…../ Once upon a time, there was….*" He ended his stories with the*traditional ending expression* of the folk tale : "*Wa tar al-ter! Alla ymasi al-hadhrin bi al-kher, / and the bird flew, Good night to the present guests*…" which lent a touch of pure heritage on some of his folk tales.

It is noticed that in this period the Palestinian writers largely employed Palestinian popular expressions in their stories, which lent folk atmosphere on them and increased the sense of reality to the narrative text.

In the **second period**, however, employment of folk tales in children's literature took a different direction and there were different ways in which the writer employed them. Some writers kept to the structure of the folk tale without modifying it through rewriting. The writer **Rawdha al-Hudhud** was the most prominent one in this approach.

Other writers rewrote the folk tale with some adaptation in the content in an aim to revive the Palestinian folk tales and rephrasing them in a way that suits the spirit of the era. They also tried to "create" written tales that imitate folk tales, but after they put them in a new literary form to be read by children, they assumed the role of folk tales that parents tell to their children orally.

**Sonia Nimer**did well in this field. She rewrote Palestinian folk tales in a modern way and inserted some moderations that suit modern concepts of education. Therefore, this study devoted a large space for Sonia Nimer's works and the analysis of her stories. Through analysis of Sonia's stories, the study points out the causes of modifications that the writer introduced in an attempt to clarify the motives of the modifications that were inserted in the new text.

Probably, the motive behind **Dima Suhwil's** employment of Palestinian folk tales in her works is the same as the one behind Sonia Nimer's. She, too, constructed her stories after the elements of the folk tale and thus, they gained the narrative feature of heritage. In fact, the writer intended to imitate the commonly accepted narrative style of folk tales in her stories and thus, she allowed the reader to feel that what is related to him orally refers him to the past.

One of the important issues that the study revealed in this chapter is that the character of **Shater Hassan** is the most important and most employed one in children's literature. This character gained a lot of interest by the writers of children's literature in this period and the Palestinian writer employed it as a representative and symbol of the writer himself because of the many adventures and risks that Shater Hassan performed in his confrontation with the ghoul.

The study also found out that the writers did not adopt one specific approach in their employment of this retrieved character. In fact, their methods of employment and the styles of treatment of the folkloric character were varied. Some of them employed the character of Shater Hassan in the story through re-narrating its folkloric reality in a new form and Sonia Nimer was prominent in this field.

However, the best type of employment of the character of Shater Hassan is the one that **Mahmoud Shkair** developed. He dealt with this character in his stories through reintroducing it in a new way that transcends its past time to live in the present time and interact with modern characters in the story depending on its indication of folkloric heritage**.** Consequently, that allowed the retrieved character to be unique when it expressed new life phenomenon and revealed the writer's idea, which connected between the past and the present.

As it has been seen, Mahmoud Shukair dealt with this character as a representative of the contemporary reality in an attempt to insert his vision about contemporary events and express his issues and thoughts through retrieving and employing the character of Shater Hassan and turning it into a contemporary character that has features that suit his contemporary experience.

As mentioned above, **the second period** witnessed a quantitative development in the employment of the narrative structure of the popular tale, especially the style of the ironic narrator who is not discrepant with his narrated text. **Mahmoud Abbasi** overused the technique of the narrator in his texts in an attempt to create a modern short story.

Retrieving the narrator into his stories means retrieving the popular culture through its reconstruction in a way that suits the contemporary period so that there will be an interactive value between the past and the present. We see that the ironic discrepant narrator narrated a story in order to tell another tale and then return to narrate his own story again.

**Chapter Two of the Applied Part** shows that the employment of the Palestinian popular proverb is limited to **the first period.** The writers did not show interest in employing popular proverbs in their stories for children. Most probably, the writer in this period was not aware enough of the importance of the employment of popular culture in children's literature and some writers chose to use only standard Arabic in their writing thinking that spoken Arabic is of lower level than standard Arabic, especially if the receiver is a child.

Besides, some writers employed popular proverbs in their stories but that employment did not serve the story in a conscious way. It is noticed that retrieving the popular proverb in that period was not well-developed as it was in **the second period**.

The writer in this period dealt with popular proverbs through simple styles such as: quoting the proverb in its spoken version without any change, standardizing the proverb or changing some of its words. For example, the writer **Mustafa Murrar** is the writer who employed Palestinian popular proverbs most, especially in the second period, in which writers increasingly showed interest in Palestinian popular culture and specifically in the employment of the popular proverb in children's stories.

In this period, the writer showed cultural awareness and daring in accepting the popular proverb and his treatment of the spoken language. Hence, the employment of the popular proverb in this period took different dimensions and carried several deeper indications.

Besides, the treatment of the aspects of modernism with the employment of popular proverbs started to be clear gradually. Retrieving of popular proverbs was not exclusive to simple techniques as it was noticed in the previous period but included other artistic techniques and forms.

The study also showed that the Palestinian writer quoted the popular proverb to be the title of his stories because the title is considered one of the most important para-textual thresholds of the text. The experience of the writer **Abdalla I'shan** in retrieving popular proverbs as a title is the richest one. The writer showed a special interest in the Palestinian folklore in his literary career. He collected a lot of popular culture materials and was so fond of folk tales that folklore became an integral part of his works. He employed a lot of proverbs and tales in his children's stories in different ways that imply that he had a larger interest than those who preceded him.

The writer's retrieving of Palestinian popular proverbs and integrating them into his stories shows the extent of his awareness of his heritage as a bridge that connects between his desire to communicate with children. That is reflected in his retrieving of Palestinian proverbs which he mostly diverted from their folkloric indications into new ones and by doing so, he created interaction between him and the child receiver through **modification** of the proverb.

**Chapter Three**, which is the last chapter in the **Theoretical Part** , shows disparity in the employment of the **popular song** in the texts in the **first period.** The song appeared as an image that is closer to retrieving than to employment in its artistic meaning. Some texts included some segments of well-known popular songs that fit in with the narrative context only but without performing any other function in the story. However, with regard to the phenomenon of employment in this period, the employment of the popular song achieved several goals, some of which were related to the contents of the text.

The writer **Mahmoud Shukair** was prominent in the employment of the names of Palestinian popular songs, which was of the most common technique. That is attributed to the writer's realization of the importance of popular songs and their artistic value in children's stories, which emphasizes the importance of popular singing for the writer. In fact, the Palestinian writer preferred to avoid writing in the spoken dialect especially in this period, and preferred to transfer the popular song from the spoken Palestinian Arabic into standard Arabic.

The study revealed that in the **second period**, the Palestinian writer showed a lot of interest in the Palestinian popular songs. Besides, we noticed increase in the employment of popular styles and techniques of popular singing. The children's writer showed particular knowledge in all kinds of Palestinian popular songs and their artistic styles through his employment of new styles and methods in the literary text for children. Besides, we saw that the Palestinian writer showed more courage in employing the popular song in its spoken dialect or in imitating the style of the song.

One of the writers who emerged in this period is **Muhammad Badarneh**, who developed new styles that are connected to the popular song. Badarnehis considered a distinguished writer in his communication with the popular song. His interest in employing it was so strong that he skillfully diversified the employment of the popular songs. This technique has become one of the main pillars of his stories. He turned this technique into a structural element that expresses patriotic, national, and international human issues.

It is noticed also that Badarneh's employment of Palestinian popular songs was not arbitrary but a conscious operation due to the popular cultural load that the popular song bears. This is clear in the samples that are appended in the study. Badarneh employed the popular songs nine times in his stories. He quoted the popular song and created a new one by imitating the original one.

The study also showed that the popular song of **Dal'una** is the most retrieved one in children's stories especially in Muhammad Badarneh's stories. The writer realized that this popular song has its particularity and its strong connection with the Palestinian land more than any other song. Therefore, he preferred it to other common popular songs and gave it the lion's share in his stories.

As we have seen, the Palestinian writer has become more daring in quoting the popular song in its original spoken language and employing it in his texts. This indicates the openness of the experience in writing for children in a large way and the writer's desire to benefit from the different expressive capacities that raise the level of his creativity.

Therefore, the writer turned to the employment of the spoken dialect in his stories in a prominent way and employed new techniques through quoting the popular song entirely or partially and consequently, the popular material has more intensive presence in the text. This technique helped in approximating the reader to the popular folk feeling and human reality.

The study also showed also that the writer has become more daring in quoting songs that are related to children only and employing them in their spoken form in his stories, especially *Songs of Lullabies (Tahalil) and Songs of Rain*. Children's songs constituted a main link and important bricks in the structure of the Palestinian society as the popular song carried meanings and values and symbols for children. They are considered a mixture of what the Palestinian songs bear, which carry the same indications, meanings and values that imitate society's values in general. They are an integral part of the Palestinian popular culture because they carry the same communication of meaning, content and musical form with some simplification that suits the children's artistic and intellectual abilities. We have seen that the writer **Mustafa Murrar** was the one who retrieved children's songs most in his short stories.

The study also revealed that the Palestinian writer was influenced by the style of *popular singing* and the *rhyme scheme*of some songs in his attempt to imitate the spirit of the popular song to employ it in his stories in order to express the condition of the Palestinian individual.

Again, the study confirmed that Muhammad Badarneh was the writer who was most influenced by this technique. He used it in seven of his short stories in which he imitated the singing type of the most popular song, Dal'una.

The techniques of imitating the style of popular songs reached its peak in **Jamal Qa'war's** poems. He used the technique of full-imitation in his standard Arabic poems. He also rewrote the popular songs in standard Arabic (Fasiha). For example, he rewrote the famous song, "al-Jammal" (*The Cameleer*) in full imitation of rhyme and rhythm and popular phrases to make us feel his strong connection to his folklore in an attempt to connect between the past and the present and to preserve the patriotic and national features through the employment of the popular culture.

Finally, the study revealed the fact that the Palestinian writer focused on his own popular culture in an attempt to show the Palestinian characteristics of the Palestinian child as a way that points out the Palestinian identity and the need to preserve it from extinction as a result of the occupation, evacuation, and continuous suppression. Ultimately, all that emphasizes the importance of popular culture as a unifying element of identity in the Palestinian society and is seen as one of the components of its entity and a fundamental element in its unity.