
Radical Issues in Children's Narratives on *Eliyas Explains What's Going On in Palestine*

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ABSTRACT

The discourses about childhood and its entanglement with commonly discussed literature significantly impact children's literature. This is reflected by writers' drive to raise issues that do not always revolve around normative issues in their works. Lately, critical issues prominent in children's literature include radical political unrest and social injustice, as exemplified in Zanib Mian's illustrative book *Eliyas Explains What's Going On in Palestine*. Zanib Mian's work was the focused material object of the research. The research employed a qualitative approach, explicitly utilizing document analysis as the primary method. This study utilized Gerard Genette's Narratology and Kimberley Reynolds' theory of Radical Children's Literature to examine how narrators convey these problematic issues to children's readers. The analysis revealed that the narrator in "Eliyas" employed an autodiegetic perspective to foster understanding, effectively engaging children by sharing personal experiences and emotions. Furthermore, the radical issue of the Palestinian conflict, which was presented sensitively, profoundly impacted the children's characters within the story and, by extension, the children's readers engaging with the story. The novelty of this research lies in discussing radical issues without leaving the narrative dimension in literary works using narratological theory and the notion of radical children's literature, especially in Zanib Mian's latest work, which deals with politics and war in Palestine.

Keywords: *children's literature; Eliyas Explains What's Going On in Palestine; narratology; radical issue; Zanib Mian*

INTRODUCTION

At the end of 2023, the social media community and the world were shocked by the unending conflict between the Israeli government and Hamas in Gaza, Palestine. Various responses to this conflict emerged in various forms of discourse and media. One of the

most interesting is the emergence of *Eliyas Explains What's Going On in Palestine*, an illustrated book by Zanib Mian, which offers a powerful and sensitive answer for young readers seeking to understand the conflict happening between Israeli Government

and Hamas in Gaza, Palestine. Designed specifically for young readers, this picture book leverages the interplay of text and illustrations to introduce children to the realities of the Palestinian conflict, fostering empathy and critical thinking. Unlike traditional illustrated books, where text typically dominates and images serve a supplementary role to support independent reading, picture books rely on a more integrated approach. Barbara Bader defines a picture book as a combination of text, illustrations, and overall design, functioning as both a commercial product and a cultural, social, and historical document. Most importantly, it offers readers a unique and immersive experience. As an art form, the picture book depends on the interdependence of words and images, the simultaneous presentation of two facing pages, and the anticipation created by turning the page (Bader, 1976).

Zanib Mian is known for often producing writing in illustrated books with the target readers being children, especially Muslim children. Some of her works can be accessed via the website muslimchildrensbooks.co.uk. Known for her illustrated books aimed at Muslim children, particularly through his *Planet Omar*, *Meet the Maliks*, and *Eliyas Explains* series, Mian has made a significant effort to engage children and youth readers with important social issues. In advance, several *Eliyas Explains* series had been published, *Eliyas Explains What's Going On in Palestine* (Mian, 2023) is one of Zanib Mian's works which is distributed free of charge, ensuring accessibility for all. This is different from other *Eliyas Explains* series which usually require a fee. In response to the growing need for resources that explain the Palestinian conflict to children aged seven and above, Mian created the book *Eliyas Explains What's Going On in Palestine*. This project reflects Mian's deep concern for the conflict's impact on children and his desire to provide a resource that helps parents and educators address the difficult questions children may have. The book was developed specifically to meet the concerns of parents and adults seeking an informative—yet age-appropriate—way to explain the ongoing conflict to young readers.

The content in *Eliyas Explains What's Going On in Palestine* (hereinafter written as *Eliyas Explains*) begins with Eliyas who found himself grappling with questions about what is happening in Palestine and why so many people are discussing and considering it:

I knew more about how to build a spacecraft than I did about Palestine, and since it was the number one thing that everyone was talking about, when my family sat around the table to play a card game, instead of being super excited that I was dealt the change colours card, and the make someone pick up 4 card, I asked Mum and Dad, “**what's going on in Palestine?**”

(Mian, 2023: 3)

This statement, voiced by a curious child eager to make sense of the world, sets the stage for the book's narrative journey. Through this quotation, the author subtly encourages readers to connect with Eliyas' sincere desire to understand the conflict in Palestine from a child's perspective. Following this, Eliyas' parents begin to explain the history of Palestine, the events that have unfolded there, why Palestine holds special significance, and what can be done in response to the current situation and conditions.

The combination of simple illustrations and straightforward storytelling creates a distinctive approach to engaging young readers with a complex and sensitive subject. This illustrated book spans 24 pages, including the front and back covers. In *Eliyas Explains What's Going On in Palestine*, Mian addresses unconventional topics for children's literature, tackling themes of war, conflict, and the situation in Palestine, while presenting the content as suitable for children aged seven to eight and above (as noted on the cover). The strategic choice of this target audience underscores Mian's belief that even young readers are capable of grasping the Palestinian conflict. However, the story explores politically charged and radical issues. The position of the narrator introduces potential ambiguity in the interpretation of the story, particularly given that it is aimed at children. To address the issues posed by the narrative, two key questions must be considered: (1) How does the narrator present the story of Palestine? (2) Why is the discussion of these radical issues in *Eliyas Explains What's Going On in Palestine* significant?

To understand how *Eliyas Explains* engages children's readers with the conflict in Palestine, this article examines the narrative voice in *Eliyas Explains What's Going On in Palestine* through the theoretical framework of Gerard Genette's Narratology and Kimberley Reynolds' notion of Radical Children's Literature. The approach through narratology will

make it easier for this research article to classify, sort, and observe the relationships and problems that occur in the narrative and story (Genette, 1980). This research article used Gerard Genette's point of view regarding a general view of narratology and specifically focused on reviewing aspects of *voice* in narratives of *Eliyas Explains What's Going On in Palestine*. Genette categorizes narrative structure into three aspects; tense, mood, and voice (Genette, 1980: 31). Although Genette's categorization includes three aspects, this article focuses solely on the aspect of voice. Voice pertains to the mode of narration and its relationship with the subject. Importantly, the subject in Genette's analysis is not limited to a person but can encompass various narrative entities.

Voice is the mode of action; of the verb considered for its relations to the subject—the subject here being not only the person who carries out or submits to the action, but also the person (the same one or another) who reports it, and, if need be, all those people who participate, even though passively, in this narrating activity.

(Genette, 1980: 213)

Voice allows us to examine the relationship between the subject narrating and the position from which the narration takes place, both in terms of the level and time of narration. This helps to identify who is narrating and where the narrator is situated during the act of narration. However, to fully explore the radical issues presented in *Eliyas Explains What's Going On in Palestine*, it is necessary to conduct a discursive study beyond the scope of narratology.

While Gérard Genette's Narratology provides a framework for analyzing narrative structure, Kimberley Reynolds' concept of Radical Children's Literature offers a valuable lens for examining the social and political implications embedded in children's literature. This dual approach allows for a deeper understanding of how narrative techniques interact with broader cultural and ideological messages. According to Reynolds, children's literature, since its inception, has been implicated in social, intellectual, and artistic change (Reynolds, 2007: 1). Reynolds contends that children can contribute to the social and aesthetic transformation of culture by, for instance, encouraging readers to approach ideas, issues, and

objects from new perspectives and so prepare the way for change (Reynolds, 2007: 1). This is the sense in which Reynolds sees writing for the young as replete with radical potential (Reynolds, 2007: 1).

This research applied a qualitative method using document analysis (Ary, Jacobs, Razavieh, & Sorensen, 2010) and Gérard Genette's narratology to collect primary data related to the qualifications of voice, which are divided into three categories: time of narrating, level of narrating, and person. These categories are applied in the analysis of *Eliyas Explains What's Going On in Palestine*. The collected data is then organized according to the predetermined formal object. In the data analysis phase, the relationships between the various data points are examined to establish a coherent interpretation of the narrative as a whole (Faruk, 2015).

To ensure originality and avoid overlap with existing research, a thorough review of related literature is necessary. However, it has been challenging for researchers to find journal articles specifically addressing radical issues in children's literature. One relevant article with connections to this study is *Children's Literature as a Vehicle for Political Socialization: An Examination of Best-selling Picture Books 2012–2017*, written by Meagan M. Patterson. This article provides insight into how children's literature can serve as a tool for political socialization, offering a valuable parallel to the current research's focus on radical issues in children's narratives (Patterson, 2019). In her article, Patterson discusses how picture books can inform children about politics and influence their political engagement and aspirations. This study presents a content analysis of all books included in The New York Times bestseller list for children's picture books from 2012 to 2017. Books were reviewed for depictions of political issues, political processes, political leaders, symbols related to politics or political leadership, and government officials. The findings in Patterson's paper suggest that while many picture books contain politically relevant content, picture books represent a missed opportunity in many aspects of political socialization. The similarity between Patterson's research and this article is that both use picture books as the main material object of research and discuss politics. However, Patterson does not apply Genette's narratology to analyze narrativity in picture books, which presents new research opportunities for this

article. Additionally, Patterson's focus is on white politics rather than the Palestinian issue in 2023, further distinguishing the scope of this research and highlighting its unique contribution to the field.

The next literature review is an article written by John Streamas with the title *Narrative Politics in Historical Fictions for Children* (Streamas, 2008) from Washington State University. In his article, Streamas raises the issue of how discussions and discourses on race or the problem of racism need to be reviewed, especially in literary works. Streamas poses an interesting question to be answered by narrative theory and ethnic studies, *Are children themselves capable of racism, even if only as extensions of adult racial imaginations?* (Streamas, 2008: 1). In his article, Streamas found that critics who would dodge the trap of essentializing in the analysis of adult culture still fall into the trap when discussing children's narratives. Streamas argues that children's culture cannot aim for enlightenment until their stories replace narratives of individual development with narratives of cause and context (Streamas, 2008: 1). The similarity between Streamas' article and this one lies in their use of children's literature as the central focus of research, with both addressing political themes. However, Streamas does not engage with the Palestinian issue in his work. Nevertheless, the racial issues discussed by Streamas bear similarities to the Palestinian issue in several respects, particularly in their treatment of oppression and how adults often project children as objects in literary works rather than recognizing them as active subjects. This parallel highlights how both works explore the marginalization of children within broader political and social narratives.

Furthermore, the next literature review is an article written by Isni Hindriaty Hindarto (Hindarto, 2022). The article written by Hindarto is actually different in formal object and material object from this research article. It is just that there is a gap that can bring novelty to the writing of this research article. The gap lies in Hindarto's discussion of political issues targeting youth but through the medium of TikTok. Meanwhile, the focus of this research examines the spread of political issues that are assumed to be radical for children through the medium of literary works. The result of Hindarto's research was the discovery of a significant increase in young people's interest in political practices or issues presented in the form of 15-second videos on TikTok compared to

journal article pages available on the internet.

In addition, one of the articles that became a literature review in this research is an article entitled *Just How Radical is Radical: Children's Picture Books and Trans Youth* (Bedford, Brömdal, Kerby, & Baguley, 2023). The article discusses how some picture books written by Australian authors use transgender and LGBTQ+ themes. The theme has sparked controversy among Australians themselves. However, according to Bedford et al, literary works with such themes are needed to break the dominant traditional gender discourse. The radical issue, according to Bedford et al, is something that can be justified for children to consume. The similarity between Bedford et al.'s article and this research lies in the exploration of radical issues within children's literature, particularly in picture books. However, the material and formal objects under examination differ. This research focuses on social and political radical issues, while Bedford et al. concentrate on radical gender issues. Despite the thematic overlap, the distinct focus of each study highlights different dimensions of radicalism in children's literature.

The final literature review examines an article by Krisha Camille R. Angoluan and Jarroh Kleigh B. Guerrero (Angoluan & Guerrero, 2024), which explores social issues as themes in contemporary children's literature. Their article examines the authors' intentions in writing such stories and explores parental perceptions of children's stories that address social issues. According to their findings, incorporating social issues into children's books uniquely promotes moral development and social awareness, empowering children to engage with the realities of the world. These narratives also serve as an effective medium for parents to teach children about social challenges and have the potential to foster social transformation when integrated into school curricula. Angoluan and Guerrero's article shares similarities with this research in its focus on social issues in children's literature. However, the scope of themes in Angoluan and Guerrero's work is more limited, as they do not address radical issues. Additionally, the two articles differ in theoretical approaches and research methods: Angoluan and Guerrero conducted interviews with authors, whereas this research relies solely on analyzing the *Eliyas Explains What's Going On in Palestine* picture book without author involvement.

From the literature reviews previously

discussed, similarities and gaps emerge in comparison with this research. These gaps highlight the novelty of the current study. The distinct contribution of this research lies in its exploration of radical issues while maintaining a focus on the narrative dimension of literary works, particularly in Zanib Mian's latest picture book. Unlike the previous studies, none have attempted to approach children's literature through the lens of narratology. This approach is crucial for examining how sensitive topics are narrated in literature, especially for young readers. By employing narratological theory alongside the concept of radical children's literature, this research evaluates how these delicate issues are conveyed in a way that profoundly influences both the child characters within the story and the implied young readers outside the text.

FINDINGS & DISCUSSION

This section of the article discusses *Eliyas Explains What's Going On in Palestine* as a literary work that narrates radical issues regarding political and social events in children's literature, written by Zanib Mian. The findings and discussion in this article are divided into two parts. First, this research examines how the narrator, who is a child, narrates the story of Palestine. Second, this research explores the reasons behind the necessity to address radical issues in children's literature.

Children's Voices and Palestine's Story

Zanib Mian's *Eliyas Explains What's Going On in Palestine* opens with an intriguing narrative strategy, without mentioning anything about himself, introducing the protagonist, Eliyas, directly to the readers. This immediate engagement with the child character sets a distinctive tone for the story, further emphasized by Eliyas' declaration: "I can tell you everything I learnt about Palestine and what's going on there right now (I'm writing this in October 2023)" (Mian, 2023: 1). "I'm writing this", this statement raises an immediate question of who wrote the sentence—Eliyas, a fictional character crafted by Mian or Mian himself who wrote this in October 2023 became the initial question to see how Mian used voice (in Genette's terminology) to tell children's stories to children. This ambiguity in the voice reveals a deliberate tactic employed by Mian to engage children's readers in the storytelling process. Without further analysis, it is evident that Zanib Mian

is the author of *Eliyas Explains What's Going On in Palestine*, yet she adopts Eliyas as the primary point of view and narrator throughout the story. This raises an important question: How can Eliyas, as a child, explain the complex issue of Palestine? This narrative choice invites a deeper exploration of how Mian navigates the tension between a child's limited understanding and the political depth of the conflict. It also prompts an investigation into how the author balances childlike innocence with the need to convey complex realities, offering insight into the techniques used to make such topics accessible to young readers while maintaining narrative authenticity. The text presents a complex interplay of perspectives, highlighting the role of Eliyas, his parents—who actually know more about the events that are happening in Palestine than Eliyas—and the author himself. Furthermore, to fully understand this intricate narrative voice, it is necessary to analyze the precise positions and degrees of involvement held by each: Zanib Mian as the author, Eliyas as the narrator, and Eliyas' family members within the story. This analysis sheds light on how Mian navigates the complex topic of Palestine through a child's perspective, highlighting the potential for young readers to engage with sensitive subject matter through a carefully constructed narrative voice.

From the narration, the one who narrates the story is Eliyas or "I'm" as the narrator while what is narrated is about what is going on in Palestine, which is partly conveyed by the character Dad and the character Mum. To see who narrates the story, we need to look at Genette's division and explanation of *Person*. The person aspect relates to who is narrating the story. Genette (1980: 244–245) divides two types of narrators, those are heterodiegetic and homodiegetic. Two types of narrative: one with the narrator absent from the story he tells (example: Homer in the *Iliad*, or Flaubert in *L'Education Sentimental*), and the other with the narrator present as a character in the story he tells (example: Gil Bias, or *Wuthering Heights*). We call the first type heterodiegetic and the second type homodiegetic (Genette, 1980: 244–245). The first type of narrator is heterodiegetic and the second type is homodiegetic. The heterodiegetic type of narrator is a narrator who is not present in the story he narrates. This is different from the homodiegetic narrator, who becomes a character or appears as a character in the narration. This aspect of the person is easier for researchers to categorize 'who exactly' is performing

the narrating action. Interestingly, if the homodiegetic narrator becomes the main character or protagonist in the story, he will occupy the position of autodiegetic narrator:

There is a dissymmetry in the status of these two types of narratives. Absence is absolute, but presence has degrees. So will have to differentiate within the homodiegetic type at least two varieties: one where the narrator is the hero of his narrative and one where he plays only a secondary role, which almost always turns out to be a role as observer and witness. For the first variety (which to some extent represents the strong degree of the homodiegetic) we will reserve the unavoidable term Autodiegetic.

(Genette, 1980: 245)

An autodiegetic narrator holds authority over his own story, serving as both the main character and the storyteller. While similar to the homodiegetic narrator, who is also a character within the narrative, the key distinction is that the autodiegetic narrator narrates the entire narrative, positioning themselves as the protagonist. This unique narrative position allows the autodiegetic narrator to offer a deeply personal perspective on the events, shaping the reader's understanding through their firsthand experience and insight into the story.

In terms of Genette's categorization of a person, the narrator of this story is certainly an autodiegetic narrator. Although Eliyas has introduced his other family members (Mian, 2023: 2) and every story narrated in this story involves the voice of Dad and Mum because that is where the information about Palestine comes from, but it is not really the voice of Dad and Mum. This can be seen in how Eliyas writes and tells it in the excerpt below:

But then Dad said, "Actually, let's start by telling them about when the prophets (as) built Masjid Al-Aqsa in Palestine—a land that is mentioned in the Qur'an at least six times, because it is blessed."

(Mian, 2023: 4)

"Oh, of course," said Mum, "Al-Aqsa is the only masjid mentioned in the Quran by name,

apart from Masjid Al-Haram in Makkah. It's in Jerusalem, which is also a holy place to Jews and Christians. Prophet Ibrahim (as) built Al-Aqsa, then prophet Dawud (as) started rebuilding it and Prophet Sulayman (as) finally completed the building of masjid Al-Aqsa. It's really special. The Prophet Muhammad (saw) said, "Do not go on a journey to visit any mosque but these three: this mosque of mine (Madinah), Masjid Al-Haram (Makkah) and the masjid of Al-Aqsa."

(Mian, 2023: 4–5)

The excerpt above clearly uses Eliyas' voice, because he recounts events that have already happened. That is the event when his father told him about "Al-Aqsa Mosque" and the event when his mother complimented his father's statement about how important Al-Aqsa is for the world Muslim community and Palestine. The use of past tense words; "Dad said" and "Mum said" also adds to the belief that this is the voice of Eliyas who occupies the Autodiegetic narrator.

Dad, Mum, Aasiya, and Yusuf only occupy the position of narratee in *Eliyas Explains*. This is apparent from the excerpt below which shows that they—the characters other than Eliyas mentioned earlier—are the narratees because from the beginning of the narration of the story to the end the characters are narrated by Eliyas:

I love video games and pizza – best day if I get them both together! I have a sneaky 6 year old sister called Aasiya (illustration of Aasiya) and a sticky 3 year old little brother called Yusuf (illustration of Yusuf). This is my mum. Who makes art to sell online, (illustration of Mum) and this is my dad, who writes books (illustration of father).

(Mian, 2023: 2)

According to Genette like the narrator, the narratee is one of the elements in the narrating situation, and he is necessarily located at the same diegetic level; that is, he does not merge a priori with the reader (even an implied reader) any more than the narrator necessarily merges with the author (Genette, 1980: 259).

Narratee belongs to the elements that exist in the storytelling situation. According to Genette, the narratee must be on the same diegetic level as the

narrator; the narratee does not join a priori with the reader or even the implied reader as imagined by the author or writer, which means that the narratee must be directly involved in the story. The same diegetic level as the narrator can occasionally create the impression that the narratee shares the narrator's position. However, the narratee remains distinct, occupying a role in which they are consistently narrated by the narrator. In this case, *Eliyas* assumes the role of an autodiegetic narrator, while the other members of his family function as narratees. Despite their contributions to the story, they are framed within *Eliyas*' narrative voice, maintaining the hierarchy between the narrator and the narratees.

The next analysis of voice is time of narrating and narrative level. Time of narrating is the position of the narrator where he describes the time in the story. It is almost impossible not to place the story at the right time with respect to the act of narrating. Because the story must be told in the present, past, or future tense. Genette divides narrating time into four types (Genette, 1980: 217) subsequent, prior, simultaneous, and interpolated.

The story about Palestine told by Dad and Mum takes place in the past or subsequent (Mian, 2023: 221) because several times it retells the history of Palestine which takes place in the past. However, from the classification explained by Genette regarding the subsequent, none of *Eliyas*' stories are included in the time of the story in the past. According to Genette, subsequent: the classical position of the past-tense narrative, far and away the most frequent. This narrative type dominates the vast majority of narratives produced to date. The use of past tense alone is sufficient to establish the narrative as subsequent, even if it does not specify the temporal interval separating the moment of narration from the moment of the story being told. This allows for flexibility in storytelling, where the distance between the events and their recounting remains ambiguous (Mian, 2023: 221). Therefore, in the story *Eliyas Explains*, it can be seen that the narration used is narrative in the present or what Genette calls simultaneous. Simultaneous is narrative in the present contemporaneous with the action. This type of narration is fundamentally the simplest, as the strict simultaneity between the story and the act of narrating eliminates any possibility of temporal interference or manipulation. The simultaneous type

can operate in two opposing directions, depending on whether the focus is placed on the unfolding events of the story or on the act of narration itself. This approach maintains a direct alignment between the narrative's progression and the events being described, providing a seamless storytelling experience (Mian, 2023: 218–219). This can be proven in the story because the narrator does not actually move and is always in the present time.

The next discussion regarding voice is narrative level. Genette divides the narrative levels into three levels. The levels are extradiegetic, intradiegetic, or metadiegetic (Genette, 1980: 228). Extradiegetic is the level where the narrative action creates the narrative or produces the narrative. The narrator in this case functions as the producer of the story without being directly involved in it. This positions the narrator at an extradiegetic level, separate from the narrative world. The next level of narration is intradiegetic, where the 'narrative itself' takes place and contains the main story. At this level, the narrator is embedded within the story's world. The metadiegetic level refers to a narrative within a narrative, situated at the second level, embedded within the main story. This structure allows for layered storytelling, with each level of narration adding complexity to the narrative framework.

The narrative level found in the story *Eliyas Explains* is the intradiegetic level. The definition of intradiegetic according to Genette is narrator converts into a narrative by describing it himself or, more rarely, by having another character describe it (Genette, 1980: 231). This type of narrator is involved, present, and narrates the narration himself. In the discussion of the person, it has been found that the narrator is in the position of an autodiegetic narrator. This point further supports the discussion on this narrative level that the narrator is at the intradiegetic level of narration. Because this is about *Eliyas*, told by *Eliyas* and *Eliyas* is involved in this narration.

The first discussion finally closed with the discovery that the narrative of *Eliyas Explains What's Going On in Palestine* forms a story narrated by an autodiegetic narrator because the entire story in this short story is a story about the narrator's own experience which he wants to tell to other people. The use of an autodiegetic narrator in this work is needed to replace the position of author held by Zanib Mian by changing his position to the narrator, namely *Eliyas*,

who is a child. If Mian were to tell it, an adult's point of view would be felt in this story, while the target readers are children. Meanwhile, the story time takes place in a simultaneous aspect. This happens because the narrator does not move, he only tells about the present; how important information about Palestine is now, and what needs to be done afterward. Apart from taking the story time in the present, the level of narration used by the narrator in this short story is intradiegetic because the narrator himself produces the narrative in the story.

Radical Issues in *Eliyas Explains What's Going On in Palestine*

Referring to what Reynolds said radical children's literature is the work of children's literature that has been implicated in social, intellectual, and artistic and contributes to the social and aesthetic transformation of culture; for instance, encouraging readers to approach ideas, issues, and objects from new perspectives and so prepare the way for change (Reynolds, 2007: 1). The term radical referred to Reynolds is not the basic normative views of democracy as mentioned by Kirk A. Hawkin (Hawkins, 2016). However, it is closer to the understanding that radical is a way of thinking that is rooted in its most basic foundations. Sometimes the term radical is confused with extremism, but the two are different. A brief example is how Latoya Teague in her article entitled *Not American Enough: African Diaspora, Unfinished Migrations, and Transnational Children's Literature* (Teague, 2021) mentions that black children should see themselves more closely and comprehensively through works of children's literature that encourage them to see themselves through their history and experiences. What Teague's research does is what Reynolds calls radical. Therefore, *Eliyas Explains What's Going On in Palestine* is a work that has discussed socio-politics and not only that, this work also contributes to social transformation and cultural aesthetics as stated by Reynolds, this can be seen in the following citation:

Dad shook his head, "the occupation of Palestine has been recognized by international law as an illegal occupation, and Jewish only settlements built on stolen Palestinian land have also been recognised as illegal."

(Mian, 2023: 8)

"Wait, so is it a Jews vs Muslims thing?" I asked. "No. Definitely not. It's the government of Israel that is guilty of all of this against the Palestinians. Many, many Jewish people also against what Israel does. There are many Jewish activists, people that support the rights of the Palestinians, and historians who wrote about what happened in the past. The Jewish religion is against all of the horrors that have been happening. There are also many, many Christian Palestinians," Dad explained

(Mian, 2023: 9)

The social transformation that occurs in *Eliyas* and *Aasiyah's* conversation with Mum and Dad is a change in perspective and ideology about the war, occupation, and conflict in Palestine, but what is very important here is that this family explains very well to *Eliyas* and *Aasiyah* about what is really happening in Palestine. These things according to Reynolds are what is called "encouraging readers to approach ideas, issues, and objects from new perspectives". *Eliyas* and *Aasiyah* as characters and of course the children who are assumed by *Zanib Mian* to read her work must also have a new perspective on Palestine and what is happening there.

In addition to excerpts of *Eliyas* and *Aasiyah's* conversations with Mum and Dad about perspectives and ideologies regarding war, occupation, and conflict in Palestine. Another finding in *Eliyas Explains What's Going On in Palestine* that proves that *Zanib Mian's* work refers to what Reynolds says contributes to social transformation and cultural aesthetics by, for example, encouraging readers to approach ideas, issues, and objects from a new perspective is found in the excerpt below:

My teacher told me that apartheid is when some people are treated differently when they live in the same place, because of their race. There are different laws for them. When Nelson Mandela started fighting against apartheid, they chucked him in jail and called him a terrorist, and now, like I said, we learn about him at school because **everyone knows he was a hero!** This is what he said: "But we know too well that our freedom is incomplete without the freedom of the Palestinians."

(Mian, 2023: 12-13)

And guess what? Dad told me all these important and fancy guys have rightly accused Israel of being an Apartheid state too:

- Amnesty International
- Human Rights Watch
- A UN expert
- And even a former head of Israel's own intelligence agency.

(Mian, 2023: 12-13)

It can be viewed how Zanib Mian through his narrator Eliyas discusses Apartheid that occurred in Africa and Nelson Mandela who made a major contribution to the resistance that occurred in Africa, especially in South Africa in the 20th century at that time. It can also be considered how the figure of Dad plays a role in informing other information that reinforces that what is happening in Palestine today is another Apartheid event. The reason is all-important people accuse Israel of being an Apartheid state, including even the former head of Israel's intelligence agency. This kind of explanation in children's literature is taboo, but without realizing it, this is exactly what children need. The template themes of morality, family, and the dichotomy of aesthetics and pedagogical prepare children to be "childish". Without realizing it, the social transformation around us will never change and find new perspectives.

According to Mickenberg, children's literature can be radical in its content, in its form, or both. At its core, radical children's literature challenges dominant norms and expectations about childhood (and, by extension, adulthood), society, socialization in general, and children's reading in particular (J. L Mickenberg, 2017). In line with the notion of Mickenberg that children's literature can be radical in both content and form, it is possible to see in the content of the story *Eliyas Explains What's Going On in Palestine* that the content of the story is very political and challenges the themes or issues in children's literature in general which are still very classical because they follow the foundation of children's literature in general which is very Lockean's concept: *tabula rasa* (Locke, 1989).

The assumption that children are like a blank sheet of paper is irrelevant because children certainly already have their perspective about the world. It just depends on how to direct the children and teach them properly. Therefore, radical issues like this should be introduced to children, because

children will be the agents of change in the future. Philip Nel and Mickenberg have argued, that radical children's literature encourages children to question the authority of those in power. It teaches children to take collective action to effect change, to trust their instincts, to explore alternative social arrangements, and to use history to understand how and why today's world has developed as it has (J. L Mickenberg & Nel, 2008).

Eliyas Explains What's Going On in Palestine illustrated book is necessary for children especially to understand what is happening in Palestine today. This is necessary to avoid misunderstanding what is happening there, as discussed in research entitled *A Palestine Story: A Brief Overview* that is important to understand and contribute to a deeper understanding of the complexities surrounding the Palestinian struggle and to advocate for a future of peace, justice, and dignity for all inhabitants of the region (Malik, Ayub, & Butt, 2023). One way to contribute to the previously mentioned is through literature. The result of art that knows and enters the experience of the nation, history, and society is literary work (Gultom & Setyami, 2022). The goal is to help children understand that the conflict is not between Muslims and Jews, or Jews and Christians, but rather a political conflict between two governments. Literature, as a medium or tool, provides a platform for voices that are often silenced in other media dialogues to be expressed. This is because literary works are global and universal in their reach, enabling suppressed perspectives to be heard and fostering greater understanding across diverse audiences. World Literature as textual practice as well as discipline gave more space to more global writers (Mattar, 2014). Moreover, what Israel doing is genocide, not just war, because it is attacking Palestinians including children. The pain of Palestinian children illustrated in Zanib Mian's book is shown to increase empathy for fellow human beings, especially children of the same age. This can be seen on the last pages of the book's illustrations, how Eliyas invites readers to stand up for people who are being oppressed, pray for, and donate to their friends in Palestine. This can be seen in Chapter 5-*What Can We Do?* (Mian, 2023: 18-19).

Childhood is a time for play, getting to know themselves, a time when all forms of principles and values are embedded in oneself. Childhood is also a period of developing individual potential in

preparation for a better future. Children must also be prepared for all the contradictions that occur not only in their minds but also around their environment, where people may differ in all opinions. As stated by Kimberley Reynolds, childhood is not only certainly a time for learning to negotiate and find a place in society but also about developing individual potential suited to a future in which societies could be different in some significant ways—for instance, in the organization of families, the distribution of resources, or the circulation of power (Reynolds, 2007: 2). According to Laura Wray-Lake children and youth become politically engaged by forming attachments to their communities and accessing opportunities in the settings of their everyday lives (Wray-Lake, 2019). Therefore, this current research highlights children should receive literary work that is not 'light' in terms of themes and issues. Without realizing it, it will create a weak and unprepared generation for the future to face all forms of challenges that exist today. Zanib Mian's illustrated book is a form of children's literature that should be spread and multiplied so that from an early age children are ready for the problems in society later. Radical issues or themes in children's literature have a crucial role to fulfil in social transformation. Children who are currently regarded as 'little kids' have an essential role to play in pushing society towards change for the better. The society is not only men and women or those who have had life experiences. Children are also part of society. Therefore, narratives of war, occupation, and anything deemed 'radical' do not always have to be consumed by adults.

CONCLUSION

The narration of the story *Eliyas Explains What's Going On in Palestine* that forms the story is narrated by an autodiegetic narrator because the whole story in this children's illustration book is a story about the narrator's experience to be told to others. The use of an autodiegetic narrator in this work is needed to replace the author position held by Zanib Mian because he is an adult. With this realization, Zanib Mian changes his position to the narrator, Eliyas, who is a child.

The importance of radical literary works for children should be introduced at an early age. This is to address the inevitable challenges and curiosity of

children. The presence of *Eliyas Explains What's Going On in Palestine* amid political issues of war between Israel and Palestine can answer all forms of anxiety of many adults. Especially regarding children's reading and references to answer children's curiosity. If the radical issues contained in the *Eliyas Explains* series are not discussed or raised, it will certainly be very difficult to find reading material for children about the Palestinian issue.

STATEMENT OF COMPETING INTEREST

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