

The Thousand and One Nights

Studies on Performing Arts & Literature of the Islamicate World

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The Thousand and One Nights

*Sources and Transformations in
Literature, Art, and Science*

Edited by

Ibrahim Akel
William Granara



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Contents

- Avant-propos IX
Aboubakr Chraïbi
Preface XII
List of Figures and Tables xv
Notes on Contributors xvi

PART 1

The Sources of the Thousand and One Nights

- 1 Dans l'atelier des *Mille et une nuits* 3
Ulrich Marzolph
- 2 Reshaping the Frame Story of the *Thousand and One Nights*
The Coherence of Prologue and Epilogue in the Earliest Existing Arabic MSS 22
Johannes Thomann
- 3 Les manuscrits des *Mille et une nuits* au Maroc 39
Ahmed Saïdy
- 4 Redécouverte d'un manuscrit oublié des *Mille et une nuits*
Le manuscrit de James Anderson 57
Ibrahim Akel

PART 2

Galland's Translation and the Eighteenth Century

- 5 *Métissage* and the Literary Field of the French Enlightenment
The Impact of Galland's Translation of the Arabian Nights 69
Anne E. Duggan
- 6 Genie in a Bookshop
Print Culture, Authorship, and 'The Affair of the Eighth Volume' at the Origins of Les Mille et une nuits 82
Arafat Abdur Razzaque

PART 3

The Nights, World Literature, and the Arts

- 7 Eugénie et les deux rêveurs 123
Abdelfattah Kilito
- 8 Subtile influence des *Mille et une nuits* dans le Rimbaud des
Illuminations 127
Rafika Hammoudi
- 9 *Callida Junctura*
Richard F. Burton's Transtextual 1001 Nights and the Source of Its
Poetry 142
Michael James Lundell
- 10 Sacred and Profane Love in the *Arabian Nights*
Nūr al-Dīn ibn Bakkār vs. Nūr al-Dīn ibn Ḥāqān 163
William Granara
- 11 Hārūn Al-Rašīd, the *Arabian Nights*, and Politics on the Arabic Stage,
1850s–1920s 175
Adam Mestyan
- 12 Alfred Faraĝ's *Arabian Nights*
Ongoing Experimentation in Arabic Theatre 198
Daniela Potenza
- 13 The Reception of *One Thousand and One Nights* in Polish Contemporary
Literature 216
Magdalena Kubarek
- 14 *Italian Nights*
Three Twentieth-Century Examples of Reception (Vittorini, Pasolini,
Calvino) 227
Marina Paino
- 15 L'héritage des *Mille et une nuits* chez Michel Ocelot 240
Ilaria Vitali

PART 4

The Nights, the Humanities, and the Sciences

- 16 American Nights
*The Introduction and Usage of the Arabian Nights within the
US's Print Modernity* 255
Rasoul Aliakbari
- 17 Jacqueline Kahanoff on the Margins of *A Thousand and One Nights* 270
Daniel Behar
- 18 Healing by Exempla
Political Therapy in the Nights' Hypertext 280
Dominique Jullien
- 19 The Devil in the Details, or, Economics in *Thousand and One Nights* 296
Eyüp Özveren
- Index 325

Avant-propos

Les *Mille et une nuits* sont un ouvrage d'une exceptionnelle ouverture sur le monde, sur les lettres, les sciences et les arts. Au début de l'année 2017, en parcourant la presse en ligne, on pouvait lire sur le site <<http://bibliobs.nouvelobs.com>> un article intitulé « Les surfers de Malibu méritent-ils le revenu universel ? » (Pascal Riché, 2 janvier 2017)¹. Le titre semble amusant et provocateur : est-il concevable de rémunérer quelqu'un à faire du surf, du matin au soir, pour le plaisir ? Mais l'article, comme son auteur l'indique, appartient à une discipline très sérieuse : la philosophie politique. De manière intuitive, il m'a semblé qu'il y avait là quelque chose de commun, un rapport intéressant à établir, avec les *Mille et une nuits*. Comment l'expliquer ?

Un premier lien existe, simplement du point de vue de l'interdisciplinarité : le regretté Muhsin Mahdi, qui a participé par ses propres publications comme par celles qu'il a suscitées autour de lui, à la dynamique de la recherche sur les *Nuits*, ne s'occupait-il pas principalement de philosophie politique ? N'avait-il pas lui-même, avant son édition critique du manuscrit Galland des *Nuits* en 1984, franchi le pas et publié un brillant article en 1973, bien documenté, en philosophie politique, où il avait pris comme corpus de référence les *Nuits*² ? Le bénéfice d'une approche croisée est notable. Les frontières entre les disciplines ont probablement du sens mais sont souvent exagérées et, dans certains cas, préjudiciables à une approche globale. Il faut savoir passer d'une discipline à l'autre afin de les éclairer mutuellement. C'est très précieux. Le présent livre, parfaitement bien conçu par Ibrahim Akel et William Granara, en est un excellent exemple.

Il faut savoir aussi, dans ce grand brassage, fort utile, entre disciplines et aires culturelles, appeler les choses par leur nom. Les *Nuits* ne sont pas un livre de philosophie politique, mais un ouvrage de littérature de fiction ; un ouvrage arabe, aux origines indiennes et surtout persanes, créé avec ce titre nouveau au plus tard au IX^e siècle, que l'on lisait et qu'on lit encore aujourd'hui principalement pour se distraire. Appelons donc un chat un chat. Ce sont les *Mille et une nuits* ! Conçues pour l'immense plaisir des lecteurs, comme les ont célébrées par exemple les auteurs français fin de siècle³, pour le plaisir et au profit

1 <<http://bibliobs.nouvelobs.com/idees/20170102.OBS3284/les-surfers-de-malibu-meritent-ils-le-revenu-universel.html>>.

2 Muhsin Mahdi, « Remarks on the 1001 Nights », in *Interpretation, a Journal of Political Philosophy*, vol. 3/2–3, winter 1973, pp. 157–168.

3 Voir la préface de Joseph C. Mardrus à sa traduction des *Nuits* et la lettre écrite par André Gide et citée par Marc Fumaroli : *Le Livre des Mille et une nuits*, traduit par le Dr. J.C. Mardrus,

aussi d'autres arts, de la peinture, de la musique, du théâtre ou du cinéma. N'importe quelle personne au monde pourra vous le dire. Ce sont des djinns et de la magie, des histoires d'amour légitimes et illégitimes, des marchands qui se ruinent et s'enrichissent, des califes qui se font tyrans ou justiciers, des villes orientales dangereuses et resplendissantes, des contrées et des créatures imaginaires. Tout cela est consigné dans une centaine de manuscrits arabes des *Nuits* et quelques dizaines de manuscrits turcs, une littérature médiane, plutôt citadine et « bourgeoise », qui peut encore nous apporter des surprises ; l'essentiel de cette matière a été traduit sur tous les continents, non sans apporter là encore une matière nouvelle, des imitations et des influences, élargissant de plus en plus le corpus, le territoire des *Nuits*, jusqu'à poser de sérieuses difficultés aux chercheurs qui tentent d'en reconnaître les limites.

À la racine de leur succès, une rhétorique qui leur est propre : la mise en abyme, où l'art de raconter est au service de la vie, et en harmonie intime avec elle. Les *Nuits* octroient en effet à la littérature une importance égale à la chose la plus précieuse qui puisse exister. Elles mettent en place, *via* l'enchâssement, une équation radicale. Un récit des *Nuits* dispose de la même valeur qu'une vie humaine et s'y échange exactement contre une vie humaine. La valorisation de la création littéraire y atteint des sommets inaccessibles au commun des récits, et nombre d'auteurs modernes se pensent en conteurs négociant des vies, comme Schéhérazade⁴. Les *Mille et une nuits* peuvent aider, comme l'une des productions les plus originales et les plus stimulantes de la littérature de fiction, à mieux comprendre les hommes et les sociétés du monde, mais restent néanmoins, sur terre, dans les rayonnages des bibliothèques, une fiction plaisante, du domaine des rêves. Le présent ouvrage traite précisément ces deux aspects des *Nuits*, à la fois leur « humanité » et leur « irréalité », de manière lumineuse.

Et là, au passage, se dégage un lien plus subtil avec l'article cité (les surfeurs méritent-ils le revenu universel ?), non pas au niveau du corpus d'application, un corpus parmi d'autres, potentiellement profitable à la science qui réfléchit sur la pertinence politique d'une telle législation, mais à un niveau plus profond. Ce niveau est celui du rêve positif, qui se structure en utopie et s'impose, du point de vue pragmatique, comme un dépassement de la réalité et, en fin de compte, comme la recherche légitime du bonheur. Dans cette perspective, la littérature de fiction, ainsi d'ailleurs que n'importe quelle création humaine et n'importe quel jeu humain libre, partagé et conçu pour le

présentation de Marc Fumaroli, 2 vols, Paris : Robert Laffont, 1985, vol. 1, p. 1–2 et p. 5.

4 Voir par exemple *La Mille et Deuxième Nuit* de Théophile Gautier (Paris : Omnibus, 2011) ainsi que le livre d'Evangelia Stead, *Contes de la mille et deuxième nuit*, Grenoble : Million, 2011.

plaisir, interrogent le politique sur son objectif ultime : où mène-t-il la société ? Les travaux d'Aristote⁵, centrés sur une politique du bonheur, ont apporté une solide réponse qui va dans le même sens que la réponse apportée par les *Mille et une nuits* sur l'importance positive d'une belle fiction inventée de toutes pièces pour notre grand plaisir : c'est ce qui motive la vie et la sauvegarde, nuit après nuit, c'est le tissu même du temps qui s'écoule, se traduit en parole, en acte, en écriture, en récit, et fournit ce moment de bonheur dont même les textes les plus rigoureux et les plus austères reconnaissent la nécessité.

Ce livre est le fruit d'une très belle coopération entre L'Institut National des Langues et Civilisations Orientales et Harvard University et, plus précisément, entre l'équipe de recherche de l'Inalco, le Cermom (Centre de recherche Moyen-Orient Méditerranée), représenté ici par Ibrahim Akel, et le CMES (Center for Middle Eastern Studies) que représente le Professeur William Granara. Il a été rendu possible grâce aux financements du CMES et de l'Agence Nationale de la Recherche du projet Inalco/Msfima (*Les Mille et une nuits : sources et fonctions dans l'islam médiéval*).

Aboubakr Chraïbi

Inalco, Paris

5 Aristote, *Éthique de Nicomaque*, traduction, préface et notes par Jean Voilquin, Paris : GF-Flammarion, 1992, p. 21 et suiv.

Preface

Taking into account the sources of the *Thousand and One Nights* before the publication of the Arabic editions of Calcutta (1814–1818 and 1839–1842) and Būlāq (1835), we can conclude that the narrative material relating to the *Nights* or, similarly, the *Arabian Nights*, was in circulation throughout medieval times. This material amounted, to a wide and varied degree, to a rich source that added tremendously to what has been studied until now. (See, for example, the index of the Arabic manuscripts by Ibrahim Akel and the Turkish manuscripts by Delio Proverbio). In fact, the ‘book’ of *The Thousand and One Nights* belongs to an even larger collection of literally hundreds of unpublished texts that are connected to a specific movement of medieval literary creativity. This collection does not fall within the ‘popular literature’ category nor into a scholarly canon. It takes its place more accurately within a literature identified by Aboubakr Chraïbi (1993, 1998, 2008, 2016) as a *middle literature*. This category (genre?) of literature circulated widely in medieval times, and especially within the Arabic sector where it first surfaced with the appearance of the “Nights” in the Arabic-speaking world of the mid-eighth century. This is clearly evidenced by the [subsequent] Syrian, Egyptian, and Maghrebi manuscripts which produced a variety of versions and variants. Moreover, the ‘Nights’ expanded beyond Arabic and seeped into other languages, especially Turkish, with more than twenty Turkish manuscripts of the *Thousand and One Nights* produced, then eventually making its way into European languages and cultures. The [transmission] of ‘The Nights,’ as we now know, left its mark on authors such as Petrus Alphonsi (1062–1140) and Giovanni Boccaccio (1313–1375). And, long before the publication of Antoine Galland’s French translation in 1704, which had a monumental impact on French literature, even contributing to the creation of a new literary genre, the ‘oriental tale,’ to which Voltaire makes reference in the introduction to his *Zadiq ou la Destinée* (1747), echoes of the frame story of the *Thousand and One Nights*, and more exactly the *Hundred and One Nights*, had already reached Italy via Giovanni Sercambi’s *Novella d’Astolfo* (c. 1400) and with Ludovico Ariosto’s *Orlando Furioso* (1532).

Literary works with many textual sources, which have been transformed, much translated, and exercised a wide influence, such as the *Thousand and One Nights*, create dense and fluid textual networks. What must we have read, seen, or heard to claim to know the *Nights*? The oldest and most comprehensive Arabic manuscript? The Būlāq or Mahdi edition? Burton or Haddawy’s translations? Poe’s short story? Rabaud’s opera? Mahfouz’s novel? Borges’s essays? Pasolini’s film? Materials related to the *Nights* continue to emerge from

many arts, countries, periods, disciplines, and languages, and their scope continues to widen, making the *Nights* a universal work from every point of view.

The simultaneous transformations of the *Thousand and One Nights* and their environments often introduce new forms of interaction and promote the creation of new cultural objects and new research perspectives. From the nineteenth century onwards, short stories and novels would gradually dominate the various forms of literary production, while, during this time, the *Nights* would be revitalized with new editions (Būlāq, Calcutta I and II, Breslau, etc.) and with new translations (Lane, Burton, Mardrus, and so forth). Always a publishing staple, the *Nights* would gradually enter *world literature* through the great novel as the vehicle of transmission of the day, from Argentina to Japan, but also other arts, such as music and cinema from its earliest days (Méliès, 1905; Reiniger, 1926). Another remarkable transformation relates to contemporary society, namely the birth of several scientific disciplines, the innovation of new research tools, and the cross-pollination of interdisciplinary approaches to sociology, history, anthropology, psychoanalysis, and political philosophy, all of which have adopted the *Nights* in some way as a reference corpus.

This volume traverses various aspects of the dense textual network referenced above. It is divided into four sections. The first section consists of four chapters that revolve around the study of 'sources' and manuscript copies of the *Thousand and One Nights*. Ulrich Marzolph investigates the contribution of Muḥammad Ibn 'Abd al-Mu'ṭī al-Ishāqī's *Latā'if aḥbār al-uwal* (*Book of Subtle Stories from the Forefathers*) to the collection of the *Nights*; Johannes Thomann undertakes a 'reshaping' of the *Nights*' frame story drawing from the earliest existing manuscripts employed by Galland and Kayseri; Ahmed Saidy surveys the *Arabian Nights* manuscripts preserved in the Moroccan archives; and Ibrahim Akel examines a recently discovered unknown manuscript of James Anderson.

The second section revisits the Galland translation of 1704 and the transformations the publication of this book have registered in France since the eighteenth century. It also considers how a European reading public viewed this book in terms of 'literary genre.' Anne E. Duggan examines how Galland's translation influenced the fields of literature and philosophy in the age of French Enlightenment and how it may have altered the concept of 'story' as well. Arafat Razzaque's chapter, meanwhile, probes the roles of print culture and authorship in his reading of *L'affaire du Tome VIII*.

The third section comprises articles that situate the *Nights* and its vast influence in the contexts of 'comparative' and 'world' literature[s]. Abdelfattah Kilito traces a connection between the *Night's* tale, 'Two Dreamers', and Balzac's *Eugénie Grandet*; meanwhile Rafika Hammoudi considers the *Nights'*

influences on Rimbaud's *Illuminations*. Michael Lundell casts new light upon the sources Richard Burton drew upon in his translations of the *Night's* poetry. William Granara provides a reading of two love stories in the *Nights*, as reworkings of the Arabian sacred and profane *ğazal*. Adam Mestyan exposes images of the character of Hārūn al-Rašīd in pioneering works of the early Arabic theatre. Magdalena Kubarek traces the presence of Scheherazade in contemporary Polish literature and culture. Marina Paino examines the influence of the *Nights* upon works of modern literature and film. Finally, Ilaria Vitalia argues for the inspiration of the *Thousand and One Nights* on Michel Ocelet's vast literary and theatrical production.

The fourth, and final, section contains chapters devoted to numerous functions and reworkings of the *Thousand and One Nights* in the contemporary humanities and sciences. Rasoul Aliakbari analyzes the publication of the *Arabian Nights* against the background of the evolving concept of nationhood in pre-Civil War America. Daniel Behar's reading of Jacqueline Kahanoff's essay on the *Arabian Nights* captures the connection between the technique of embeddedness found in Scheherazade's storytelling and actual political realities of Kahanoff's time and place. Dominique Jullien discusses the pedagogical and moral dimensions of the tales by tracing the motif of healing as connectors of the individual story to the frame story. And finally, Eyüp Özveren identifies economic representations and their association with economic analysis in the *Nights*.

In sum this volume sets its sights on scrutinizing the expanse of sources for this monumental work of Arabic literature, in all of their static and dynamic complexity. It also follows the trajectory of the *Nights'* texts and their creative scholarly commentaries, their productive encounter with all that followed the French translation in the eighteenth century, and their developments and relationships with the arts and sciences.

Ibrahim Akel and William Granara

Figures and Tables

Figures

- 3.1 *Arabian Nights* manuscripts in the Moroccan libraries 46
- 3.2 Beginning of the manuscript no. 6110 (National Library of the Kingdom of Morocco) 47
- 3.3 End of the manuscript no. 6110 48
- 3.4 Dated stamp in the manuscript no. 6110 52
- 3.5 Beginning of the manuscript no. 6149 (National Library of the Kingdom of Morocco) 53
- 3.6 End of the manuscript no. 6149 54
- 5.1 Genealogy of Oriental Tales from Galland 72
- 9.1 Burton's Lane 9-1 145
- 9.2 Burton's Lane 2-79 146
- 9.3 Burton's Lane 1-4 148

Tables

- 3.1 *Arabian Nights* manuscripts in the Moroccan libraries 46
- 3.2 Comparison between the Moroccan manuscript and the editions of Būlāq and Mahdi 49
- 4.1 Concordance of Manuscripts (Edinburgh, Yale and Oxford) 61
- 5.1 Explicit and Implicit Relatives of the *Nights* 74
- 5.2 Tale collections and books not included in the *Cabinet des Fées* 75
- 5.3 Periodical Press 76
- 5.4 Cabinet des fées, 37 volumes (1785–86) 77
- 16.1 Major publications of "Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves," "Sinbad," "Aladdin," and *Arabian Nights* based on location of publication in the United States in the antebellum period 266

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PART 1

The Sources of the
Thousand and One Nights



Dans l'atelier des *Mille et une nuits*

Ulrich Marzolph

L'histoire de l'évolution des *Mille et une nuits* jusqu'à la compilation que l'on connaît aujourd'hui est caractérisée par une série d'événements drôles.¹ Dès le début de son introduction aux publics européens, le livre était accompagné d'actes de mystification délibérés, tels que la liberté de Galland ayant intégré dans sa traduction des contes qui ne faisaient jamais partie de la collection originale en arabe, ainsi que la production suivante des versions arabes pour les contes d'Aladdin et d'Ali Baba. Comme des manuscrits « complets » des *Nuits* n'étaient que rarement disponibles avant Galland, les copistes arabes étoffaient arbitrairement le contenu des *Nuits*, pour former une œuvre aux apparences multiples. En somme, l'histoire des *Nuits* présente une œuvre qui, malgré son noyau fondateur relativement stable², a été largement créée par la réception enthousiaste de l'adaptation de Galland en Occident ainsi que par la quête des manuscrits « complets » qui s'ensuivit aux XVIII^e et XIX^e siècles. À côté du manuscrit le plus vieux qui était à la base de l'adaptation de Galland, nous connaissons aujourd'hui moins d'une douzaine de manuscrits compilés avant la fin du XVII^e siècle, c'est-à-dire avant la publication de la traduction de Galland et l'impact émanant de sa réception³. Aucun de ces manuscrits n'est complet, et même l'ensemble des fragments ne permet pas une reconstruction claire et non ambiguë d'un ensemble standard de contes qui se trouve dans les manuscrits arabes avant le début du XVIII^e siècle. Ces remarques préalables indiquent déjà un aspect important gouvernant le contenu des *Nuits* avant et après Galland : le noyau fondateur mis à part, le répertoire des *Nuits* change dans les versions différents, l'œuvre est un véritable « change-forme ». Au lieu de contenir un répertoire fixe de narrations, elle offre un cadre narratif bien structuré qui permet l'intégration d'une large gamme de récits, quasiment de tous genres, c'est-à-dire des épopées, des contes merveilleux du type « conte de

1 Je remercie Christiane Fellenberg pour la préparation de la traduction française de mon texte original en anglais, ainsi que Marilena Papachristophorou et Aboubakr Chraïbi pour avoir adapté la traduction. Celle-ci a été mise à jour à partir de la version anglaise, *In the Studio of the Nights, Middle Eastern Literatures* 17,1 (2014), pp. 43–57.

2 Chraïbi 2008, pp. 89–116.

3 Akel 2016, pp. 65–114, particulièrement pp. 69–78.

fées », des légendes religieuses, des contes d'animaux, des facéties et des anecdotes.

Tous les manuscrits complets des *Nuits* que l'on connaît aujourd'hui – à savoir les manuscrits qui, en fait, comme le nom original le suggère bien, pourraient nourrir mille et une nuits de narration – ont été produits afin de satisfaire la demande européenne au XVIII^e et XIX^e siècles⁴. On sait bien que les compilateurs des manuscrits des *Nuits* puisaient dans une grande variété de sources même avant la date donnée pour compléter les manuscrits fragmentaires qui leur étaient accessibles à l'époque. Parmi les œuvres qui ont fait l'objet d'études précédentes, on en trouve d'assez anciennes, comme le « miroir des princes » *al-Tibr al-masbūk fī naṣīḥat al-mulūk* (« L'Or filé dans le conseil des rois ») compilée par le fameux al-Ġazzālī (mort en 1111)⁵ ainsi que les œuvres contemporaines d'Ishāqī comme le *I'lām al-nās fīmā waqa'a li-l-Barāmika ma'a Banī l-Abbās* (« Informations pour les gens à propos de ce qui est arrivé aux Barmaquides avec les Abbassides ») d'al-Itlīdī, auteur du XVII^e siècle⁶. Au niveau pratique, les compilateurs auraient dû avoir tiré leur matériel à partir des œuvres qui étaient accessibles physiquement. Vu les caractéristiques de la tradition des manuscrits, ils avaient sûrement un accès moins direct aux œuvres de la littérature arabe classique qu'aux compilations contemporaines qui contenaient non seulement des citations secondaires des compilations plus anciennes mais aussi du matériel supplémentaire. En outre, il est également probable que – au niveau idéologique – les compilateurs ressentaient une évolution culturelle. Par conséquent, un recours aux œuvres les plus anciennes aurait représenté une forme de dilapidation d'un matériel précieux et en même temps un mépris des œuvres ultérieures qui, au fond, résultaient des anciennes et qui, du reste, s'avéraient être encore plus propices à une interprétation consciente du matériel traditionnel pour la société contemporaine⁷. Dans le présent essai, je vais parler d'une œuvre particulièrement intéressante de la littérature arabe du XVII^e siècle qui – bien que connue depuis longtemps – n'a jamais fait l'objet d'une étude détaillée. Il s'agit de la chronique *Kitāb Laṭā'if aḥbār al-uwal* (« Les belles anecdotes des Anciens ») compilée par un certain Muḥammad Ibn 'Abd al-Mu'tī al-Ishāqī (mort après 1623)⁸.

4 Grotzfeld 2004, vol. 1, pp. 17–21 ; id. 2005, pp. 9–30 ; Akel 2016.

5 Yamanaka 2005, pp. 93–115.

6 cf. Marzolph/Van Leeuwen, vol. 2, pp. 606–607.

7 Pour des discussions récentes sur le phénomène de la littérature arabe post-classique cf. Bauer 2003, pp. 71–122 ; id. 2005, pp. 105–132 ; id. 2007, pp. 137–167 ; Allen/ Richards 2006 ; Lowry/ Stewart 2009.

8 Marzolph 2011, pp. 317–328.

Apparemment, le premier savant occidental à avoir remarqué la correspondance d'un conte dans les *Nuits* et l'œuvre historique de Ishāqī fut Edward William Lane. Celui-ci vivait en Égypte à l'époque où on compilait encore de nouvelles versions « complètes » des *Nuits*. Dans sa note détaillée à l'histoire de « Abū al-Ḥasan, ou le Dormeur éveillé », publiée en 1839 dans le deuxième volume de ses *Arabian Nights' Entertainments*, Lane dit qu'« il a trouvé la part principale de ce conte en tant qu'anecdote historique » dans l'œuvre d'Ishāqī⁹. Cette « part principale » raconte l'histoire d'un homme à qui l'on a fait croire que c'était lui le caliphe ; le déroulement de l'action offre de nombreuses possibilités pour des tournants burlesques. En outre, le récit du « dormeur éveillé » ne se trouve pas dans les éditions standard arabes des *Nuits* – un fait dont Lane s'était déjà rendu compte. À côté de la version adaptée de Galland, Lane connaissait et traduisait le conte tiré de l'édition Breslau de Habicht (1824–1838), de fait, la seule version arabe publiée des *Nuits* comportant ce conte et disponible en son temps. Mais comme « il existe dans une copie et représente un des meilleurs contes dans la version de Galland », Lane « lui a heureusement accordé une place dans sa collection ». Au fil d'une discussion qui portait sur les sources et les équivalents du conte, j'étais arrivé à la conclusion que la version de Galland de ce conte s'originait probablement dans un manuscrit des *Nuits* du XVII^e siècle, compilé en turc ottoman et préservé déjà à l'époque à la Bibliothèque Royale de Paris¹⁰. Plus récemment, Ibrahim Akel a découvert le manuscrit arabe sur lequel Galland s'appuyait sans doute, à voir le manuscrit Paris, BnF, ar. 3893 (Ancien fonds 1496)¹¹. Mais cela à part pour l'instant, on y reviendra plus tard. À part Lane et Habicht, le récit d'Abū al-Ḥasan se trouve aussi dans les traductions publiées par John Payne et Richard Burton. Les deux traducteurs n'ajoutent pourtant pas d'informations essentielles sur la chronique d'Ishāqī. La seule remarque nouvelle que fait Burton est de sorte erratique comme d'habitude, quand il remarque « que parmi quelques despotes pétulants de l'Est l'aventure aurait dû se passer bien souvent »¹².

Entre-temps, le neveu de Lane, Edward Stanley Poole, avait publié la version des *Nuits* de son oncle « d'une copie annotée par le traducteur » en 1859, démontrant un autre conte correspondant entre les *Nuits* et Ishāqī¹³. Il s'agit du conte populaire (conte-type 1645) intitulé « Le Rêve du trésor sur le pont », un conte dans lequel le rêveur apprend par le rêve d'une autre personne qu'un trésor est caché dans son propre jardin. Ce conte remonte au *Kitāb al-Faraġ*

9 Lane, vol. 2, p. 335, note 1.

10 Marzolph 2015, pp. 34–67.

11 Akel 2017, pp. 206–209.

12 Burton, vol. 11 (= suppl. 1), p. 2, note 2.

13 Lane, vol. 2, p. 461, note 39.

ba'd al-šidda (« La délivrance après la difficulté ») compilé par al-Muḥassin al-Tanūḥī (mort en 994), dont l'avait déjà tiré l'anthologie *Tamarāt al-awrāq* (« Les fruits des parchemins ») de Ibn Ḥiǧǧa al-Ḥamawī (mort en 1434)¹⁴. Bien que Poole ait ajouté un autre détail à la question qui nous concerne au moment, il a manqué à reconnaître l'importance de sa découverte pour la compilation des *Nuits*. C'était à l'orientaliste René Basset qu'il revient de s'occuper plus en détail d'al-Ishāqī.

Parmi les nombreux petits traités de Basset dans le domaine d'ethnologie, de folklore et de littérature comparée, on trouve un court essai publié en 1889 dans la *Revue des traditions populaires* qui s'intitule « Le rêve du trésor sur le pont »¹⁵. L'intention principale de Basset ici est de discuter la version du récit dans la chronique d'Ishāqī. Depuis le traité érudit écrit par Jacob Grimm, le conte avait déjà été le sujet de la recherche plusieurs fois avant la fin du XIX^e siècle. Dans un court essai publié en 1888 dans le journal en question, Victor Chauvin, auteur de la grande *Bibliographie des ouvrages arabes*, en avait décelé les origines arabes¹⁶. Chauvin n'a pourtant pas déchiffré la référence rudimentaire à « (El-Is-hāḳee) » donné par Lane. Basset donc ne fournit pas seulement la référence exacte mais il remarque que la version citée par Ishāqī au niveau de contenu *et* de libellé ne se distingue pas de manière considérable du texte du conte comme on le trouve dans les éditions standard des *Nuits* – à savoir les éditions de Būlāq (1835) et de Calcutta II (1839–42). Lors de la lecture d'Ishāqī, un fait attira l'attention de Basset : le *Kitāb Latā'if aḥbār al-uwal* comporte encore d'autres contes qui se trouvent aussi dans les *Nuits*. Il cite quatre de ces récits tout particulièrement : « Ğa'far le Barmécide et le vieux Bédouin »¹⁷, « Abū al-Ḥasan, ou le dormeur éveillé », « La Noblesse du Barmécide Ğa'far contre le marchand de fèves »¹⁸ et « Ibrāhīm al-Mahdī »¹⁹. Le « etc. » à la fin de la liste de Basset suggère qu'il avait aussi conscience d'autres analogies entre l'œuvre d'Ishāqī et les *Nuits*.

Le seul résultat repérable de la suite explicitement annoncée est une traduction du conte intitulé « Abū al-Ḥasan, ou le dormeur éveillé » publiée avec un commentaire de Basset²⁰. Il est intéressant de signaler que les récits d'Ishāqī mentionnés chez Basset apparaissent en ordre chronologique bien qu'ils ne suivent directement l'un l'autre. En outre, ils se trouvent en l'espace de 15 pages

14 Marzolph 2010, cols. 877–882.

15 Basset 1899, pp. 111–112.

16 Chauvin 1898, pp. 193–196.

17 Chraïbi 2008, p. 156, no. 165.

18 *ibid.*, p. 146, no. 087.

19 *ibid.*, p. 157, no. 219

20 Basset 1901, pp. 74–88.

dans la première moitié de l'œuvre d'Ishāqī avant le récit « Le rêve du trésor sur le pont ». Bien que Basset dans sa compilation *Mille et un contes, récits et légendes arabes* (1924–26) ait cité des passages de la deuxième moitié d'Ishāqī, lui aussi a manqué de dévoiler l'impact de grande portée du *Kitāb Laṭā'if aḥbār al-uwal* pour la compilation des *Nuits*, – fait qui est à démontrer dans ce qui suit.

Afin d'éviter un malentendu au niveau terminologique, même en prenant le risque de répéter des connaissances acceptées de manière générale, on devrait rappeler que les *Nuits*, dans les limites de nos connaissances actuelles, ne sont et n'ont probablement jamais été une œuvre homogène avec un contenu complètement figé au-delà du noyau fondateur des premiers contes. L'œuvre commence par un noyau constitutif stable qui se trouve déjà dans le manuscrit le plus vieux. Ce manuscrit, qu'a publié Muhsin Mahdi en 1984²¹, servait de base pour l'adaptation française de Galland. La recherche sur les manuscrits individuels et sur les éditions des *Nuits*, notamment celle du chercheur allemand Heinz Grotzfeld²², a nettement démontré que chaque manuscrit et chaque édition, voire même chaque traduction des *Nuits*, représente éventuellement une version séparée qui se distingue, entre autres, par son contenu et sa mise en ordre spécifique. Comme on l'a vu, les compilateurs des manuscrits des *Nuits* ont puisé dans une grande variété de sources pour compléter les manuscrits fragmentaires disponibles. La chronique d'Ishāqī nous conduit au cœur de « l'atelier » de ces compilateurs.

Le titre en entier du livre d'Ishāqī est *Kitāb Laṭā'if aḥbār al-uwal fī man taṣarrafa fī Miṣr min arbāb al-duwal* (« Les belles anecdotes des Anciens qui ont dirigé l'Égypte parmi les gouverneurs »)²³. Après des remarques préalables qui traitent la période préislamique, l'auteur discute de façon chronologique le règne des premiers califes (y compris d'ailleurs al-Ḥasan, fils du quatrième calife 'Alī) et les dynasties suivantes des Umayyades et des Abbasides. Suivent des chapitres qui portent sur un certain nombre de souverains égyptiens, puis sur les Toulounides, les Ikhchidides, les Fatimides, les Ayyoubides, les Mamelouks, les Circassiens, et enfin les Ottomans, dans le temps desquels l'auteur a compilé son livre. Les sources citées par l'auteur, en somme une cinquantaine de livres, comportent des œuvres standard de la littérature historiographique et biographiques, au côté de commentaires du Coran (*tafsīr*) et d'œuvres des belles-lettres (*adab*). En ce qui concerne l'*adab*, Ishāqī ne se réfère guère aux

21 The Thousand and One Nights (Alf Layla wa-layla) *from the Earliest Known Sources. Arabic Text Edited with Introduction and Notes* by Muhsin Mahdi. vol 1–2. Leiden 1984.

22 Grotzfeld 1985, pp. 73–87 ; id. 1991, pp. 855–886 ; id. 1999, pp. 91–108 ; id. 2004, pp. 456–464.

23 éd. M.R. Muhannā. al-Manṣūra 1420/2000 (392 p.).

œuvres de la période pré-mongole telle que le *Rabīʿ al-abrār* (« Le printemps des gens doux et généreux » de al-Zamaḥṣarī (mort en 1144 ; p. 67/8) ou bien le miroir des princes *Sirāj al-mulūk* « La lampe des rois » d'al-Ṭurṭuṣī (mort en 1126 ; p. 119/-7; 124/8). Par contre il préfère citer de nombreuses œuvres qui remontent à la période post-mongole, comme le *Sukkardān al-sultān* (« Le pot des douceurs pour le sultan ») d'Ibn Abī Ḥaḡala (mort en 1375 ; p. 128/-7), *Ḥayāt al-ḥayawān* (« La vie des animaux ») d'al-Damīrī (mort vers 1403 ; p. 245/13, 258/-7, 260/3, 273/15, 333/12), *Fākihāt al-ḥulafāʾ* (« Les fruits des caliphes ») d'Ibn ʿArabšāh (mort en 1450 ; p. 119/-1), ou *al-Naṣīḥa bimā abdathu al-qarīḥa* (« Conseils venus à l'esprit ») d'un certain Muḥammad Ibn ʿAbd al-Salām al-Manūfi (mort en 1527 ; p. 271/-11).

En tant que produit typique de la littérature égypto-arabe compilée pendant la période ottomane, l'œuvre d'Iṣḥāqī est parfois mentionnée dans les recherches récentes sur la littérature arabe²⁴. Cependant, il n'a jamais été étudié sérieusement. À un certain degré, ce mépris est probablement dû au fait que les orientalistes occidentaux continuent à considérer les compilations de la période entre la littérature arabe classique et moderne comme répétitives, sans esprit et largement sans pouvoir créatif – bref, une estimation *ex negativo*, telle que « manque de l'acquis littéraire ». Il suffit d'évoquer le montant considérable des évaluations prévenues qu'ont exprimé les orientalistes occidentaux à l'égard de l'encyclopédie *al-Mustaṭraf fī kull fann mustaẓraf* (« Le plus fin de chacun des plus beaux arts ») compilée par un compatriote d'Iṣḥāqī, à avoir al-Ibšīhī au début du xv^e siècle²⁵. Ces évaluations commencent par « peu d'individualité » (René Basset) et s'étendent jusqu'à reprocher à l'auteur d'avoir compilé son matériel sans « l'essai de réfléchir lui-même » (Maurice Godefroy-Demombynes) à cause de sa « capacité intellectuelle limitée » (Hartmut Fähndrich), jusqu'à juger le *Mustaṭraf* « une œuvre plutôt maladroite » à l'« arrangement à l'aveuglette » (Jean-Claude Vadet).

En évaluant les « chroniques de l'Égypte ottomane », Nelly Hanna a correctement mentionné le fait que « le langage et le style de quelques-unes de ces œuvres les rendent plus facilement accessibles à un public plus vaste »²⁶. Notamment « beaucoup de gens qui lisaient ou écoutaient des écrits historiques appréciaient des récits d'un certain degré de divertissement ou bien ceux qui combinaient des faits racontés à travers des histoires amusantes ». En discutant la chronique d'Iṣḥāqī en tant qu'exemple, Hanna souligne le caractère distrayant de l'œuvre. À côté d'informations historiques, l'œuvre fournit des

24 Busse 1987, p. 289 ; Winter 2006, p. 174 ; Hanna 2001, p. 247 ; id. 2003, pp. 113, 115–116.

25 Marzolph 1997, pp. 407–419.

26 Hanna 2001, p. 247.

renseignements sur des curiosités de toutes sortes, y compris des « recettes médicales pour diverses maladies, comme « manger du poulet fait accroître le sperme », « formules magiques propices à utiliser contre des personnes malfaisantes ; conseil pour diminuer la puissance d'une femme dominatrice, à savoir à l'aide d'une langue de gazelle séchée à l'ombre comme nourriture » et, bien entendu, « un nombre de récits amusants érotiques ou pornographiques », ainsi celui où un homme « est dupé pour copuler avec une personne de même sexe » à son insu²⁷. En général, Hanna évalue la chronique d'Ishāqī comme « médiocre au sens de l'acquis historique ». Selon elle, même les passages narratifs se présentent de manière plus ou moins « maladroite ».

Ainsi, elle a failli adopter une « attitude coloniale » prévenue et largement répandue parmi les chercheurs occidentaux depuis la seconde moitié du XIX^e siècle. La notion de décadence et de stagnation qu'implique cette attitude par rapport au développement historique du monde islamique a amené à considérer les chroniques des périodes mamelouke et ottomane comme répétitives et inférieures²⁸. C'est pourquoi, on ne les a pas envisagées comme des œuvres méritant une étude sérieuse comme c'était le cas des extraits tirés des originaux qu'on trouve dans les anthologies de l'époque. Au lieu d'apprécier les anthologies des périodes mamelouke et ottomane en tant que « résultat d'une culture littéraire dynamique de l'époque »²⁹, la valeur principale qu'on leur a attribuée consistait simplement en la préservation des textes plus anciens et aujourd'hui perdus. Uniquement quelques approches récemment parues valorisent ces anthologies comme « réinterprétant le canon [...] d'une manière faisant appel à de développements contemporains en question de goût et sensibilités littéraires »³⁰. Chevauchant l'attitude traditionnelle des intellectuels arabes à l'égard des narrations populaires, l'attitude orientaliste contraste fort avec celle des médiévistes et des folkloristes. Depuis longtemps, les chercheurs de ces disciplines-là ont bien apprécié l'importance des compilations post-classiques en tant qu'œuvres qui préservent de même qu'elles transmettent des connaissances de jadis³¹. En outre, les compilations post-classiques servaient à encoder et à consolider le codex des connaissances désirables mais aussi à bien enraciner ces codes dans la tradition contemporaine érudite et populaire.

Le mépris manifesté à l'encontre de l'œuvre d'Ishāqī – et de beaucoup d'œuvres similaires – pourrait aussi s'expliquer par le fait que le livre présente

27 Hanna 2003, p. 116 ; id. 2001, p. 247.

28 cf. les références note 7.

29 Bauer 2005, p. 122.

30 Lowry/Stewart 2009, p. 7.

31 Schenda 1996, cols. 76–85 ; cols. 647–660 ; Alsheimer 1996, cols. 111–114.

largement l'histoire à travers des anecdotes. Les informations sur l'histoire sont imbriquées aux récits, tout en utilisant les faits historiques comme de simples prétextes pour raconter de courtes histoires distrayantes et des anecdotes amusantes. Parfois, l'auteur a l'air de prendre conscience de sa propre indulgence dans ces contextes amusants, de sorte qu'il reprend la discussion plus sérieuse en employant la formule *raġa'nā ilā mā naħnu bi-ṣadadihi* (« il faudrait revenir au sujet de la discussion », ou un peu plus librement « revenons à nos moutons ... »), formule citée d'ailleurs environ 15 fois³². En plus, beaucoup de ces courtes anecdotes citées par Ishāqī sont d'un caractère des « frivolités les plus ennuyants [...] qui dans leurs naïvetés sont tellement brutes, insupportables et gênants que les Janissaires n'auraient pas pu trouver un trésor plus riche pour leur goût » – évaluation fournie par Gustav Flügel, savant allemand du XIX^e siècle, sur la collection contemporaine anonyme *Nuzhat al-udabā'* (« La promenade des lettrés »)³³. Face à ce jugement, les sujets favoris et les topiques abordés par Ishāqī comportent aussi, bien entendu, ceux de nature scatologique et sexuelle, notamment quelques-uns sur des pratiques sexuelles hors de la norme hétérosexuelle traditionnellement acceptée. D'un point de vue d'aujourd'hui, on peut constater que ces récits ne s'avèrent toutefois pas plus provocatifs en question des plaisirs séculaires que ceux de la Renaissance italienne, par exemple dans les *Novellae* de Girolamo Morlini³⁴. En outre, les anecdotes « obscènes » ne sont pas du tout une particularité de la littérature arabe des périodes mamelouke et ottomane, puisqu'on en rencontre beaucoup d'entre eux déjà dans la littérature amusante de l'époque pré-mongole.

Pour le contexte en question, il est important de prendre en compte que Daniel Beaumont, dans sa discussion des éditions des *Nuits* publiées au XIX^e siècle, a déjà attiré l'attention sur le fait qu'Ishāqī n'a écrit son livre que quelques décennies avant que Galland ait acquis le manuscrit le plus ancien conservé des *Nuits*. Pourtant, Beaumont malinterprète la portée de sa trouvaille en concluant que l'auteur du *Kitāb Laṭā'if aḥbār al-uwal* avait accès aux *Nuits* « d'une version ressemblable à celle que l'on connaît aujourd'hui »³⁵. Bien au contraire, je prétends que l'œuvre d'Ishāqī était une proie pour les compilateurs des *Nuits*. Ishāqī n'a pas cité de version des *Nuits* précédant sa chronique – mais bien au contraire quelques contes fournis par Ishāqī ont été directement copiés dans les versions des *Nuits* produites après lui. L'évidence d'une correspondance de plus de dix contes entre la chronique d'Ishāqī et les *Nuits*

32 *Laṭā'if*, pp. 25/-3, 55/-3, 117/-3, 182/-2, 187/13, 210/10, 242/1, 246/-8, 252/3, 263/-4 ('udnā ...), 275/-2, 286/-3, 337/1, 348/2.

33 Flügel 1860, pp. 534–538, 535 ; cf. Marzolph 1992, vol. 1, pp. 67–71 ; id. 2002, cols. 166–169.

34 *Die Novellen Girolamo Morlinis*. traduit par A. Wesselski. Munich 1908.

35 Beaumont 2002, p. 19.

ainsi que l'analogie en fonction de l'arrangement et l'énoncé nous mènent à la conclusion que l'œuvre d'Ishāqī est censée être une des compilations contemporaines dont les compilateurs des *Nuits* se servaient afin de la remplir des contes supplémentaires.

Ainsi, pour la première fois en étudiant les sources des *Nuits*, on se rapproche donc d'une « ambiance d'atelier » des compilateurs. Les analogies entre les *Nuits* et l'œuvre d'Ishāqī qu'a remarquées Basset sont toutes énumérées dans la dernière partie de l'œuvre d'Ishāqī, dans les paragraphes traitant l'époque des premiers califes abbassides. Hārūn al-Rašīd, personnage exemplaire du souverain juste dans les *Nuits*, n'apparaît que dans deux de ces récits. Le premier récit, qui se trouve déjà dans de nombreuses sources prémongoles, porte sur Ġa'far et le Bédouin : Le Bédouin bafoué donne la récompense d'une prescription dérisoire par un fort pet³⁶. Le second récit sur Abū al-Ḥasan est en rapport avec le temps de Hārūn al-Rašīd et s'intitule « Le dormeur éveillé » comme déjà mentionné plus haut³⁷. « L'histoire de la noblesse du Barmécide Ġa'far contre le marchand des fèves » est cité en rapport avec le règne d'al-Amīn, fils d'Hārūn³⁸. « L'histoire d'Ibrāhīm al-Mahdī », bien connue de la littérature historiographique plus ancienne, se déroule ici lors du règne d'al-Ma'mūn³⁹. Vers la fin du chapitre sur al-Ma'mūn on trouve aussi « L'histoire de l'homme riche devenu pauvre et redevenu riche », soit l'histoire du « Rêve du trésor sur le pont »⁴⁰, qui a formé le point de départ pour l'essai de Basset. Deux courtes anecdotes, qui ne figurent pas dans la liste de Basset sont citées chez Ishāqī dans les chapitres respectifs sur le calife Abū Bakr et le calife umayyade Hišām.

Le contexte, dans lequel l'histoire du « Rêve du trésor sur le pont » est citée chez Ishāqī est représentatif pour le caractère associatif de sa compilation : le conte suit un récit dans lequel un devin doué reconnaît et interprète le rêve

36 *Latā'if* 149/4 ; Marzolph 1992, vol. 2, no. 52 ; Chauvin 1892–1922, vol. 5, p. 281, no. 165 ; Marzolph/Van Leeuwen, vol. 1, p. 236, no. 129.

37 *Latā'if* 149/-2 ; Chauvin, vol. 5, pp. 272–275, no. 155 ; Marzolph/Van Leeuwen, vol. 1, pp. 392–393, no. 263 ; Frenzel, Elisabeth: Bauer wird König für einen Tag. *Enzyklopädie des Märchens* 1. Berlin/New York 1977, cols. 1343–1346 ; *The Types of the Folktale: A Classification and Bibliography*. Antti Aarne's "Verzeichnis der Märchentypen" [...] Translated and Enlarged by Stith Thompson. Second Revision. Helsinki (1961) 1973, conte-type 1531 ; Aarne/Thompson et Uther 2004, conte-type 1531.

38 *Latā'if* 160/4 ; Chauvin, vol. 5, pp. 164–165, no. 87 ; Marzolph/Van Leeuwen, vol. 1, pp. 235–236, no. 77.

39 *Latā'if* 170/9 ; Chauvin, vol. 6, p. 54, no. 219 ; Marzolph/Van Leeuwen, vol. 1, p. 229, no. 69.

40 *Latā'if* 180/-6 ; Chauvin, vol. 6, pp. 94–95, no. 258 ; Marzolph/Van Leeuwen, vol. 1, pp. 353–354, no. 99.

oublié par le monarque, récit donc qui aborde le sujet du « rêve »⁴¹. Il est poursuivi par une autre histoire de grande diffusion (conte-type 1645 B) qui combine pareillement les deux motifs de « trésor » et du « rêve » : ici, le rêveur a la vision de trouver un trésor. Faute d'un outil susceptible de lui rendre service, il marque la place où le trésor est caché avec son excrément pour la retrouver plus tard. Bien entendu, à son réveil il ne trouve que ceci⁴². Les courtes anecdotes suivantes citées par Ishāqī se délectent dans les affaires scatologiques : ils parlent des pets dramatiques, de lâcher une caisse dans des situations inappropriées et d'autres exemples de flatulence, jusqu'à ce que l'auteur se rappelle à l'ordre en citant de manière hésitante la formule « il faudrait revenir au sujet de la discussion ».

Si l'on regarde l'ordre des récits cités dans les éditions standard des *Nuits*, on peut en conclure ce que Basset n'a pas vu. Trois des récits correspondants dans les *Nuits* se trouvent déjà chez Ishāqī dans le même ordre, bien qu'ils figurent à une certaine distance l'un de l'autre. « L'histoire d'al-Mutawakkil et de la belle esclave Maḥbūba » est citée par Ishāqī pendant le règne du calife abbasside al-Mutawakkil⁴³, tandis que « l'histoire de Wardān le boucher, de la femme et de l'ours »⁴⁴ ainsi que « l'histoire de la princesse et du singe »⁴⁵ sont mentionnées en se référant à une tradition anonyme (*ḥukiya*, *qīla*) pendant le califat des Fatimides. Un autre conte chez Ishāqī dont il existe des versions analogues dans les *Nuits* est, au fond, la combinaison de deux anecdotes relativement courtes sur le Qāḍī Abū Yūsuf, personnage du VIII^e siècle, connu pour son intelligence supérieure. Bien qu'Ishāqī mentionne le même protagoniste, il cite ce récit dans le chapitre portant sur le règne ottoman. Dans la première anecdote, Abū Yūsuf identifie le sperme dans le lit de Zubayda, femme d'Hārūn al-Rašīd, comme celui d'un chauve souris qui vit en cachette dans la chambre. Ainsi, il dissout le soupçon de l'époux. Dans la deuxième anecdote, déjà connue par *al-Bayān wa-l-tabyīn* écrit par al-Ġāḥiz, on demande Abū Yūsuf de décider le quel de deux desserts est le plus délicieux. Il demande à goûter le premier. Après avoir tout mangé, il demande la même chose pour le deuxième puisqu' « il ne veut pas juger sur un témoin qui est absent »⁴⁶.

41 *Laṭā'if* 177/4.

42 *Laṭā'if* 182/7 ; Marzolph 2004, cols. 1268–1273 ; Aarne/Thompson et Uther 2004, conte-type 1645 B.

43 *Laṭā'if* 196/-7 ; Chauvin, vol. 5, p. 105, no. 35 ; Marzolph/Van Leeuwen, vol. 1, p. 312, no. 100.

44 *Laṭā'if* 256/13 ; Chauvin, vol. 5, pp. 177–178, no. 101 ; Marzolph/Van Leeuwen, vol. 1, pp. 442–443, no. 101.

45 *Laṭā'if* 258/-1 ; Chauvin, vol. 5, p. 178, no. 102 ; Marzolph/Van Leeuwen, vol. 1, pp. 262–263, no. 102.

46 *Laṭā'if* 157/-6 ; Chauvin, vol. 7, p. 115, no. 384 ; Marzolph/Van Leeuwen, vol. 1, p. 78, no. 119 ; Marzolph 1992, vol. 2, no. 70.

Le conte du « Rêve du trésor sur le pont » avec les trois contes suivants dans les *Nuits* constituent un bloc de quatre contes que les compilateurs des *Nuits* ont copiés directement de l'œuvre d'Ishāqī. Pour autant que l'on sache à l'heure actuelle, uniquement l'ordre identique affirme l'hypothèse. Néanmoins, on pourrait toujours maintenir le contraire : l'ordre des contes dans les deux œuvres ne se ressemble que par hasard puisqu'on peut trouver les mêmes contes dans d'autres sources encore non-identifiées. Un étalement plus élaboré de la dépendance des *Nuits* sur Ishāqī pourrait se réaliser par le biais d'une comparaison textuelle des passages en question. Dans un autre essai, j'ai effectué une telle comparaison méticuleuse pour le conte de « Rêve du trésor sur le pont »⁴⁷.

La comparaison entre les versions du conte « Rêve du trésor sur le pont » dans le *Kitāb Laṭā'if aḥbār al-uwal* et dans les éditions imprimées des *Nuits* démontre moins de 30 déviations textuelles dans un texte de 200 mots à peu près. Ces déviations ne représentent guère de changements décisifs du texte, puisqu'elles ne sont pas profondes sous l'angle de la forme comme du contenu. Par conséquent, elles ne sont pas susceptibles de servir d'argument à l'idée que quelques autres textes auraient été la base pour les compilateurs des *Nuits*. Tout d'abord, ces divergences peuvent être expliquées de manière bien convaincante dans leur totalité. Premièrement, le manuscrit de la chronique d'Ishāqī utilisé par les compilateurs des *Nuits* ne devrait pas correspondre de façon exacte à celui qui servait de base pour les éditions imprimées d'Ishāqī. En tout cas, le texte a été intégré dans les *Nuits* bien avant l'édition du *Kitāb Laṭā'if aḥbār al-uwal*, car la première édition imprimée du livre n'apparaît qu'en 1835. Deuxièmement, il est possible que les éditeurs du *Kitāb Laṭā'if aḥbār al-uwal* aient effectué des modifications dans le manuscrit à publier, de sorte que le texte dans les *Nuits* pourrait reproduire un énoncé plus proche de celui dans le manuscrit de base. La dernière hypothèse est toutefois moins probable puisque l'énoncé chez Ishāqī est parfois incorrect au niveau grammatical ou bien le sens nécessite une amélioration. Par conséquent, on est obligé de présumer que les changements donnés sont des corrections faites par les compilateurs des *Nuits*. Le fait que le texte des *Nuits* parfois subit des élargissements soutient cette hypothèse encore parce qu'il implique les efforts consciemment faits afin de corriger les fautes dans les textes copiés et à les amplifier pour créer enfin une version plus logique et plus aisée.

Le fait que les compilateurs des *Nuits* auraient copié directement à partir d'Ishāqī – ou de toute autre source supposée – pourrait seulement être prouvé avec certitude après la découverte d'assertions et de documents relatifs. Faute

47 Marzolph 2011.

de données de première main, l'argument invoqué ici est fondé sur la preuve par indice et nous mène le plus près possible de la pratique employée par les compilateurs des *Nuits*. Une comparaison détaillée du texte des autres récits en commun pour le *Kitāb Laṭā'if aḥbār al-uwal* et les *Nuits* apporte un résultat similaire avec la comparaison effectuée en détail pour le récit de « Rêve du trésor sur le pont ». Les divergences entre les versions variées s'expliqueraient à un grand degré par les corrections grammaticales, les raffinements linguistiques ou bien les améliorations de style qu'ont effectuées les rédacteurs qui pour leur part ont adapté les récits du *Kitāb Laṭā'if aḥbār al-uwal* pour les *Nuits*. L'histoire de « Ğā'far le Barmecide et le vieux Bédouin » offre une congruité supplémentaire pour supposer que les versions d'Ishāqī et des *Nuits* – et uniquement ces deux-ci – constituent un groupe à part qui se distingue de la plupart des autres versions qu'on trouve dans la tradition arabe précédente⁴⁸. Tandis que dans les plus vieux versions de ce récit, le « bouffon » se réfère à al-Faḍl Ibn al-Rabī', vizir sous Hārūn et son fils al-Amīn, le processus de la cristallisation du personnage exemplaire du souverain Hārūn al-Rašīd a déjà avancé à l'époque d'Ishāqī à tel point que le vizir Ğā'far al-Barmakī est dénommé le compagnon exemplaire d'Hārūn. Ce changement représente un argument de plus pour le fait que les compilateurs des *Nuits* ont copié à partir de l'œuvre d'Ishāqī sans aucun intermédiaire.

Avoir servi de source directe pour les compilateurs des *Nuits* est l'impact principal de la chronique d'Ishāqī. En outre, beaucoup de contes examinés ici constituent aussi des sujets d'étude fascinants parce qu'ils remontent loin dans l'histoire. Autrement dit, les versions des contes telles qu'on les retrouve chez Ishāqī sont issues d'un processus historique qui les a modifiées progressivement jusqu'à obtenir la forme dans laquelle il les cite. Tandis que ses versions représentent donc le résultat d'un développement permanent, l'étape finale, c'est-à-dire l'intégration de ces contes dans les *Nuits*, signifie, en fait, moins un pas ultérieur de développement, qu'une citation à la lettre avec des adaptations mineures. J'ai déjà parlé du « Rêve du trésor sur le pont » qui remonte à une version du IX^e siècle écrite par Tanūḥī⁴⁹. La version de Tanūḥī a été préservée par le biais de la citation dans l'anthologie populaire d'Ibn Ḥiǧǧa al-Ḥamawī du XV^e siècle⁵⁰. C'est d'ici qu'Ishāqī et après lui les compilateurs des *Nuits* l'ont copié. Au cours des siècles, d'autres versions du conte concurrentes ont vu le jour, ainsi celle dans un manuel pour les pèlerins. Celui-ci est compilé au XIV^e siècle pour louer la magnanimité d'un certain 'Affān Ibn Sulaymān, un homme

48 Marzolph 1992, vol. 2, no. 52.

49 al-Tanūḥī, pp. 268–269, no. 212.

50 Ibn Ḥiǧǧa al-Ḥamawī, pp. 310–311.

riche qui vécut au x^e siècle au Caire⁵¹. La version de Tanūhī semble également être la source pour la première adaptation du conte que l'on trouve dans le *Karlmeinet* allemand, une compilation du xiv^e siècle qui porte sur le début de l'histoire de Charlemagne⁵². Ainsi, beaucoup de ces contes en question font partie d'un réseau de tradition national, voire parfois international, dont les composants détachés se perpétuent dans la tradition puisqu'ils ont été amenés et renforcés par la tradition écrite maintes fois.

Les deux contes explicitement sexuels (« pornographiques ») qui ont été copiés par les compilateurs des *Nuits* de Iṣḥāqī représentent un exemple particulièrement intéressant pour notre contexte. On parle de « l'histoire de Wardān le boucher, de la femme et de l'ours » et de « l'histoire de la princesse et du singe ». Tout d'abord, les deux contes sont cités par Iṣḥāqī en tant que contes dérivant d'une tradition anonyme, comme l'indiquent les verbes *ḥukiya* (« on a raconté ») ou *qila* (« on a dit »). Comme Iṣḥāqī connaissait, sans doute, au moins un de ces contes par le biais de la tradition écrite, la référence à une tradition anonyme paraît être une sorte de déclaration prudente qui, au fait, authentifie la narration, de même qu'elle permet à l'auteur de ne pas dévoiler ses sources. L'un de ces contes, à savoir « l'histoire de la princesse et du singe » n'a été documenté dans aucune autre version. Suivant l'indice de l'auteur, il paraît donc bien possible, qu'elle dérive de la tradition orale contemporaine. Il n'empêche que, lors d'une discussion détaillée, Rachid Bazzi a démontré de manière convainquante que le conte convient au scénario des autres récits sur le rapport sexuel entre un être humain et des singes mâles ou autres créatures considérées comme également brutes, soit un démon, soit un homme noir⁵³. À mentionner en passant que la bestialité dans les contes arabes n'est pas restreinte aux femmes mais elle est aussi pratiquée par des hommes. Il y a, par exemple, le conte d'un naufragé qui a engendré des enfants en ayant un rapport sexuel avec un singe femelle, récit cité par le capitaine Buzurg Ibn Ṣahriyār dans la collection des histoires de marin du x^e siècle, *ʿAǧāʾib al-Hind* (« Les merveilles de l'Inde »)⁵⁴. Grâce à son insertion dans le roman sindbadesque persan *Salim-e Javāheri* (« L'orfèvre Salīm »), cette idée se perpétue dans la tradition populaire persane, où elle était encore documentée à la deuxième moitié du xx^e siècle⁵⁵.

51 Muwaffaq al-Dīn Ibn ʿUṭmān, pp. 656–657.

52 Marzolph 2010.

53 Bazzi 2002, pp. 97–109.

54 Sauvaget 1954, pp. 231–233, no. 40 ; Buzurg Ibn Ṣahriyār, pp. 40–41, no. XL.

55 Marzolph 1994, pp. 82, 87–88, 91–92.

Le deuxième conte explicitement sexuel est « l'histoire de Wardān » qui a été discuté en détail par Claude Bremond⁵⁶. « L'histoire de Wardān » est citée pour la première fois – bien que le texte et son contenu soient différents – dans la chronique d'Ibn al-Dawādārī, œuvre compilée au début du xiv^e siècle⁵⁷. Ibn al-Dawādārī cite sa version selon un livre qui s'appelle *Ḥall al-rumūz fī 'ilm al-kunūz* (« Le dévoilement des mystères, sur la découverte des trésors »), une œuvre d'un auteur inconnu et dont aucune copie n'a été conservée. L'histoire se déroule sous le règne du calife fatimide al-Ḥākim, qui a régné de 996 à 1021. Elle prétend donc décrire des événements qui se sont passés quelques siècles auparavant. La version d'Ibn al-Dawādārī met l'accent sur le magique et le surnaturel : la femme observée par Wardān pendant son accouplement avec un ours est décrite en tant que sorcière qui à l'aide d'une formule magique fait déborder l'eau du chaudron et ainsi menace Wardān de le noyer dans une inondation. En outre, il y a un élément de destin pour autant que le trésor surveillé de l'ours ne puisse être approprié que par le protagoniste Wardān, puisque c'est lui le propriétaire prédéterminé. L'accent sur le merveilleux est perdu dans une autre version ancienne, qui n'est pas discutée chez Bremond, et qui est citée dans le traité *Ruḡū' al-ṣayḥ ilā ṣabāh* (« Un vieil homme redevient jeune »)⁵⁸. La compilation de ce livre sur le comportement sexuel est conventionnellement attribuée à Ibn Kamāl Bāṣā (mort en 1533), auteur du xvi^e siècle, c'est-à-dire de l'époque ottomane. Compte tenu du contexte, la version d'Ibn Kamāl Bāṣā met l'accent sur la sexualité. Au lieu de circonscrire avec courtoisie les activités sexuelles entre la femme et l'ours, l'auteur ne tarde pas à utiliser les termes vulgaires plusieurs fois et ce n'est que dans sa version que le pénis de l'ours est décrit exprès « aussi grand que le pénis d'un âne, voire plus grand ». Comme Iṣḥāqī se réfère explicitement à Ibn Kamāl Bāṣā ailleurs dans sa chronique⁵⁹, il semblerait bien que sa version domestiquée, qui est en principe largement identique, ait été tirée du même livre.

Hormis les récits qu'ont en commun les *Nuits* et Iṣḥāqī, l'histoire de « Abū al-Ḥasan, ou le dormeur éveillé » offre un exemple qui, en dépit de son importance, se situe en dehors de la norme discutée ici. Tous les autres récits examinés ici étaient adoptés dans les manuscrits qui constituaient la base des éditions de Būlāq et de Calcutta II. Par contre, l'histoire du « Dormeur éveillé »

56 Bremond 1994, pp. 99–123.

57 al-Dawādārī, vol. 6, pp. 302–308.

58 Je dois cette référence à Heinz Grotzfeld, qui m'a aussi donné accès au texte du manuscrit Ahlwardt no. 6380 (Pet. 375,2), fol. 100b/14–101b/-5.

59 *Laṭā'if* 260/-6.

se trouve uniquement dans l'édition Breslau⁶⁰ (et, plus tard, dans une forme adaptée, dans l'édition de Beyrouth). Il est frappant qu'en même temps cette histoire soit la seule d'Ishāqī à être déjà intégrée dans l'adaptation de Galland bien qu'on ait ignoré jusqu'à très récemment à quelle source Galland avait puisé exactement. L'histoire a été intégrée dans les *Nuits* après Ishāqī et avant Galland dans le manuscrit de Maillet. Ce manuscrit a été vraisemblablement préparé dans la deuxième moitié du xvii^e siècle et acquis par le consul en Égypte, Benoit de Maillet, au plus tard au début du xviii^e siècle. Comme Hermann Zotenberg l'avait déjà estimé, le manuscrit Maillet faisait déjà partie de la Bibliothèque Royale à Paris vers 1738. S'appuyant sur des caractéristiques particulières, Zotenberg ne voulait pas attribuer le manuscrit Maillet à une des rédactions des *Nuits* connues. Face à la question si Galland avait eu accès au document ou pas, il était convaincu que le texte de Galland ne montrait aucune affinité avec le manuscrit Maillet en termes de l'énoncé. Cependant, il est possible que Galland connaissait l'histoire du « Dormeur éveillé » d'un autre manuscrit des *Nuits* préservé dans la Bibliothèque Royale – la traduction turco-ottomane des *Nuits*. Comme le manuscrit turc porte la date de 1046/1636 il est préparé juste après la mort d'Ishāqī. La discussion sur les sources possibles utilisées par Galland pour sa version de « L'histoire du dormeur éveillé » devient encore plus complexe si on prend en compte le fait que Galland lui-même connaissait le *Kitāb Laṭā'if aḥbār al-uwal* de Ishāqī, parce qu'il est cité dans la *Bibliothèque orientale* de Barthélemy d'Herbelot, livre publié en 1694 à la préparation duquel Galland a participé⁶¹. Comme l'avait déjà noté Lane, la version de l'histoire chez Ishāqī est plus simple que celle dans les *Nuits*, puisqu'elle finit par l'explication des expériences du rêveur et ne contient pas la deuxième partie que l'on trouve chez Galland. Cette deuxième partie est une anecdote, originalement sous forme d'un texte détaché, qui est attribué traditionnellement au protagoniste Abū Dulāma⁶². Il a déjà été utilisé en tant que pièce ajoutée dans la collection des récits connus comme *al-Ḥikāyāt al-ʿaḡība* (« Histoires merveilleuses »), manuscrit arabe du xiv^e siècle aujourd'hui préservé à Istanbul. Ici, il forme l'appendice amusant pour la version du conte du docteur malgré lui, connu dans le monde entier (conte-type 1641). La découverte récente du manuscrit arabe sur lequel Galland s'est appuyé pour sa traduction du « Dormeur éveillé » (et, en outre, l'« Histoire de Ganem ») rend la discussion ci-dessus largement obsolète. Comme l'a démontré Akel d'une manière qui ne laisse

60 Habicht/Fleischer, vol. 4 (1828), pp. 134–189. Pour les détails de la discussion suivante, cf. Marzolph 2015.

61 Herbelot 1776, 524, s. v. Lathaif.

62 Marzolph/Van Leeuwen, vol. 1, pp. 392–393 ; Aarne/Thompson et Uther 2004, conte-type 1556 ; Marzolph 2002, cols. 709–713.

aucun doute, « une simple comparaison entre le manuscrit et la traduction révèle rapidement leur similarité »⁶³. Avec cette découverte, une des dernières énigmes concernant les sources de la traduction de Galland a été résolue.

Pour résumer la discussion de la chronique d'Ishāqī et de ses implications pour l'étude de la compilation des *Nuits*, j'aimerais bien récapituler mes considérations de manière plus générale. Dans sa publication *Les Mille et une nuits : Histoire du texte et Classification des contes* parue en 2008, Aboubakr Chraïbi a pour la première fois classé l'ensemble des contes des *Nuits* en termes de genre. En plus, il a énuméré les versions analogues dans la littérature arabe classique et post-classique pour chaque conte. Ce classement et sa documentation constitue une tâche énorme qui ouvre la voie pour mieux comprendre la dimension historique ainsi que la complexité des *Nuits*. Seule la comparaison approfondie de chaque conte va nous permettre de comprendre le processus complexe qui est à la base de la compilation – peut-être faudrait-il plutôt dire de la création – des versions « complètes » des *Nuits*. Le rôle qu'a joué le *Kitāb Laṭā'if aḥbār al-uwal* d'Ishāqī n'est pas à sous-estimer, bien qu'il ne soit tellement large ni unique. En attendant, en surplus de la fascination générale que les lecteurs des *Nuits* éprouveront pour les contes des *Nuits* en termes de structure et de contenu, la connaissance du rôle d'Ishāqī offre un plaisir intellectuel supplémentaire qui mène à mieux apprécier les *Nuits* comme œuvre littéraire qui a contribué si largement à la culture mondiale.

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63 Akel 2017, p. 207.

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Reshaping the Frame Story of the *Thousand and One Nights*

The Coherence of Prologue and Epilogue in the Earliest Existing Arabic MSS

Johannes Thomann

1 Introduction

The year 1949 was epochal for research on the textual history of the *Arabian Nights*. Two seminal papers appeared, both of which announced discoveries of manuscripts. In the first paper Nabia Abbott published a document, which had been acquired by the Oriental Institute in Chicago two years before. The document was a bifolium which once formed part of a paper codex produced at the beginning of the third/ninth century in Baghdad, containing a selection of stories taken from a work with the title ‘Thousand nights’ (*Alf layla*).¹ The second paper by Helmut Ritter contained a description of an Arabic manuscript in Kayseri containing the two final story cycles and the very end of the Arabian nights. Ritter considered the date of the manuscript as the tenth/sixteenth century or later. He provided a detailed description of its content and identified the stories with the catalogue by Chauvin.²

The first document defines the original role of Duniyāzād/Dīnarzād as having been significantly different from the role in later versions, a fact which underlines that a considerable reshaping of the frame story had taken place some time between the ninth to the fifteenth centuries. The second document shows that the end of the frame story in the Breslau edition, which was discredited to a great part of scholarship on the *Arabian Nights*, contains elements which coincide in content with the oldest attested end in the Arabic manuscript tradition. Both documents are cornerstones in the chain of arguments which will be brought forward in the sections to follow.

1 Abbot 1949, pp. 129–64.

2 Ritter 1949, pp. 287–9.

2 Transformation of the *Dramatis Personae* in the Frame Story

The Chicago fragment stems from a codex of a work with the title ‘A Book with a tale of thousand nights’ (*kitāb fīhi ḥadīṭ alf laylah*), an Arabic work which imitated the Persian *Hazār afsāne*.³ The text begins at a time which is called ‘that following night’ (*tilka al-layla al-qābila*) when Dīnāzād asks a female person, to narrate a story (*ḥadīṭ*). No name of the addressed female person occurs, but it might have been mentioned in a lower right-hand part of the page which is now missing. Dīnāzād continues by naming the themes of the story to be narrated, which point to genres not found in the Persian *Hazār afsāne*, but which were adaptations to the taste of an Arabic audience.⁴

Dīnāzād calls her addressee ‘oh my delectable’ (*yā malaḍḍatī* or *yā muliḍ-datī*). According to Nabia Abbott this would not be appropriate towards an elder sister, but it would rather fit to a nurse.⁵ In his *Murūǧ al-ḍahab* al-Mas‘ūdī gave a list of the *dramatis personae* in the work ‘Thousand Stories’ (*Alf ḥurāfa*): ‘story (*ḥabar*) of the king, the vizier, his (the Vizier’s) daughter, and her slave (*ǧārīya*). The (last) two are Širāzād and Dīnāzād.’⁶ The characterization of Dīnāzād as a slave or a servant fits well with Nabia Abbott’s observation concerning the Chicago fragment. The quartet of characters listed by al-Mas‘ūdī opens a wide field of well-known narrative motifs. The figure of the Royal counsellor is ambivalent, and can be trustworthy (motif P₁₁₂) or treacherous (motif P_{112.1}), wise or unwise (motif P_{112.2.0}), good or evil (motif P_{113.1}).⁷ The figure of the slave-girl can also play different roles, but is mostly characterized as intelligent and clever.⁸ There is some disagreement about the remark in al-Mas‘ūdī’s text ‘and the people call this book “Thousand and One Nights” (*wa-l-nās yusammūna ḥādā l-kitāb Alf layla wa-layla*).’⁹ Generally it was assumed that this phrase is a later interpolation in the text, but it is found in the oldest manuscript of the *Murūǧ al-ḍahab*.¹⁰

In Ibn al-Nadīm’s *Fihrist*, three characters of the book ‘Thousand stories’ (*alf ḥurāfa*) are mentioned: A king, a maiden of royal descent (*ǧārīya min awlād al-mulūk*), named Šarāzād, and the king’s stewardess (*qahrmāna*), called

3 Chraïbi 2016, p. 19.

4 Ibid..

5 Abbot 1949, pp. 152–3.

6 Mas‘ūdī 1966, p. 406; Mas‘ūdī 1965, p. 545.

7 El-Schamy 2006, p. 217.

8 El-Schamy 2006, p. 621.

9 Mas‘ūdī 1966, p. 406; Mas‘ūdī 1965, p. 545.

10 Chraïbi 2016, p. 21.

Dīnārzād.¹¹ Further, the king's habit of spending every night with a woman and killing her the next day is mentioned. Scheherazade is characterized as possessing both understanding and knowledge. As the king's wife she began telling him stories in such a way that he preserved her life. Finally, Dīnārzād is said to have been helpful to Scheherazade. This points to the narrative type of the cunning servant or nurse (motif type P361).¹² Ibn al-Nadīm does not mention the vizier and the descriptions of Scheherazade and Dīnārzād also differ from al-Mas'ūdī. Ibn al-Nadīm and al-Mas'ūdī might have referred to different versions of the 'Thousand stories'. However, the characterizations of Dīnārzād as a helping servant or stewardess are sufficiently coherent in all three early accounts. Her function was to cue Scheherazade and to praise her narrative skills, as is evident from the text in the Chicago fragment. The two female characters had personal names while the male characters were anonymous. The king and the vizier were conceived as abstract types while Scheherazade and Dīnārzād were the main speakers and individualized by their verbal utterances.¹³ In this conception of Dīnārzād her type of a servant and her function as a helper of the heroine Scheherazade coincide perfectly. There must have been other reasons to change the type of Dīnārzād and to make her the younger sister of Scheherazade in later versions. In comparative perspective, the relationship of sisters in the tales is mostly antagonistic, and this is particularly true for the relationship of two sisters.¹⁴ The same holds for Arabic popular literature.¹⁵ Cruelty among sisters and even sorricide are archetypical motifs (P252.1, S73.0.1, S73.1.5).¹⁶ Even in the modern oral tradition rivalry dominates the relationships between sisters.¹⁷ But there are also rare cases of sisters acting as helpers (motif P252.0.3).¹⁸ However, in such cases the sister appears in an episodic manner and not as a permanent companion of the protagonist. A significant example is the story 'Masrūr and Zayn al-Mawāṣif'.¹⁹ Nasīm, the sister of Zayn al-Mawāṣif helps Masrūr to communicate by letters with his beloved and keeps her sister's belongings during her absence from home. In contrast, the permanent companion of Zayn al-Mawāṣif is Hubūb, her slave-girl (*ġāriya*). At one occasion Hubūb cues Masrūr to recite a poem in order to appease Zayn

11 Ibn al-Nadīm 1871–1872, p. 304; Ibn al-Nadīm, 2009, vol. 2.1, pp. 321–2; Dodge, 1970, vol. 2, pp. 713–14.

12 El-Schamy 2006, p. 244.

13 On anonymity in narratives see Bausinger 1977, and on names see Nicolaisen 1999.

14 Bottingheimer 2007, p. 421.

15 El-Shamy 1995, vol. 1, pp. 299–300.

16 El-Schamy 2006, p. 234 and p. 309; El-Shamy 2004, pp. 181–3.

17 El-Shamy 1999, pp. 255–85.

18 El-Schamy 2006, p. 234.

19 Marzolph/van Leeuwen 2004, pp. 294–5 (no. 232).

al-Mawāṣif.²⁰ This reminds them of Dīnārzād's action and shows that it made sense to make her a slave-girl rather than a sister. Once again the problem intrudes as to why her type was later changed to that of a sister.

There is another intriguing problem in the change of the *dramatis personae* in the later 'Thousand and one Nights'. Before the fifteenth century version no trace exists of the king having a brother. The frame story of the 'Hundred and One Nights' was modelled after some early version of the 'Thousand and One Nights'.²¹ If its oldest manuscript was indeed produced in the thirteenth century,²² a pre Mamluk version of the *Arabian Nights* must have been used as a model. However, there are some doubts concerning this early date.²³ It happened not infrequently in manuscript transmission that a colophon was copied in a later apograph, and since the colophon belongs to the first part of the manuscript and not to the second, which contains the 'Hundred and One Nights', it would not prove the existence of the second text in the thirteenth century.

The protagonists in the 'Hundred and One Nights' are the quartet known from al-Mas'ūdī, but the story differs considerably from the later 'Thousand and One Nights'. The king has no brother, instead adultery of the king's wife is detected by a son of a merchant, whose wife has also committed adultery. Dīnārzād is here said to be the sister of Scheherazade as in the later 'Thousand and One Nights', however her function is here unclear. There exists more than one version, and their relationship is still under dispute.²⁴

3 The Prologue of the Frame Story in the Mamluk Version

The text in the oldest Arabic Manuscript of the 'Thousand and One Nights', Mahdi's manuscript A, the manuscript used by Galland, is the first quarter of a version which was composed in the late Mamluk era. In a recently published study, Warren Shultz modified the chronological arguments of Heinz Grotzfeld concerning the date of the manuscript. Shultz convincingly confirmed that the first Dīnār, which could be called *Ašrafī* appeared not before 1425.²⁵ However, further arguments of Grotzfeld to shift the *terminus post quem* into the second

20 Macnaghten 1839–1842, p. 198.

21 Edition and English translation Fudge 2016; French translation: Gaudefroid-Desmombynes, 1911; German translation: Ott, 2013.

22 Ott 2012, pp. 252–6.

23 Marzolph/Chraïbi 2012, p. 307; Fudge 2016, p. xxxi.

24 Marzolph/Chraïbi 2012, p. 316.

25 Schultz 2015, pp. 9–19.

half of the fifteenth century have now been disproved by Shultz.²⁶ Therefore a creation of the text immediately after 1425 cannot be excluded. A *terminus ante quem* for the manuscript is the date 943/1536 in a readership statement.²⁷

If we leave aside the possibility of intermediate versions which might have existed, it seems that the Mamluk redactor reshaped the prologue considerably. The most prominent change is the introduction of the younger brother of the king, himself a king in Samarqand, and in parallel the reshaping of Dīnāzād as the younger sister of Scheherazade, as was already the case in the 'Hundred and One Nights'. Another new feature is the renaming of Dīnāzād (or Dīnārzād, as she is called in the *Fihrist*) as Dunyāzād. The names of the two sisters, Scheherazade and Dunyāzād could now be understood as 'city freer' and 'world freer'. The names of the king, Šahryār which appears for the first time in the Mamluk version could be understood as 'sovereign of the city', and his brothers name, Šāhzamān as 'king of the time'. There is an obvious parallelism between the names of the sisters and the name of the brothers. The older siblings have the element 'city' in their names, which seems to refer to the place of the story, the main capital of the 'islands of India and China'.²⁸ In contrast, the younger siblings have a globalizing element in their name, 'world' and 'time'. In the case of the brothers, their names correspond to their place of action, the elder in the centre of the empire, the city par excellence, the younger at the Western periphery of the empire in Samarkand. In the case of the sisters the elements 'city' and 'world' seem not to have any correspondence in the plot of the prologue, but later it will be seen that they point to the utopian epilogue. Further, there is a clear contrast between the names of the brothers and the names of the sisters. The former contains an element of power, 'sovereign' and 'king', which is perfectly appropriate. The latter contain an element of freedom and liberation. Indeed, in the Mamluk version Scheherazade's plot is characterized as a mission of liberation. She announces to her father, the king's vizier that she wishes 'to become the cause for the liberation of mankind' (*ḥalāṣ al-ḥalq*).²⁹ This sounds like a promise for an end of the story which brings freedom not only for the individual protagonists but for the city and beyond.

26 Schultz 2015, pp. 19–24.

27 Akel 2016, p. 70.

28 Mahdi 1984–1994, vol. 1, p. 56.

29 Mahdi 1984–1994, vol. 1, p. 66.

4 The End of the ‘Thousand and One Nights’ in the Earliest Manuscripts

At this point the question arises as to which kind of conclusion of the plot was intended by the redactor of the Mamluk version. This question has been answered differently – it has even been stated that no intention of a conclusion existed, and the story was conceived as endless.³⁰ However, at least the early version known to Ibn al-Nadīm had a conclusion. In his words everything lasted a thousand nights ‘until she was bestowed from him with a child, whom she made visible, and she informed the king about her plot against him. Thus, he apprehended her, as being intelligent, he took sympathy for her, and he asked her to stay’.³¹ There are two elements in Scheherazade’s acting: The disclosure of her motherhood of the king’s child, and the confession of her plot. In some later versions the second element disappeared. In the ‘Hundred and One Nights’ Scheherazade confesses her pregnancy to the king, while in the late Egyptian version Scheherazade shows this to the king three sons.³² The early version must have had a more elaborate final scene, since Ibn al-Nadīm in his very brief account makes the phases of the king’s conversion relatively prominent. It indicates that the original work contained a substantially longer text describing the conclusion of the story than the one found in the late Egyptian version. This leads back to the question of the Mamluk version and its conception of the story’s conclusion. At this point the discovery of Hellmut Ritter in 1949, mentioned at the beginning, is relevant.³³ The manuscript in Kayseri was the first manuscript of the ‘Thousand and One Nights’ which was discovered in a library in the Islamic World. It has no date but Ritter considered it to be from the sixteenth century or eventually later.³⁴ Osigus assumed that it dates from around 1600.³⁵ Ott assumed a date ‘around 1500 or shortly after’.³⁶ A *terminus ante quem* can be derived by a stamp of the *waqf*, which was established in 1797.³⁷ The manuscript contains the cycle of fables, the ‘Šād Baḥt’ cycle, the cycle of ‘Baybars and the sixteen constables of police’, two stories of concubines and a long scene of the end of the frame story. The only studies on the manuscript after Ritter’s publication were those of Grotzfeld in 1985, Osigus in 2010, and most recently by Ott.³⁸ There are three

30 Marzolph 1998, p. 162.

31 Ibn al-Nadīm 1871–1872, p. 304; Ibn al-Nadīm 2009, vol. 2.1, p. 322; Dodge 1970, vol. 2, p. 714.

32 Macnaghten 1839–1842, vol. 4, p. 730.

33 Ritter 1949, pp. 287–9.

34 Ritter 1949, p. 287: ‘Frühestens 10. Jahrh. h.’, which means ‘tenth century at the earliest’ not ‘du tout début du x^e siècle’ as in Akel 2016, p. 72.

35 Osigus 2010, p. 137.

36 ‘um 1500 oder kurz danach’ Ott 2016, p. 388.

37 Erünsal 2008, p. 462.

38 Grotzfeld 1985, pp. 78–83; Osigus 2010, pp. 114–19; Ott 2016, pp. 373–90.

more manuscripts which contain the cycle of 'Baybars' and the long scene of the conclusion. The first manuscript in Paris (BNF Arabe 3619) was produced at the end of the seventeenth or at the beginning of the eighteenth century.³⁹ It contains the 'Šād Baḥt' cycle, the cycle of 'Baybars', and the long scene of the conclusion in the same sequence as the Kayseri manuscript. The second manuscript in Berlin (SB We. 662) has the date 1759.⁴⁰ It contains the cycle of 'Baybars' and the long scene of the conclusion. The third manuscript (Cairo, al-Azhar sād 9483 and 'ayn 133413 adab) has been discovered by Ibrahim Akel.⁴¹ It consists of the two last volumes of a four volume set. The third volume starts with 'Sindbad the Seaman' and ends in the middle of 'Sayf al-Mulūk'. The fourth volume continues with 'Sayf al-Mulūk' and ends with 'Baybars', the two concubine stories and the long end of the frame story. There is a purchase note in the fourth volume with the date 17 Dū l-Qa'da 1132/20 September 1719.⁴²

The four manuscripts show in the common stories a close relationship at the level of sentences but vary a lot on the level of their words and phrasal expressions. These variants are not products of scribal errors, but of intentional interventions of different redactors. Eventually they are the result of some steps of oral transmission. Both the cycle of Baybars and the long conclusion were contained in two separated volumes of the Breslau edition.⁴³ An English translation appeared in Burton's supplementary volumes, also as separate parts.⁴⁴ A partial German translation based on the manuscripts in Kayseri, Paris, and Berlin was provided by Grotzfeld, and a full German translation based on the Kayseri manuscript by Ott appeared 2016.⁴⁵ The texts in the Breslau edition show variants of the same nature as in the manuscripts and have to be seen as a separate version too.

The sequence of stories in the Kayseri Manuscript form a well composed narrative structure, designed to solve the problem, how to break out from the seemingly endless circle of nights and new tales, and to bring the story to a satisfying conclusion. One narrative device for this purpose is mirroring, especially in the form of a *mise en abyme*, the mirroring of the entire story in an embedded tale.⁴⁶

In the Šādbaḥt cycle a double *mise en abyme* is found. In the frame story of Šādbaḥt the king has a dream, in which he is poisoned by his Vizier and his

39 Akel 2016, p. 77.

40 Akel 2016, p. 80.

41 Akel 2016, pp. 84–85.

42 Akel 2016, p. 85.

43 Habicht 1825–1842, vol. 11, pp. 321–99; id., vol. 12, pp. 384–427.

44 Burton 1886–1888, vol. 2, pp. 3–66; id., vol. 2, 263–87.

45 Grotzfeld 1993, vol. 2, pp. 270–301.

46 Thomann 2017; on *mise en abyme* in the "Thousand and One Nights" see Ghazoul 2013, p. 362, and in a Ḥurāfa story see Chraïbi 2016, p. 38; on *mise en abyme* in general see Dällenbach 1977 and Dällenbach 1996.

oneirocritic, who is bribed by the Viziers enemies, advises the king to kill his Vizier within the time-span of a month.⁴⁷ The king asks the Vizier what to do, and the Vizier agrees to be killed the next day to restore the king's self-confidence. In the evening the restless king demands entertainment from the Vizier, who starts to narrate a story. The king is delighted, and the Vizier offers to tell another story the next evening if the king would postpone his killing. This goes on day after day, until on the evening of the twenty eighth night the Vizier narrates the story of an Indian king and his vizier, which is a mirror of the story of Šādbaḥt and himself.⁴⁸ This lets the king to return to reason, and he spares the vizier's life. Obviously the Šādbaḥt cycle mirrors the outer frame story, since both the vizier and Scheherazade narrate for their lives. But the Šādbaḥt cycle also contains within itself a mirroring story at the end. Therefore, the cycle forms a double *mise en abyme*.⁴⁹

Another complex structure of a *mise en abyme* is found in the following cycle, the Baybars cycle.⁵⁰ The protagonist of the frame story is the famous Sultan Baybars, the well-known hero of the popular *Sīrat Baybars*.

A woman entertainer from his company claims that women exist who are braver than men and who know how to fight with the sword and are subversive to their superiors. That arouses the Sultan's curiosity and he asks for stories about such women. The chief of police is given the task of making such stories available. He arranges a sumptuous festivity to which he invites his captains, instructs them to narrate stories of this special kind:

I heard accounts of the ancients (*aḥādīṭ al-awwalīn*), but [now] wish to hear stories and marvels of present-day people (*ḥikāyāt al-muta'ahḥirīn wa-ʿaǧāʾibihim*), told in such a way that I can see what happens, during the narration, in its sequence of events (*bi-ḥayṭu annī arā l-ḥadaṭa yuḥaddīṭu bi-wāqīʿatihi*).⁵¹

This meta-discourse by the chief of police on storytelling marks a clear break from the story cycles of the preceding nights, which were situated at exotic places in the distant past. Subsequent stories are set in Cairo, its neighbourhood,

47 Burton 1886–1888, vol. 1, pp. 191–3; Marzolph/van Leeuwen 2004, vol. 1, pp. 368–9 (no. 286).

48 Thomann 2017, p. 481; Burton 1886–1888, vol. 1, pp. 352–4; Marzolph/van Leeuwen 2004, vol. 1, pp. 257–8 (no. 318).

49 Thomann 2017, p. 481.

50 Thomann 2017, p. 477–482; Marzolph/van Leeuwen 2004, vol. 1, pp. 123–4 (no. 319).

51 Thomann 2017, p. 478; MS Kayseri f. 2v; Burton 1886–1888, vol. 2, p. 4; Habicht 1825–1842, vol. 11, p. 322.

or in Damascus. Their narrative backgrounds are moved closer in time and space to the real world of the audience.

Apart from the captains of police, the protagonists of the stories belong to the middle and lower classes, or to the criminal underworld. The backstreets and houses, in which they operate, and the sequence of movements are described with attention to detail. For such narrative elements, David Pinault has coined the term 'dramatic visualisation', which has precisely the sense of instruction used by the chief of police quoted above.⁵² The stories of the police captains belong to the genre of 'crime reporting stories', in which the events leading to a crime, or, in some cases, events leading to its prevention are narrated. Mia Gerhardt, one of the few scholars who commented on stories from the Baybars cycle, described these stories as shocking for modern readers and a perversion of the genre to which they belong, since the majority show crime and corruption as permissible and without punishment.⁵³ A common topic from these stories is non-compliance with social norms. Expected borders of gender, religion, and social status are crossed at will. In the background lurks an oppressive government's power against which the individual fights.

In the first story, a mysterious woman bribes a captain of police to gain his assistance in her revenge on a judge.⁵⁴ She confesses to having had a sexual relationship with the daughter of the judge, but now is prevented from seeing her. Instead of being indignant, the captain of police offers her his help and develops sympathy for her. This is an unexpected reaction since normally sexual relationships between women cause a veritable scandal. The atypical motif of tolerance towards same-sex relationships is introduced as the first element of what David Pinault has called 'repetitive designation'.⁵⁵ When first mentioned, such an element appears insignificant and casual, but when occurring again it becomes significant. In this particular case, resumption is postponed to the final section of the frame story. In the second story a wealthy Muslim woman has a sexual relationship with a young Jewish lover.⁵⁶ The couple are denounced to the captain of police, who sees a welcome opportunity for blackmailing the couple. However, the plot fails through the mental prowess and eloquence of the woman and the Jewish lover escapes. In the third story a captain of police harasses a woman

52 Pinault 1992, pp. 25–30.

53 Gerhardt 1963, pp. 173–74.

54 Thomann 2017, p. 479; MS Kayseri f. 3v; Burton 1886–1888, vol. 2, p. 6; Habicht 1825–1842, vol. 11, p. 323.

55 Pinault 1992, pp. 25–6.

56 Thomann 2017, p. 479; MS Kayseri f. 8r; Burton 1886–1888, vol. 2, p. 16; Habicht 1825–1842, vol. 11, p. 339.

on the street, but she takes revenge by exposing him to ridicule.⁵⁷ In the following stories female criminals of various shades appear; the spectrum ranging from simple thieves and tricksters to a serial killer. In the later stories, the initially dominant topic of women being braver than men is abandoned. Repression, unscrupulousness, and sheer violence in various forms dominate the narratives. The story of the sixteenth captain contains a surprise.⁵⁸ The place of action is a royal court in China and the protagonists are the king, his brother, and the daughter of the Vizier. It is an anonymous and slightly abridged, but faithful copy of the frame story of Šahryār, his brother, and Scheherazade. However, towards the end, a new motif is introduced. When the daughter of the vizier survives the first few nights together with the king, people from the town are mentioned, who notice the end of the killings. They are happy and pray that the end to violence would be continued. At this point the story of the sixteenth captains ends without a definitive conclusion. The company of the captains of police disperses and Scheherazade declares that the story of Sultan Baybars is completed.

In this case the *mise en abyme* goes over two narrative levels. A tale within a tale mirrors the frame story. It functions as a means for helping the protagonist to understand his own life situation. Indeed, after this confrontation the king is brought, as it is said, to consciousness (*intabaha*) and awakened from his drunkenness (*afāqa min sakratihī*). He says to himself:

Praise to God! This story (*hikāya*) is my story, and this fable (*qiṣṣa*) is my fable. I was in outrage and great pain until she brought me to consciousness. Praise to the cause of causes (*sabab al-asbāb*) and the liberator of slaves (*mu'tiq ar-riqāb*).⁵⁹

After the end of the Baybars cycle, Scheherazade's provocation does not miss its effect on the king. Otherwise silent, he starts to speak and says shamefacedly: 'Something similar happened to a king, whom I know. But I would like to learn what happened next among the people of the town'.⁶⁰

This is the prompt for Scheherazade to test herself as political counsellor. She teaches the king the key elements of good governance, among which the most important is a trustworthy vizier. Like Moses, she says, who had his brother

57 MS Kayseri f. 8v; Burton 1886–1888, vol. 2, p. 19; Habicht 1825–1842, vol. 11, p. 342.

58 Thomann 2017, p. 480; MS Kayseri f. 120r; Burton 1886–1888, vol. 2, p. 263; Habicht 1825–1842, vol. 12, p. 384.

59 Thomann 2017, p. 481; MS Kayseri f. 123r; Burton 1886–1888, vol. 2, p. 269; Habicht 1825–1842, vol. 12, p. 394.

60 MS Kayseri f. 123r; Burton 1886–1888, vol. 2, p. 269; Habicht 1825–1842, vol. 12, p. 394.

Aaron as his vizier, every king should have a vizier, to whom he relates his secret and public affairs. Scheherazade's discourse resembles the beginning of the chapter on the vizirat in the second part of the 'Naṣīḥat al-mulūk' which was later attached to the text written by al-Ġazzālī.⁶¹

This new horizon of Scheherazade's capabilities, awakens in the king the desire to have her at his side, as his political advisor. Scheherazade continues her political discourse and raises again the topic of gender, which was already present in the Baybars cycle. She quotes examples of unfaithful wives and continues narrating the stories 'The Concubine and the Caliph' and 'The concubine of al-Ma'mūn'.⁶² The two stories are very similar, but the first has a happy end, the second a tragic end. There are other such doublets in the 'Thousand and One Nights'.⁶³ Scheherazade claims that she could continue with that for ever but makes the point that even an arbitrary number of such stories could never prove that faithful wives do not exist.

The king is impressed by her argument and decides to make her his official wife. Scheherazade accepts under the condition that she will not be separated from her sister Dunyāzād. This stipulation leads to a re-arrangement of the power structure. The king's brother Šāhzamān is asked to marry Dunyāzād and to return from Samarkand to his brother's court, which he accepts. Instead the father of Scheherazade is appointed governor of Samarkand and leaves the court. In a legal ceremony Scheherazade and her sister Dunyāzād are married to the two brothers. A great festivity is arranged in the town and the wedding guests are invited to a decorated Ḥammām. A strange ceremony takes place there.⁶⁴ The two sisters appear in turn dressed in seven different costumes and present themselves to the guests and their beauty is praised in verses. For the sixth time Dunyāzād appears in a green costume, but this time a poem of censure by Ṣanawbarī is quoted.⁶⁵ In Mamluk times green silk was the most expensive fabric and reserved for male clothing. Therefore, Dunyāzād's performance in a green dress has a scandalous aspect and the choice of verses that scoff is justified. Further, for the seventh time, Scheherazade appears in the costume of a young man with a sword and an emblem. Thus, the king gets up, goes towards her and embraces her in the manner of embracing a noble guest. The verses

61 Thomann 2017, p. 482; al-Ġazzālī 1968, p. 87; Bagley 1971, p. 106; on the authorship see Crone 1987.

62 Marzolph/van Leeuwen 2004, vol. 1, pp. 151–2 (no. 343–4).

63 An interpretation of such pairs of love stories is given in the contribution of William Granara in this volume.

64 Thomann 2017, p. 483; MS Kayseri f. 128r; Burton 1885–1888, vol. 10, p. 57; Habicht 1825–1842, vol. 12, p. 417.

65 Al-Ṣanawbarī 1970, pp. 82–3.

which follow this scene praise the beauty of young men and refer to the custom of young women having painted beards and whiskers on their faces to be elegant. The same procedure is repeated with Dunyāzād. All this refers to the motive of the *ḡulāmiyyāt*, the ‘boyish women’, a fashion phenomenon which started in the Abbasid era and had a revival in Mamluk Cairo.⁶⁶

But apart from the erotic aspect of cross-dressing, another theme seems even more significant in the Ḥammām scene. The costumes in which the sisters become dressed are constantly called *ḥil’a*. But a *ḥil’a* is not an ordinary dress, but an honorary robe, which is given to a person as a sign of investiture in an office, or as a reward for a special merit.⁶⁷ It is in this sense that the word *ḥil’a* is generally used in the *Arabian Nights*, and the persons honoured by a *ḥil’a* are always men. Thus, the ceremony in which the sisters receive the honorary robes must indicate their entry on an equal footing into a male dominated society. This is intensified in the final scene when the sisters wear swords and emblems. These insignia of military elite are forbidden for civilians. A possible model for the ceremony with the seven *ḥila’* may be an account of the Seljuq leader Tughil Beg, who received seven *ḥila’* from the Abbasid Caliph in Baghdad as a symbol of the seven klimata.⁶⁸ To receive seven *ḥila’* indicates competition for world domination. When the two couples retire to their bath cabins the Ḥammām scene ends. By that, another bracket opened earlier is closed now. In the first story of the Baybar’s cycle the mysterious woman who was in love with the daughter of a judge narrates that the two women met in the Ḥammām and used to make love in a bath cabin.⁶⁹ This has no further significance within that story. Now it turns out to be a prospective mirroring of the Ḥammām scene in the outer frame story. Common to both scenes is same-sex attraction and the surmounting of heteronormativity. The frame story ends with the departure of Scheherazade’s father where the superior position of the daughter is confirmed by the fact that at the farewell Scheherazade gives a sum of money to her father. Finally, it is said that the earlier autocracy is finished, and that power is divided and delegated in the appropriate manner. The two couples stay together, and each brother acts as king on alternate days. Finally, Scheherazade takes over the former office of her father as vizier.

This final part of the frame story has all the characteristics of utopia. The central concept for a system of government is that violence is brought to an end. The realization of such a political system is imagined at the outermost periphery of

66 Zayyāt 1957.

67 Diem 2002, Springberg-Hinsen 2000.

68 Thomann 2017, p. 484.

69 See Pinault 1992.

the known world, and the basis for such a state is explained internally as being the work of reasonable persons.

The different sections described so far, show clear contours for an intended narrative composition. The Šadbaḥt cycle still belongs in its topics to the fantastic, which is also dominant in other parts of the *Arabian Nights*. With the Baybars cycle one is faced with realism. This becomes broken by a *mise en abyme*, an effect of alienation. Afterwards the course of events moves away from a world thought of as being possibly real, and ends in utopia, where violence, repression, and the limitation by social gender roles have come to an end. This structure is underlined by the spaciality of its setting: the Indo-Iranian world, Cairo, and China.

5 The Coherence of Prologue and Epilogue in the Mamluk Version

The question remains: what relationship exists between this final part and the Mamluk version of the Prologue, as this is known from the Galland manuscript? One common element is the theme of liberation. The expression 'the liberation of mankind' occurs again in the concluding part,⁷⁰ and the utopian end of shared power is not confined to the centre but also brought to the periphery by the vizier whose arrival is celebrated by the population of Samarkand.

The device of mirroring, so prominent in the final part, is also applied in the prologue. The story of the young woman and the 'Ifrit mirrors the two stories of the adulterous wives of Šahriyār and Šāhzamān. As in the epilogue, mirroring here produces a process of self-awareness. The brothers renounce escapism and return to their former residences.

However, these observations do not exclude the possibility that the final part was a later work of someone who read the prologue of his predecessor carefully, and invented a fitting end to the story.

But this option seems less likely. There is a case of text re-use. The scene in the Ḥammām where Šarāzād and Dunyāzād are dressed with robes has an almost literal parallel in the story of the two Viziers, where Badr al-Dīn Ḥasan attends the wedding of his cousin.⁷¹ The poems in which the bride is described are in every case the same except one. It is striking that the story of the two Viziers announces seven robes by which the bride is dressed, but in fact the seventh dress is passed over in silence. In the final part the seventh dress is the point of the

⁷⁰ MS Kayseri f. 127r; Burton 1885–1888, vol. 10, p. 55; Habicht 1825–1842, vol. 12, p. 412.

⁷¹ Mahdi 1985–1995, vol. 1, pp. 245–7; Haddawy 2010, pp. 172–4; see also Grotzfeld 1985, p. 84 (n. 33).

story, when the sisters appear dressed up as *ġulāmiyyāt* with male dresses, swords, and emblems. This feature is well prepared by the previous context of the story and functions as a narrative climax. However, in the story of the two Viziers, the *ġulāmiyya* motif would have been out of place and was left out. Moreover, in this context the term *ħil'a* makes no sense. Therefore, it is likely that the entire scene was invented for the grand finale of the frame story, and was reused in incomplete form in the story of the two viziers.

There is even a stronger argument that the final part as found in the Kayseri manuscript is approximately contemporary with the opening part as found in the Galland manuscript. A Turkish translation of the 'Thousand and One Nights' was made in the fifteenth century, and a number of manuscripts from the fifteenth, sixteenth, and seventeenth centuries which contain parts of it have survived.⁷² They belong to different recensions, some with linguistic modernizations, but are all based on the fifteenth century translation.⁷³ It is significant that one sixteenth century manuscript (MS Manchester Turkish 75) contains in an abbreviated form the same final series of story cycles and the end of the frame story as the Arabic Kayseri manuscript.⁷⁴ Moreover, a survey of the early Arabic manuscripts and a comparison with the extant Turkish manuscript has shown that the series of stories in both traditions are very similar.⁷⁵ Some stories were inserted or omitted in some recensions, but the order of the common stories is the same. Even if it seems to have been difficult to find and compose complete sets of the 'Thousand and One Nights', there existed a knowledge of how to narrate the stories in their proper chronology.

The evidence from the Turkish fifteenth century translation corroborates that the prologue in the Galland manuscript and the epilogue in the Kayseri manuscript are evidence of one reshaped version of the frame story. One new element in this version was probably the introduction of the king's brother, whose function was to construct a balanced end of the story with no loose ends, in which all protagonists were involved. The case of Duniyazād is more problematic. It would be tempting to interpret it as another innovation of the same redactor, who transformed the slave girl of the old version into the sister of the heroine, in order to perfect the symmetry of the plot. However, the same transformation is also found in the 'Hundred and One Nights' without that narrative motivation. Finally, the same redactor relinquished the motif of Scheherazade's motherhood, and let her succeed solely by her storytelling ability and sense of persuasion. As

72 For a list of 62 MSS see Thomann 2016, pp. 199–213; see also Proverbio 2016.

73 Proverbio 2016, p. 389.

74 Proverbio 2016, pp. 390–400; see also Akel 2016, p. 73; Thomann 2020.

75 Thomann 2016, pp. 190–95; Thomann 2020.

an icing on the cake, he made her go beyond her role as storyteller, performing through the beauty of her own body, first as a woman, and then transforming her body step by step into that of an ideal human being of paramount attractiveness, grace and dignity. The utopian character at the end should be taken into account in interpreting the beginning of the frame story since this substantiates the political dimension of the story. Maybe it is too much to declare this as *littérature engagée* – for that it is too playful, but in its juxtaposition of scenes of injustice and oppression in Mamluk Cairo with a utopian cessation of violence and the end of autocracy as far away as China it seems to satisfy the fears and hopes of the city-dwelling ‘Middle class’, the audience for this kind of literature, which Aboubakr Chraïbi has called ‘Middle literature.’⁷⁶

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⁷⁶ Chraïbi 2016, p. 63.

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Les manuscrits des *Mille et une nuits* au Maroc

Ahmed Saïdy

1 Introduction

Le livre des « Mille et une nuits » n'est ni inconnu ni ignoré des hommes de lettres et des gens en général au Maroc. La preuve en est ces deux témoignages d'intellectuels de premier plan. Le premier, Muḥammad al-Muḥtār al-Sūsī, dit : « Dès lors que j'ai commencé à lire le livre des *Mille et une nuits* à l'aube de ma vie – c'est le premier livre que j'ai lu quand j'avais environ dix ans – j'ai été attiré par ses histoires au sujet de la civilisation arabe à Bagdad et au Caire »¹. Le second, Abdelfattah Kilito, dit : « C'est dans ces circonstances que mon attention fut attirée par un livre posé tout près de moi, *Les Mille et Une Nuits* [...] Ce fut le premier livre que je tentai de lire, le premier livre arabe, le premier livre tout court [...] C'est pourtant grâce à ce livre que je fus invité aux Etats-Unis, plus précisément grâce à un article (à l'origine un mémoire de maîtrise), "Le sommeil dans *Les Mille et Une Nuits*" »².

Le livre s'est imposé au Maroc au moyen de deux facteurs :

1. La tradition orale (notamment les cercles de conteurs de la place Jemaa el-Fna, à Marrakech).
2. La mise par écrit (les manuscrits).

L'objet de notre étude concerne uniquement les sources manuscrites, comme j'ai trouvé dans des bibliothèques marocaines quelques copies des *Mille et une nuits* en écriture maghrébine. Ce sont les textes divisés en nuits et des extraits de certains contes (celui de *Tawaddūd*, par exemple) sont conservés à la Bibliothèque Royale (al-Ḥizāna al-Ḥasaniyya) et à la Bibliothèque Nationale (al-Maktaba al-Waṭaniyya) à Rabat, à la Bibliothèque de Mohammed Daoud à Tétouan, à la Bibliothèque de la Zaouïa Naciria (Ḥizānat al-Zāwiya al-Nāṣiriyya) à Tamegroute, etc³.

1 al-Sūsī 1960, 1/14.

2 Kilito 2010, pp. 13–15.

3 Pour plus d'informations sur les bibliothèques marocaines, voir Ahmed-Chouqui Binebine, *Histoire des bibliothèques au Maroc*.

Quoique des études aient déjà été faites sur ce sujet⁴, la réflexion que nous ouvrons ici porte, relativement aux *Nuits*, sur les questions suivantes :

Dans quelle mesure les Marocains se sont-ils intéressés aux *Mille et une nuits* sur le plan manuscrit ? Comment les manuscrits ont-ils été réalisés au Maroc, qui en furent les instigateurs et en quelles circonstances ? Quelles ressemblances et quelles différences existe-t-il avec les manuscrits orientaux ? Quelle est la singularité de ces sources manuscrites marocaines ? Enfin, et pour le plus pertinent, est-ce qu'un examen approfondi de ces manuscrits peut être une contribution significative ou constituer un apport important aux études portant sur les *Nuits* déjà existantes ?

Cette étude – les manuscrits des *Mille et une nuits* au Maroc : production, possession et circulation – est complètement nouvelle dans le champ des études actuelles⁵.

Une fois effectué l'inventaire des manuscrits des *Mille et une nuits* (textes divisés en nuits et extraits analogues) et leur référencement, par comparaison avec les histoires des textes édités, nous pourrions mettre en évidence la particularité de ces manuscrits, en retraçant la réception spécifique de ce livre par les Marocains, cela afin d'évaluer quelles pistes de réflexions nouvelles se trouvent par là ouvertes en ce domaine, pour examen et analyse ultérieurs.

De cette étude, et en l'état actuel de nos recherches, nous donnerons ici un premier aperçu.

2 Les manuscrits des *Mille et une nuits*, textes et extraits

Notre bibliographie, singulièrement pour les manuscrits des deux premières bibliothèques, comporte deux parties distinctes, relativement aux « textes » (*naṣṣ*) et aux « extraits » (*qit'a*)⁶. La première regroupe les textes complets ou presque, en considérant comme un texte « complet » celui dont les parties qui le composent sont complètes. Quant aux textes en extraits, ils constituent le deuxième groupe où sont rassemblés des fragments de ces parties (ou des recueils analogues aux *Nuits*). N'ayant pas toujours pu consulter l'original des manuscrits, nous nous appuyons sur les notices descriptives des catalogues.

4 Voir David Pinault, *Story-Telling Techniques in the Arabian Nights*, Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1992. p. 252 ; Aboubakr Chraïbi (éd.), *Arabic manuscripts of the Thousand and One Nights, Presentation and Critical Editions of Four Noteworthy Texts*, Paris: espaces&signes, 2016.

5 Nous tenons à remercier vivement pour leurs précieuses aides et contributions à ce travail Idris Chraouti et Ibrahim Akel.

6 Pour plus d'informations sur ces termes, voir Binbīn et al-Ṭūbī 2011, p. 355.

En consultant les catalogues de seize bibliothèques marocaines, on constate que des manuscrits des *Mille et une nuits* ne se trouvent que dans six d'entre elles. Ceci étant, notre inventaire ne prétend pas ici être exhaustif et nous n'avons pas, par exemple, cherché quels manuscrits il peut exister dans les collections privées ou familiales.

Voici le résultat de nos recherches :

Al-Ḥizāna al-Ḥasaniyya (la Bibliothèque Royale), Rabat :

– Ms. n° 6110. Manuscrit maghrébin de 130 feuillets, non daté. Lacunaire du début et de la fin. Hauteur 21.5 centimètres ; largeur 17 centimètres. 17 lignes par page. Il ne comporte pas le nom du copiste. (Hanaši et Lamadbar 2001, I, pp. 31–32).

– Ms. n° 6149. Manuscrit maghrébin de 242 feuillets, daté du 23/01/1287 de l'hégire (24/04/1870 de l'ère chrétienne). Il renferme seulement la première partie des *Mille et une nuits*. Hauteur 29 centimètres ; largeur 19 centimètres. 25 lignes par page. Il ne comporte pas le nom du copiste. (Hanaši et Lamadbar 2001, I, pp. 31–32).

– Ms. n° 6152. Manuscrit maghrébin de 154 feuillets, titré : « الحكايات العجيبات وما أضيف إليها من الغرائب والعجائب » (Les contes merveilleux et ce qu'on y a ajouté comme étrangetés et merveilles). Lacunaire de la fin. Hauteur 32 centimètres ; largeur 22 centimètres. 23 lignes par page. Il ne comporte pas le nom du copiste. (Hanaši et Lamadbar 2001, I, p. 115).

Début : “ذكر أنه دفع ابنه لمعلم وشرط عليه في أي شهر وفي أي يوم يأتيه بانه”

Fin : “فبقينا يا امير المؤمنين متفكرين حائرين حزانا على انفسنا واموالنا واهلنا وبتنا : تلك الليلة فلها اصبحنا رأينا”

– Ms. n°13668. Ce volume contient le conte de *Khalīfa le pêcheur et le calife Hārūn al-Rašīd*. (‘Ammūr 2007, p. 159).

– Mss. nos 9593, 12503, 13271, 13352 et 13483. Plusieurs exemplaires de l'histoire de la jeune esclave *Tawaddūd*. (‘Ammūr 2007, p. 342).

Al-Maktaba al-Waṭaniyya (la Bibliothèque Nationale), Rabat :

– Ms. n° 240 ḡ. Manuscrit maghrébin de 116 feuillets. Lacunaire du début, il renferme la première partie des *Mille et une nuits*. Hauteur 26 centimètres ; largeur 18.5 centimètres.

Début : “[...] ولما وصل إلى قصره ذهب إلى ابنته”

Fin : “إلى أن أتاه هادم اللذات ومفرق الجماعات ..”

– Ms. n° 987 d. Manuscrit maghrébin de 222 feuillets. Il renferme le quatrième volume des *Mille et une nuits* et s'étend de la 779^e nuit jusqu'à la fin du livre. Hauteur 22 centimètres ; largeur 17.5 centimètres.

Début (après la *basmala* et la *taṣṭiya*): «فيما حكى أنه كان في قديم الزمان وسالف العصر والأوان رجل تاجر من التجار مقيم بأرض البصرة»

Fin : «وعم بآكرامه سائر رعيته وأهل مملكته وأقام هو ودولته في نعمة وسرور ولذة: وجبور حتى أتاهم هادم اللذات ومفرق الجماعات فسبحان من لا يفنيه تداول الأوقات . . . ونضج به إليه في حسن الختام.»

– Ms. n° 719 d. Recueil d'histoires et de contes des *Mille et une nuits*. 124 pages.

– Ms. n° 56 d. Ce volume contient, entre autres (pp. 251–308), un exemplaire de l'histoire de la jeune esclave *Tawaddūd*. ('Allūš et al-Raḡrāḡī 2001, 173).

– Ms. n° 1427 d. Manuscrit maghrébin de 11 feuillets. Il renferme l'histoire de *La Ville de Cuivre*. Hauteur 255 millimètres ; largeur 170 millimètres. 32 lignes par page. ('Allūš et al-Raḡrāḡī, 109).

Début : «حدثنا يحيى بن مسعود الصديفي رحمه الله قال: دخلت يوما على أمير المؤمنين عبد الملك بن مروان بن الحكم بن أمية وقد أصابه أرق شديد إلح»

Ḥizānat Muḥammad Dāwūd (la Bibliothèque de Mohammed Daoud), Tétouan :

– Ms. n° 30.00. Manuscrit daté de 1287 (1870–1871). Il contient un exemplaire de l'histoire de la jeune esclave *Tawaddūd*. Il ne porte ni le nom du copiste ni celui du lieu de son exécution.

– Mss. nos 105.25, 280.00 et 281.01. Ces volumes contiennent, entre autres, des exemplaires de l'histoire de la jeune esclave *Tawaddūd*.

Ḥizānat al-Zāwiya al-Nāṣiriyya (la Bibliothèque de la Zaouïa Naciria), Tamegroute (région de Zagora) :

– Ms. n° 2016/3. 9 feuillets, non daté. Ce volume contient, entre autres, un exemplaire de l'histoire de la jeune esclave *Tawaddūd*. Hauteur 19.5 centimètres ; largeur 15 centimètres. 26 lignes par page. Il ne comporte pas le nom du copiste. (Laḥmar 2013, 4/1762).

Début : «بسم الله . . . كتاب فيه قصة الجارية تودد وما جرى لها من مناظرة: الفقهاء في مجلس أمير المؤمنين هارون الرشيد»

Fin : «..وقال لها أنت حرة لوجه الله تعالى وقد وهبتك لمولاك فانصرفت الجارية: مع مولاها»

– Ms. n° 2631. Manuscrit oriental de 143 feuillets, non daté. Lacunaire de la fin. Il contient une histoire intitulée : « *Tawaddūd al-‘uššāq fī ġazā’ir Wāq Wāq* ». Hauteur 18.5 centimètres ; largeur 13.5 centimètres. 14 lignes par page. Il ne comporte pas le nom du copiste. (Laḥmar 2013, 5/2493).

Début : « حكي والله أعلم فيما مضى من وتقدم وسالف من أحاديث الأمم أنه كان في قديم الزمان وسالف العصر والأوان »

Fin : « ومن قرب أشهدكم أن محمد نبي كريم وأنا له من التابعين، ورسالته من المقربين، وأنا أشهد ان لا إله الا الله وأشهد أن محمدا رسول الله، لا كفر بعد إيمان، ولا أتخذ غير الاسلام ديناً »

Maktabat Kulliyat al-Ādāb (la Bibliothèque de la Faculté des Lettres), Rabat :

– Ms. n° 30. Manuscrit lacunaire du début, titré : « *Kitāb Alf layla wa-layla* » (Le livre des Mille et une nuits), mais son texte n’est pas divisé en nuits. 399 pages (199 feuillets). Hauteur 20 centimètres ; largeur 16.5 centimètres. 15 lignes par page. (al-Murābiṭī 2011, p. 288).

Début : « الخ .. ».

Fin : « وهذا ما بلغنا من حديث الطير والحمد لله رب العالمين .. »

– Ms. n° 292/2. Manuscrit maghrébin non daté, acquis par la bibliothèque le 24/01/1984. Il contient, entre autres, un exemplaire de l’histoire de la jeune esclave *Tawaddūd* (pp. 109–155). Hauteur 23 centimètres ; largeur 17 centimètres. 23 lignes par page. Il ne comporte pas le nom du copiste. (al-Murābiṭī 2011, p. 367).

Début : « الخ ... »

Fin : « فانصرفت الجارية مع مولاها في سرور كثير وإحسان عظيم .. »

Ḥizānat Mū’assasat ‘Allāl al-Fāsī (la Bibliothèque de la fondation Allal El Fassi), Rabat :

– Ms. n° 2291/733. 115 feuillets. Ce volume renferme deux histoires des *Mille et une nuits* : celle d’*Ibrāhīm Ibn al-Ḥaṣīb et Ġamīla* et celle de *Qamar al-Zamān et sa bien-aimée*. Hauteur 20 centimètres ; largeur 15 centimètres. 21 lignes par page. (al-Ḥarīšī 1997, 4/207).

Début : « حكاية إبراهيم بن الخصب مع جميلة بنت أبي الليث عامل البصرة : »

Remarques et commentaires

Bien qu'ils ne représentent sans doute qu'une minorité des manuscrits des *Nuits* qui ont circulé au Maroc, ces quelques manuscrits identifiés dans notre bibliographie nous permettent quelques observations sur la façon dont les Marocains se sont intéressés à ce livre, et dans quelle mesure ils voulaient l'avoir dans leurs collections.

– Les manuscrits des *Mille et une nuits* mentionnés ci-dessus sont, à une exception, tous écrits en caractères maghrébins. Ils sont souvent lacunaires et les noms des copistes ainsi que les dates d'exécution ne sont généralement pas mentionnés.

– Aujourd'hui conservés dans les bibliothèques marocaines, ces manuscrits sont relativement rares ou peu nombreux. Des différentes bibliothèques (publiques, privées, des zaouias et mosquées) auxquelles nous nous sommes intéressés, il apparaît que les manuscrits des *Nuits* ne se trouvent pas dans les bibliothèques des mosquées (de Tazaa, Fès, Meknès, Ouezzane et Marrakech), alors qu'ils sont notablement présents dans les collections privées (Bibliothèque Royale, Bibliothèque Mohammed Daoud, Bibliothèque Allal El Fassi) et dans les bibliothèques des zaouias, ou en l'occurrence celle de la zaouia al-Nāṣiriyya. Cette diffusion est-elle conditionnée par le contenu jugé « érotique » des *Nuits* ? Ou est-ce que les aspects d'oralité des *Nuits* remplacent et supplantent majoritairement les textes ? « L'impression que l'on garde des *Nuits* est que la parole y est souveraine : la communication se fait de bouche à oreille ; on ne lit pas des histoires, on les écoute »⁷. Ou est-ce encore pour d'autres raisons ?⁸

– Les extraits ou fragments sont plus nombreux que les parties complètes. Voici les cinq histoires qu'ils renferment⁹ :

1. La jeune esclave *Tawaddūd*¹⁰. 13 exemplaires. (Nuit 429).
2. *La Ville de Cuivre*. Un exemplaire. (Nuit 568).
3. *Khalīfa le pêcheur et le calife Hārūn al-Rašīd*. Un exemplaire. (Nuit 378).
4. *Ibrāhīm Ibn al-Ḥašīb et Ġamīla*. Un exemplaire. (Nuit 579).
5. *Qamar al-Zamān et sa bien-aimée*. Un exemplaire. (Nuit 962).

7 Kilito 1992, p. 10. Voir aussi, Mahdi, 1974, p. 125.

8 Le livre des *Mille et une nuits* a été considéré, par certains pessimistes, comme un portemalheur. Voir Ġa'far al-Ḥalīlī, « Qiṣṣat Alf layla wa-layla », dans *Mağallat al-Fikr al-'Arabī*, n° 2, Beyrouth, 1962, p. 54, d'après al-A'raġī 2011, p. 39.

9 Ces histoires ne figurent pas dans l'édition de Muhsin Mahdi.

10 *Tawaddūd*, une jeune esclave, profondément versée dans toutes les branches du savoir. Le calife Hārūn al-Rašīd organise une disputation (*munāzara*) entre elle et dix savants. *Tawaddūd* vainc tour à tour chacun de ses adversaires.

Avec ses 13 exemplaires se trouvant dans des bibliothèques publiques et privées, dont cinq sont conservés à la Bibliothèque Royale, l'*Histoire de la jeune esclave Tawaddūd* occupe une place remarquable¹¹. Sa large diffusion découle certainement de sa nature. Elle comprend des connaissances dans de nombreux domaines : jurisprudence, interprétation, hadith, crédo, médecine, philosophie, astronomie et astrologie. Et son succès est lié à son objectif, qui est de « fournir un ensemble des connaissances élémentaires dans un cadre narratif minimal »¹².

Voici quelques tableaux récapitulatifs (Table 3.1).

3 Le récit cadre à travers trois textes

La Bibliothèque Royale, ainsi qu'il est précédemment mentionné, possède deux manuscrits « complets » des *Mille et une nuits*. Le manuscrit coté 6110, écrit en belle calligraphie maghrébine et comportant 130 feuillets, fournit quelques renseignements utiles, notamment sur le nom et, par voie de conséquence, la résidence de son ancien propriétaire et celle de ses lecteurs potentiels.

3.1 *Les marques de possession (Ex-libris)*¹³

Les marques de possession, situées au début et à la fin du manuscrit sont les suivantes :

Au début : « غفر الله ولوالده ءامين ادريس بن بوشتي البغدادي. »

À la fin : « 16 رمضان عام 1310. ملكه الله لعبده الضعيف ادريس بن بوشتي بن البغدادي المكتبي. غفر الله اوزاره وأورده الله والمسلمين الجنة يا أرحم الراحمين. »

Elles indiquent que le 16/09/1310 (04/04/1893), le manuscrit se trouve en possession d'un certain Idrīs Ibn Būštī Ibn al-Baġdādī al-Maktabī (sic). Nous savons, d'après les sources historiques maghrébines, que Fès a été dirigé par Būštī Ibn al-Baġdādī al-Ġāmi¹⁴, mort le 11/07/1310 (29/01/1893), et Idrīs, le propriétaire du manuscrit qui apparaît être un de ses fils, a très probablement acquis son manuscrit par voie d'héritage.

11 Cette histoire a fait l'objet d'une communication que nous avons donnée dans le cadre du colloque international « Écrire la vie des femmes », organisé à l'Université Georgetown au Qatar, 20-22/03/2016.

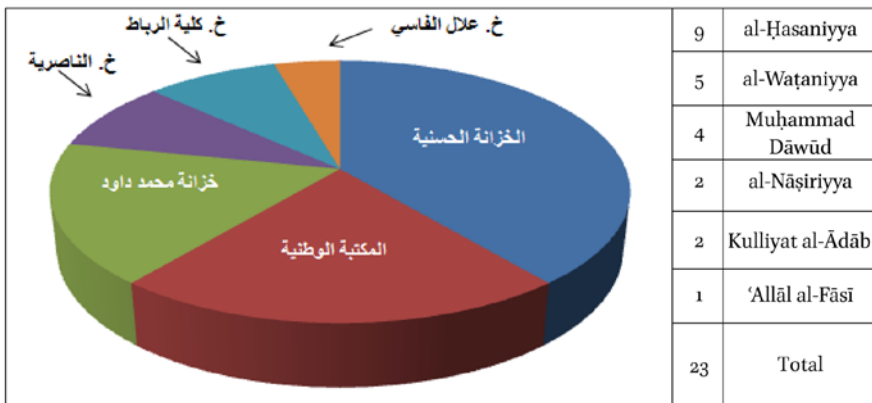
12 Makkī 1994, p. 250.

13 Pour cette terminologie, voir Binbīn et al-Ṭūbī 2011, p. 89, p. 142.

14 Voir Ibn Sūda 1997, p. 317.

TABLE 3.1 Manuscrits des *Nuits* dans les bibliothèques marocaines

Nom de la bibliothèque / <i>ḥizāna</i>	Lieu	Texte	Fragment	Nombre
al-Ḥizāna al-Ḥasaniyya (B. Royale)	Rabat	2	7	9
al-Maktaba al-Waṭaniyya (B. Nationale)	Rabat	2	3	5
Ḥizānat Muḥammad Dāwūd	Tétouan	0	4	4
al-Ḥizānat al-Nāṣiriyya	Tamegroute	0	2	2
Bibliothèque de la Faculté des Lettres	Rabat	0	2	2
Ḥizānat ‘Allāl al-Fāsī	Rabat	0	1	1
al-Ḥizānat al-Ṣubayḥiyya	Salé	0	0	0
Ḥizānat al-Qarawiyyin	Fès	0	0	0
Ḥizānat Ibn Yūsuf	Marrakech	0	0	0
Ḥ. al-Masḡid al-A‘zam (grande mosquée)	Ouazzane	0	0	0
Ḥizānat ‘Abdallāh Gannūn	Tanger	0	0	0
Ḥ. al-Ġāmi‘al-A‘zam (grande mosquée)	Taza	0	0	0
Ḥ. al-Ġāmi‘al-Kabīr (grande mosquée)	Meknès	0	0	0
al-Ḥizānat al-‘Ayyāṣiyya	Rich (province d’Errachidia)	0	0	0
Bibliothèque du Roi Abdul-Aziz Al Saoud	Casablanca	0	0	0
Ḥizānat al-Imam ‘Alī	Taroudant	0	0	0
Totale	16	4	19	23

FIGURE 3.1 Manuscrits des *Nuits* par bibliothèque

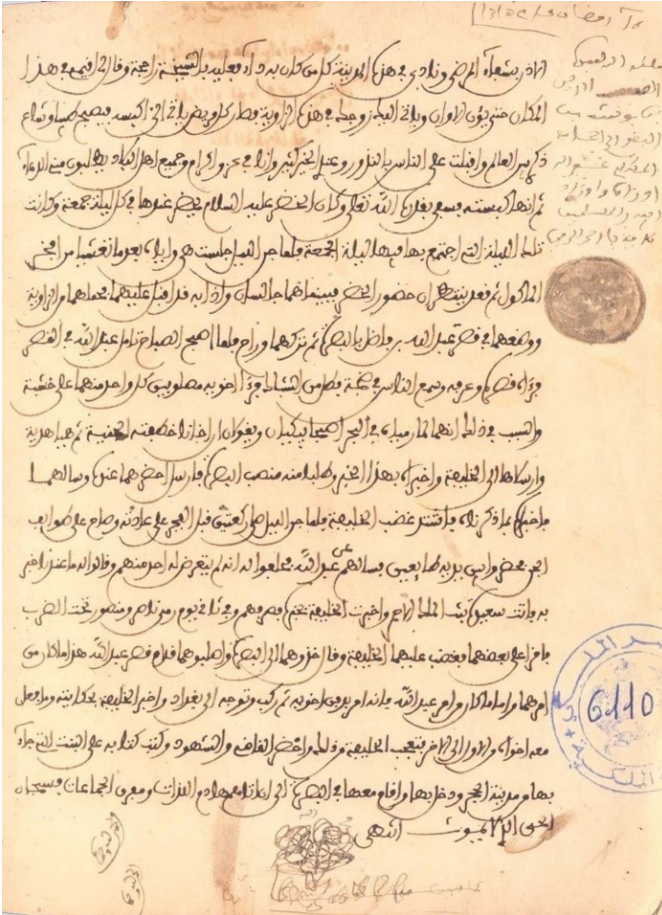


FIGURE 3.2
Début du manuscrit
n° 6110 (marque de
possession et cachet)

3.2 *Le Ḥātām (sceau, cachet)*

Les deux sceaux ou cachets qu'il comporte sont également significatifs à cet égard. Le premier *Ḥātām* identifiable est le sceau du propriétaire Idrīs Ibn Būšṭī et le second cachet, apposé plus tôt et daté de 1291 (1874–1875) au dernier feuillet du manuscrit, appartient très probablement à son père, l'ancien dirigeant de Fès.

Les *Mille et une nuits* qui ont effectivement circulé à l'état manuscrit dans la région, à savoir ce manuscrit conservé à la Bibliothèque Royale de Rabat après avoir appartenu à la ville de Fès, ne pouvaient donc être lues, ou proposées en lecture, que par et pour un public proche de la cour du gouverneur.

Le deuxième manuscrit « complet » que possède la Bibliothèque Royale est conservé sous la côte 6149 et porte également les caractères de l'écriture

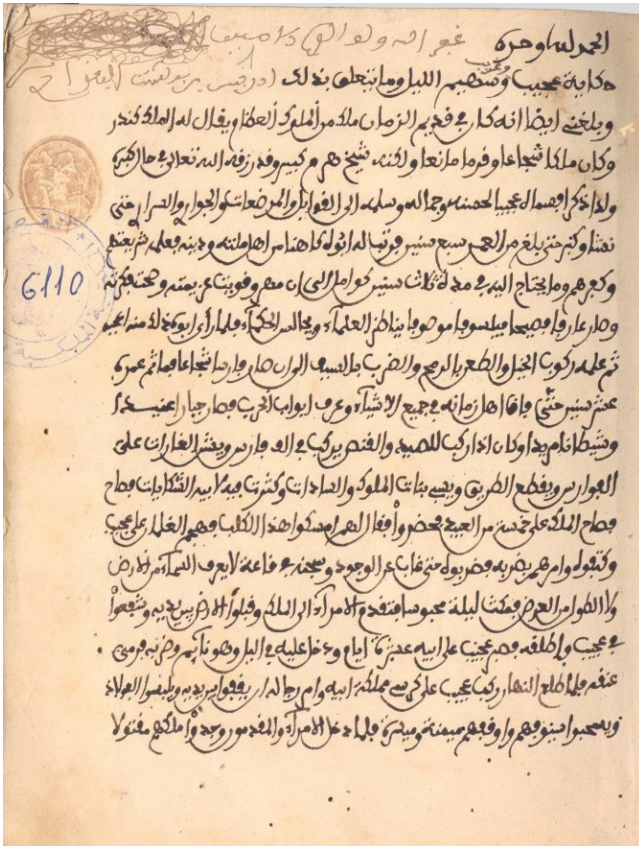


FIGURE 3.3
 Fin du manuscrit
 n° 6110 (marque de
 possession et cachet)

maghrébine (les dispositions particulières des points diacritiques du *fā*'et du *qāf*, les demi-boucles du *nūn* et du *yā*' finals brisées au milieu, etc.) et peut nous renseigner sur la nature du texte alors en circulation au Maroc.

Nous allons pour le mettre en évidence procéder, pour un extrait du récit cadre, à une comparaison entre la version de notre manuscrit¹⁵, (noté : م) et celles des éditions de Būlāq (noté : ب) et de Muhsin Mahdi (noté : مه). Comme l'écrit ce dernier, « les copies connues aujourd'hui ne sont pas des copies d'un livre, au sens où on l'entend communément, mais doivent être examinées, classées et éditées séparément, de façon critique »¹⁶. Autrement dit, les éditions de Būlāq, et aussi de Calcutta, ne sont pas des reproductions fidèles des

15 Dans l'espoir d'obtenir une copie complète du manuscrit, nous faisons le choix de cet extrait représentatif des quinze folios numérisés (du début et de la fin du manuscrit) dont nous disposons.

16 Muhsin Mahdi, *Alf layla wa-layla*, 1/23.

TABLE 3.2 Table de comparaison

Remarques	Édition de Muhsin Mahdi (مه)	Édition de Būlaq (ب)	Manuscrit maghrébin (م)
وردت الصلاة في (م) من دون واو، وهي عادة ناصرية (الالتناء إلى الطريقة الصوفية الناصرية)	بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ وَبِهِ تَقَى [تَقَى]	بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ	بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَي سَيِّدِنَا مُحَمَّدٍ وَالْهُ وَصَحْبِهِ وَسَلَّمَ تَسْلِيمًا
تطابق شبه تام بين (م) و (ب)، ما يعني أن النسخة المنقول عنها واحدة، وأول عمل إحداهما نقلت عن الأخرى. وهما تختلفان كثيرا عن (مه). [نقلت المخطوطة المغربية عن طبعة بولاق بحكم تأخرها، ولأن المطبوع كان أندر حينئذ في المغرب، نسخت منه المخطوطة]	الحمد لله الملك الجواد خالق الخلق والعباد، الذي رفع السماء بغير عمداد وبسط الأرض والمهاد، وجعل الجبال أوتاد وانبع الماء من الصخر الجماد، واهلك قوم ثمود وعاد وفرعون ذو الاوتاد. احمده تعالى على ما اولانا من الارشاد واشكره على فضله الذي ليس يحصا بالتعداد واما بعد . .	الحمد لله رب العالمين، والصلاة والسلام على سيد المرسلين سيدنا ومولانا محمد وعلى آله صلاة وسلاما دائما متلازمين الى يوم الدين *	الحمد لله رب العالمين وَالصَّلَاةُ وَالسَّلَامُ عَلَى سَيِّدِ المرسلين، سيدنا محمد وعلى آله وصحبه صلاة وسلاما دائمين متلازمين الى يوم الدين
الفارق واضح بين (مه) وسابقتها المتفقتين خلا بعض خصوصيات الرسم في (م). وإن كان الغرض بيان غاية الكتاب ومراميه، فضلا عن تسميته، إلا أن البون شاسع بين (مه) و (م) و(ب). وكاننا إزاء نصين لا ثلاثة، أو مجموعتين مختلفتين هما: (م-ب) ≠ (مه).	واما بعد فإننا نخر معاشر الاجواد، والسادة فضلا الامجاد، بان المقصود من كتابة هذا الكتاب الشهى المستطاب، النفع لمن يطالع فيه. لان فيه سير كثيرة الادب ومعاني فايقة لاهل الرتب، ومنها يتعلم الإنسان علم الكلام وما جرى للبلوك من اول الزمان على التام. وسميته الف ليلة وليلة. . .	وبعد فان سير الاولين صارت عبرة للاخرين * لكي يرى الانسان العبر التي حصلت لغيره فيعتبر * ويطالع حديث الامم السالفة وما جرى لهم فينجزر * فسبحان من جعل حديث الاولين عبرة لقوم آخرين (فمن تلك العبر الحكايات التي تسمى الف ليلة وليلة وما فيها من الغرائب والامثال . .	(وَبَعْدَ) فان سير الأولين صارت عبرة للاخرين، لكي يرى الانسان العبر التي حصلت لغيره فيعتبر، ويطالع حديث الامم السالفة وما جرى لهم فينجزر فسبحان من جعل حديث الأولين، عبرة لقوم آخرين، فمن تلك العبر الحكايات التي تسمى الف ليلة وليلة وما فيها من الغرائب والامثال.

TABLE 3.2 Table de comparaison (cont.)

Remarques	Édition de Muhsin Mahdi (مه)	Édition de Būlaq (ب)	Manuscrit maghrébin (م)
تكرر اسم «شهر باز» في (م) عنوانا وممتنا، ولا يبعد أن الناسخ أتى به من (ب)، لأنه فارسي (= ناظم الأطباء).	لا يوجد عنوان Sans titre	لا يوجد عنوان Sans titre	حكاية الملك شهر باز واخيه الملك شاه زمان (دون نَقْط النون المتطرفة) (Le <i>nūn</i> est écrit sans point diacritique)
استعمال الشكل في (م) (الشدّة= فتحة فوقها نقطة) مع الحفاظ على خصوصية الخط المغربي (نقط القاف والفاء، عدم نقط النون المتطرفة، إهمال المد أحيانا) من حيث المعنى، نلاحظ كيف أن شهر يار في (م-ب) حاكم عادل يحبه شعبه، وفي (مه)، فهو فارس وبطل ذو ثأر ونار، ملك البلاد، ونقف عند عبارة «دانت له البلاد...» لا يرد ذكر العدل والحب عكس ما ورد سابقا، وهذا أمر يبرز اختلاف شخصية شهر يار بين النصوص. يلاحظ أيضا اختلاف المكان بين: الصين، سمرقند العجم في (م-ب) وصين الصين، سمرقند في (مه)، واختلاف المدة: ٠٢ سنة (م-ب)، ٠١ سنين (مه).	. . قال الراوى صاحب التاليف [ذكروا والله اعلم بغيبه واحكم فيما مضى وتقدم وسلف من احاديث الامم، انه كان في قديم الزمان في ملك بني ساسان، في جزاير الهند وصين الصين ملكين اخوين، الكبير يقال له شهر يار والصغير يقال له شهر زمان. وكان الكبير شهر يار فارسا جبار وبطل مغوار لا يصطلي له بنار ولا يخذ له تار ولا يقعد عن اخذ الثار، وقد ملك من البلاد اقاصيهها ومن العباد نواصيهها، وقد دانت له البلاد واطاعت له العباد. فلَمَّ اخوه شاه زمان بلاد سمرقند وجعله فيها سلطان، واقام بها. [واقام هو] في الهند وصين الصين ولم يزل على هذه الحال عشر سنين.	حكى والله اعلم * واحكم واعز واکرم * انه كان في ما مضى وتقدم * من قديم الزمان * وسالف العصر والاوان * ملك من ملوك ساسان بجزائر الهند والصين * صاحب جند واعوان وخدم وحشم وكان له ولدان احدهما كبير والاخر صغير وكانا فارسين بطلين وكان الكبير افرس من الصغير وقد ملك البلاد وحكم بالعدل بين العباد واحبه اهل بلاده ومملكته وكان اسمه الملك شهر باز وكان اخوه الصغير اسمه الملك شاه زمان وكان ملك سمرقند العجم ولم يزل الامر مستقيا في بلادهما وكل واحد منهما في مملكته حاكم عادل في رعيته مدة عشرين سنة وهم في غاية البسط والانشراح.	حكى والله اعلم واحكم، واعز واکرم، أنه كان فيما مضى وتقدم، من قديم الزمان وسالف العصر والاوان، ملك من ملوك بني ساسان بجزائر الهند والصين صاحب جند وأعوامن* وخدم وحشم وكان له ولدان احدهما كبير والاخر صغير وكانا فارسين بطلين وكان الكبير افرس من الصغير وقد ملك البلاد، وحكم بالعدل بين العباد، وأحبه أهل بلاده ومملكته، وكان اسمه الملك شهر باز وكان اخوه الصغير اسمه شاه زمان وكان ملك سمرقند العجم ولم يزل الامر مستقيا في بلادهما وكل واحد منهما في مملكته حاكم عادل في رعيته مدة عشرين سنة وهم في غابة البسط والانشراح. . * كُتِبَ النون فوق الميم، يعني إن النص مقابل [مصحح]

TABLE 3.2 Table de comparaison (cont.)

Remarques	Édition de Muhsin Mahdi (مه)	Édition de Būlāq (ب)	Manuscrit maghrébin (م)
لا فرق بين (م-ب) كما سلف ذكره، لكن تفاصيل الإيقاع بالزوجة تختلف، سبب الرجوع في (م-ب) نسيان شهر يار حاجة له، أما في (مه) فالرغبة في توديع الزوجة. الذي شغل فراش شهر يار يختلف أيضا بين عبد أسود في النص، وغلام طبخ في النص الثالث. المصير هو قتل الزوجة والرجل الآخر في (م-ب)، يضاف إلى ذلك الجر من الأرجل والرمي في الخندق. ويكون الاستمرار في السفر وعدم إغائه مشتركا بين النصوص، أي التوجه إلى الآخر في مملكته.	واشفاق إلى الملك أخوه شهر يار وارسل وزيره خلفه - وكان لوزيره ابنتين الواحدة اسمها شهر آزاد والاخرى دينا رزاد - فامرهُ بالوصول إليه والقدم عليه. فتجهز الوزير وسار أيام وليالي إلى وصل إلى سمرقند (. . .) واخرج قماشه وبات تلك الليلة عند الوزير إلى نصف الليل وعبر إلى المدينة وطلع إلى قصره يودع زوجته. فلها دخل إلى القصر وجد زوجته نائمة وإلى جانبها رجلا من صبيان المطبخ متعانقة أياه. فلها راهما شاهزمان أسودت الدنيا في عينيه وحرك راسه زمان وقال في نفسه) هدي وانا لسعي ما سافرت، وانا مقيم ظاهر بلدي، فكيف يكون اذا سافرت إلى الهند إلى أخي، وكيف يكون الحال بعدي، ولكن النساء ما عليهم اعتقاد). تم انه اغتاض غيضا ما عليه مزيد وقال بالله اذا كنت انا ملك وحاكم بلاد سمرقند ويحرم على هدجا وتخونني زوجتي ويتم على هذا الامر). تم زاد عليه الغيظ فجرد سيفه وضرب الاثنين -الطباخ	ولم يزال على هذه الحالة إلى ان اشتاق الملك الكبير إلى أخيه الصغير فامر وزيره ان يسافر إليه ويحضر به فاجابه بالسمع والطاعة وسافر حتى وصل بالسلامة ودخل على أخيه وبلغه السلام واعلمه ان اخاه مشتاق إليه وقصده ان يزوره فاجابه بالسمع والطاعة ويجهز للسفر واخرج خيامه وجماله وبعاله وخدمه واعوانه واقام وزيره حاكما في بلاده وخرج طالبا بلاد أخيه فلها كان في نصف الليل تذكر حاجة نسيها في قصره فرجع ودخل قصره فوجد زوجته راقدة في فراشه معانقة عبدا أسود من العميد فلها رأى هذا أسودت الدنيا في وجهه وقال في نفسه اذا كان هذا الامر قد وقع وانا ما فارقت المدينة فكيف حال هذه العاهرة اذا غبت عند أخي مدة ثم انه سل سيفه وضرب الاثنين فقتلتهما في من وقته وساعته وأمر بالرحيل وسار إلى ان وصل إلى مدينة أخيه ففرح أخوه بقدمه ثم خرج إليه ولاقاه وسلم عليه وفرح به غاية	ولم يزال على هذه الحالة إلى ان اشتاق الملك الكبير إلى أخيه الصغير فامر وزيره ان يسافر إليه ويحضر به فاجابه بالسمع والطاعة وسافر حتى وصل بالسلامة ودخل على أخيه وبلغه السلام واعلمه ان اخاه مشتاق إليه وقصده ان يزوره فاجابه بالسمع والطاعة ويجهز للسفر واخرج خيامه وجماله وبعاله وخدمه واعوانه واقام وزيره حاكما في بلاده وخرج طالبا بلاد أخيه، فلها كان في نصف الليل تذكر حاجة نسيها في قصره فرجع ودخل قصره فوجد زوجته راقدة في فراشه معانقة عبدا أسود من العميد، فلها رأى هذا أسودت الدنيا في وجهه وقال في نفسه اذا كان هذا الامر قد وقع وانا ما فارقت المدينة فكيف حال هذه العاهرة اذا غبت عند أخي مدة ثم انه سل سيفه وضرب الاثنين فقتلتهما في الفراش ورجع من وقته وساعته وأمر بالرحيل وصار إلى ان وصل إلى مدينة أخيه ففرح أخوه بقدمه ثم

TABLE 3.2 Table de comparaison (cont.)

Remarques	Édition de Muhsin Mahdi (مه)	Édition de Būlāq (ب)	Manuscrit maghrébin (م)
	<p>وامراته - وجر برجليهما ورماهما من قصره الى اسفل الخندق وخرج على حاله الى ظاهر المدينة الى عند الوزير وامر في السفر بدلك الوقت. فذق الطبل وسافروا الملك شاهزمان في قلبه ناراً لا تطفى ولهيباً لا يخفى لاجل ما جرى عليه من جهة زوجته وكيف خاتته واستبدلت به رجلاً طبّاخ من بعض غلمان المطبخ. ولم يزالوا يجدون السير ويقطعون البراري والقفار الليل والنهار حتى وصلوا بلاد الملك شاهريار وخرج الملك الى لقيائهم. فلما وقعت عينه عليه عانق اخوه وقربه واكرمه وانزله بقصر من جوار قصره.</p>	<p>الفرح وزين له المدينة وجلس معه</p>	<p>خرج اليه ولاقاه وسلم عليه وفرح به غاية الفرح وزين له المدينة وجلس معه . . .</p>



FIGURE 3.4
Manuscrit n° 6110 (Un cachet daté)

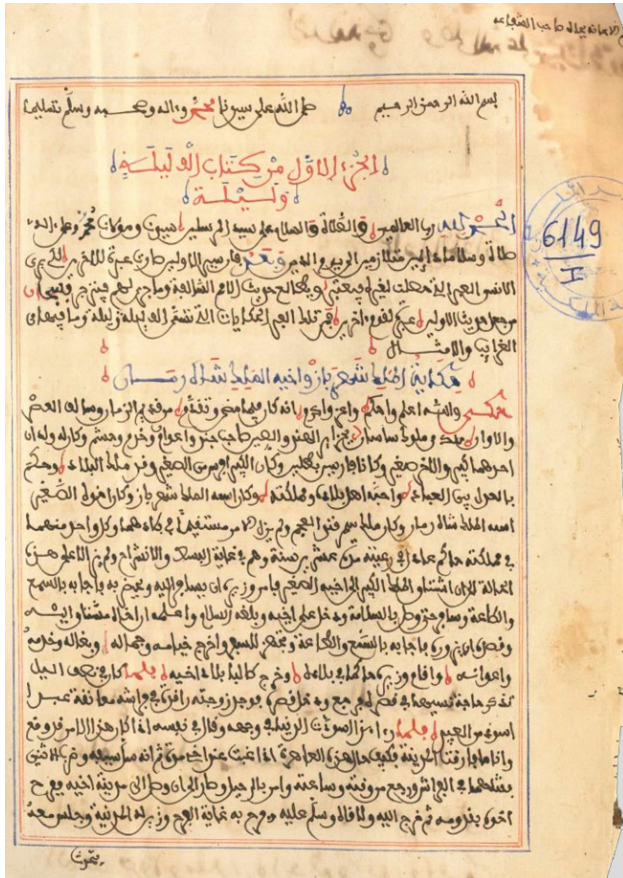


FIGURE 3.5
Début du manuscrit
n° 6149 (م)

manuscripts ; elles proposent un texte constitué en réalité de plusieurs pièces, auxquelles viennent encore s'ajouter les interventions des copistes, des correcteurs et des éditeurs eux-mêmes¹⁷.

3.3 Remarques et commentaires

Ce tableau comparatif nous permet d'identifier quelle concordance peut effectivement exister entre les trois textes.

– Le texte du manuscrit (م) correspond de façon évidente à celui de l'édition de Būlāq (ب), et a donc été copié, moins quelques écarts mineurs, sur le texte imprimé.

17 Pour plus d'informations sur ces phénomènes, voir Orfali, Bilal W., et Maurice A. Pomerantz, « Maqāmāt Badī' al-Zamān al-Hamaḍānī: al-naṣṣ wa-l-maḥṭūṭāt wa-l-tārīḥ », dans *Maḡallat Ostour 1*, (2015), pp. 39–55.



FIGURE 3.6
Fin du manuscrit n° n°
6149 (م)

– Le grand nombre et l'importance des variantes que l'on peut relever entre, d'une part, (م) et (ب), et, d'autre part, l'édition de Muhsin Mahdi (مه), montre que le texte établi (مه) dérive d'une recension tout à fait différente.

4 Conclusion

Cet aperçu de l'étude que nous donnons ici avait pour objectif une première mise au point sur la circulation des *Mille et une nuits* d'après les manuscrits conservés dans certaines bibliothèques marocaines. Le nombre des manuscrits identifiés et répertoriés n'est pas très élevé, mais nous espérons qu'il ne s'agit là que d'un début concernant la recherche que nous ouvrons relative-

ment aux *Nuits* au Maroc. Nous avons proposé, dans un deuxième temps, une comparaison d'un extrait d'un manuscrit maghrébin avec les textes de deux éditions imprimées, après nous être intéressés aux indications paratextuelles inscrites dans les marges de la copie maghrébine et qui nous ont éclairés sur son histoire. Retracer l'histoire de la transmission d'un livre¹⁸ à travers ses manuscrits est une idée séduisante car cela permet de mettre en évidence la réception de ce livre par les lecteurs de toutes catégories, de suivre l'évolution de l'art du livre et de redécouvrir des copies oubliées ou très peu connues.

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Redécouverte d'un manuscrit oublié des *Mille et une nuits*

Le manuscrit de James Anderson

Ibrahim Akel

En 1797–1798 Jonathan Scott (1754–1829) donne, dans *The Oriental Collections* de William Ouseley, la table des matières d'un fragment des *Mille et une nuits*, acheté en Inde par son ami James Anderson, en la comparant avec celle de la traduction de Galland¹. Scott, qui a déjà fait sa propre copie de ce fragment, donne également le texte arabe et la traduction anglaise du chapitre introductif (le récit-cadre)². L'orientaliste anglais, s'appuie de nouveau sur ce manuscrit et traduit en 1800, dans ses *Tales, Anecdotes and Letters*, deux nouvelles histoires qui ne figurent pas chez Galland³ : *Story of the Labourer and Flying chair* (*La chaise volante*) « *قصة الجعيدى عزرائيل* »⁴ et *Story of the King, his Son, Concubine, and Seven Viziers* (*Les Sept vizirs*) « *قصة الملك وولده الذى نجا من القتل ببركه* » « *السبعة الوزراء وما حاجوا عنه حتى نجا من القتل* »⁵.

Ce manuscrit était en fait l'un des « douze manuscrits connus des *Mille et une nuits* qui existent en Europe », que l'orientaliste autrichien Joseph von Hammer (1774–1856) a cités et comparés avec le manuscrit qui l'avait acquis de Carlo Rosetti, consul d'Autriche en Égypte⁶. Selon Hammer seule *l'Histoire du Siège volant* manque dans le manuscrit égyptien⁷.

1 Scott 1797, vol. I, p. 245 ; 1798, vol. II, p. 34–35.

2 *Ibid.*, vol. II, pp. 160–172 et pp. 228–256.

3 Scott 1800, pp. iii–iv, pp. 7–37, pp. 38–198.

4 Classé n° 131 par Chauvin.

5 Classé n° 402 par Chauvin, et n° 181 par Marzolph/van Leeuwen (ANE).

6 Il s'agit d'un exemplaire complet en 4 volumes (411, 278, 271 et 278 feuillets) qui a été copié en 1217 (1802), par 'Alī al-Anṣārī Ibn Ibrāhīm al-Anṣārī. C'est l'exemplaire, « d'où M. de Hammer a traduit en français les contes jusqu'alors inédits, et traduits ensuite par M. Zinserling en allemand, Stuttgart et Tübingen, 1823–4 ». Von Hammer l'avait cédé plus tard au Comte Wenceslas Severin Rzewuski. En 1930, la collection de Rzewuski est transférée, de la Bibliothèque Impériale Publique de Saint-Petersbourg, à la Bibliothèque Publique de Varsovie dont les principaux magasins ont été brûlés, en janvier 1945, à la veille de l'évacuation de la Pologne par les Allemands. Cf. Dorn 1852, pp. 138–139 (n° 142).

7 Joseph de Hammer 1828, t. I, pp. xxxv–xxxvi.

Hermann Zotenberg (1834–1909) signale, à son tour, dans sa fameuse notice sur les manuscrits des *Mille et une nuits*, le manuscrit rapporté de l'Inde par James Anderson, en disant que ce volume des *Nuits* « diffère, quant à son texte, d'une façon notable de toutes les autres rédactions. Mais nous n'en connaissons que le fragment publié par J. Scott, c'est-à-dire le commencement de l'ouvrage, sur lequel les scribes ont spécialement exercé leur fantaisie ». Il ajoute, dans une note, qu'il « ignore où se trouve ce manuscrit à présent »⁸.

Ainsi, le peu d'informations données par Scott sont reprises d'un auteur à l'autre⁹, sans que personne n'ait pu consulter le manuscrit même, celui que nous avons la chance de retrouver et que nous allons présenter dans les lignes qui suivent.

La Bibliothèque Universitaire d'Édimbourg possède, sous la cote Or. Ms. 169, un manuscrit de 209 folios, (les folios ne sont pas numérotés), intitulé *Alf layla wa-layla*. « Il contient des histoires du début des *Mille et une nuits* jusqu'au milieu de celle de *Qamar al-Zamān*, qui est la 97^e *hikāya* (conte) de l'édition de Macnaghten, mais dont la formulation est très différente »¹⁰. Ce manuscrit sans date, dont les poèmes sont transcrits comme de la prose, sans que les marques de ponctuation soient systématiquement impliquées, contient, sur les marges de quelques feuillets, des gloses en persan. Il est écrit en bon *nashī* et « appartenait à la collection de David Anderson », comme le dit le catalogue de la Bibliothèque.

David Anderson (1750–1828), l'assistant diplomatique « major political diplomat » de Warren Hastings (1732–1818), gouverneur général de Bengale, est le frère de James Anderson (1758–1833), l'interprète pour le persan auprès de ce dernier¹¹. En 1786, James retourne en Angleterre en ramenant (comme son frère) sa collection de livres et de manuscrits orientaux. Les collections des frères Anderson sont données, à plusieurs reprises, à l'Université d'Édimbourg. Par exemple, Adam Anderson, le neveu de James, a offert à l'Université les 54 manuscrits persans acquis par son oncle, après la mort de ce dernier¹².

James Anderson a permis à son ami Jonathan Scott, qui avait été secrétaire persan de Warren Hastings¹³, de prendre une copie de son manuscrit des *Nuits*¹⁴. Il est à signaler ici que Muhsin Mahdi (1926–2007), pense que l'ami

8 Zotenberg 1887, vol. 28, p. 215–216.

9 Voir Kirby 2008, vol. X, p. 434 [éd. 1885, vol. X, p. 495] ; Chauvin 1892–1922, vol. IV, p. 202. Chauvin cite *l'Histoire de l'envieux et de l'envié* (n° 158), parmi les contes que renferme ce manuscrit, alors que ce n'est pas le cas.

10 Hukk 1925, p. 143.

11 Edinburgh University Library, Site officiel : <<http://www.lib.ed.ac.uk/about/bgallery/Gallery/records/eighteen/anderson.html>>, consulté le 11 août 2015.

12 *Idem*.

13 Buckland 1906, p. 379.

14 Scott 1800, p. III.

de Scott (et le propriétaire du manuscrit) est James Anderson (1739–1809), médecin auprès de la Compagnie anglaise des Indes orientales, mort en 1809 à Madras¹⁵.

Le manuscrit d'Anderson est divisé en six parties (*al-ğuz'* [1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6] *min Sīrat Alf layla wa-layla*), dont seulement les trois premières et le début de la quatrième sont divisées en nuits, mais les nuits ne sont pas numérotées.

(Fol. 1b-35b). – **Première partie :**

– Les deux rois Šahriyār (ici Šāh-ribān, Šahrizyān) et Šāhzamān (ici Šāh-zayān) [Le récit-cadre].

– L'âne et le taureau (Al-ḥimār wa-l-ṭawr ma'a al-muzārī/al-tāğir/al-ḥawāğā)].

– Le marchand et le génie (Ḥadīt al-tāğir wa-l-ʿifrīt) :

– Le premier vieillard (Le vieillard à la gazelle).

– Le deuxième vieillard (Le vieillard aux deux chiens).

– Le troisième vieillard (Le vieillard à la mule). Cette histoire est très différente de celle des autres manuscrits des *Nuits* : l'épisode de la trahison ressemble beaucoup à celui décrit dans l'*Histoire du roi des îles noires* ; il n'y a pas métamorphose puis dé-métamorphose du mari trompé ; ce dernier se remarie avec la fille d'un juriste ; elle l'aide à métamorphoser sa femme en mule, etc.

– Le pêcheur et le génie (Ḥadīt/Ḥikāyat al-ṣayyād wa-l-ʿifrīt) :

– Le roi Yūnān et le médecin Dūbān.

(Fol. 35b-71a). – **Deuxième partie :**

– Suite de l'histoire du roi Yūnān et du médecin Dūbān.

– Le roi des îles noires (Ḥadīt al-malik Maḥmūd ṣāhib Ġazāyir al-sūd).

– Le portefaix et les trois dames (Ḥadīt/Ḥikāyat al-ḥammāl wa-l-ṣabāyā wa-l-qarandaliyya al-ʿūrān).

– Le premier calender.

(Fol. 71a-101b). – **Troisième partie :**

– Le deuxième calender.

– Le troisième calender.

– La première dame (La dame aux chiennes).

(Fol. 101b-157a). – **Quatrième partie :**

– Les Sept vizirs (Ḥadīt/Qiṣṣat al-malik wa-waladihi al-ladī nağā min al-qatli bi-barakat al-sab'at al-wuzarā'). Cette version présente beaucoup de variantes.

15 Mahdi, qui présente le manuscrit de Patrick Russell, dit qu'il n'a pas réussi à trouver le manuscrit de Scott. Cf. Mahdi 1984, p. 267.

(Fol. 157a-193a). – **Cinquième partie :**

- La chaise volante (Qiṣṣat/Ḥadīṭ al-Ġaʿīdi ʿIzrāʿīl).
- Qamar al-Zamān (Ḥikāyat al-malik Ṣahramān wa-waladihi Qamar al-Zamān).

(Fol. 193a-209b). – **Sixième partie :**

- Suite de l'histoire de Qamar al-Zamān, jusqu'à la naissance d'al-Amğad et al-Asʿad, ce qui correspond à la nuit 217 de l'édition de Būlaq.

Il est clair que le manuscrit d'Anderson diffère en bien des points des autres recensions des *Mille et une nuits*. Cependant ce manuscrit n'est pas un texte isolé. Nous avons pu identifier deux autres versions très proches, l'une est conservée à la Bibliothèque Bodléienne d'Oxford (Ms. Ouseley 242) et l'autre à l'Université Yale (Ms. Arabic 272). Le manuscrit de William Ouseley (1767–1842) est une bonne copie de 195 feuillets¹⁶. Le texte est précédé par un index détaillé des contes, rédigé en persan. Selon D.B. MacDonald, ce manuscrit est un abrégé : « I have extracts from two other MSS which are so abbreviated that it is not worthwhile to transcribe them : the Ouseley MS in the Bodleian (Ous. 242 ; in Ouseley's Cat. No. 577) [...] »¹⁷. Cependant, l'examen détaillé du texte montre que cette opinion n'est pas exacte.

Quant au manuscrit de Yale, il est le plus authentique des trois et le plus certainement ancien. Il s'agit d'un manuscrit rapporté du Yémen en 1805, comme le dit une note écrite sur le recto du premier feuillet : « Bought by me at Mocha 1805. M. Thoms[on] »¹⁸, il a ensuite été acheté en 1949, de la collection Wellcome-Kraus, par l'Université Yale (Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library)¹⁹, où il se trouve conservé sous la cote Arabic MSS 272. Ce manuscrit de 221 feuillets dont quelques-uns sont reliés, par erreur, à la fin du volume, est écrit, à l'exception des cinq premiers folios, en *nastaʿlīq*²⁰, et la lacune du début (fol. 1b-5b) a été comblée par une main ordinaire. Nous trouvons au recto du premier feuillet des notes qui attestent que le manuscrit a circulé dans un certain cercle de lecteurs, peut-être syriens ou égyptiens, comme pourrait laisser supposer leurs noms (Aḥmad Ibn Ṣāliḥ al-Ġūdī, ʿAbdallāh Ibn

16 Ouseley 1831, n° 577 ; Zotenberg 1887, p. 213.

17 MacDonald 1922, p. 318.

18 Beinecke Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Site officiel : <<http://brbl-dl.library.yale.edu/vufind/Record/3770375>>, consulté le 11 août 2015.

19 Yale University Library Catalog : <<http://orbexpress.library.yale.edu/vwebv/holdingsInfo?bibId=3763331>>, consulté le 11 août 2015 ; Cf. Nemoj 1956, p. 6, p. 56.

20 Le *Nastaʿlīq*, est un style calligraphique de l'écriture arabo-persane. Il est né en Perse (Iran et pays voisins) à la fin du xive siècle.

TABLE 4.1 Concordance des manuscrits (Édimbourg, Yale et Oxford)

Chauvin	ANE	Conte	Édimbourg, Or. Ms. 169	Yale, Arabic Ms. 272	Oxford, Ouseley 242
N° 111	No 1	Le récit-cadre	1b-16b	1b-14a	1b-16a
N° 104	No 2-3	L'âne et le taureau	9a-15a	6a-12a	8b-14b
N° 194	No 4	Le marchand et le génie	17a-29a	14b-29b	16a-28b
N° 396	No 5	Le premier vieillard	20b-23b	18b-21b	19b-22b
N° 397	No 6	Le deuxième vieillard	24a-26b	22a-25a	22b-25b
N° 398	No 7	Le troisième vieillard	27a-29a	25a-28a	25b-28b
N° 195	No 8	Le pêcheur et le génie	29a-52a	29b-52a	28b-52a
N° 156	No 9	Le roi Yūnān et le médecin Dūbān	33b-40b	33b-40b	33a-40b
N° 222	No 13	Le roi des îles noires	45b-52a	45b-52a	47a-51b
N° 148	No 14	Le portefaix et les trois dames	52a-101b	52a-106b	52a-
N° 115	No 15	Le premier calender	66b-72a	68a-73b	65b-71a
N° 116	No 16	Le deuxième calender	72a-83a	73b-86b	71a-81b
N° 117	No 18	Le troisième calender	83a-92a	86b-96b	81b-89b
N° 443	No 19	La première dame	93b-101b	98a-106b	90b-98a
N° 402	No 181	Les Sept vizirs	101b-157a	107a-165a	98a-148a
N° 131		La chaise volante	157a-169a	165b-173b + 219a-221b + 174a-175a	148a-158b
N° 120	No 61	Qamar al-Zamān	169a-209b	175a-184b + [lacune d'un folio] + 185a-190b + 206a-218b + 191a-205b	158b-195b

Yaḥyā Ḥūriyya, Yūsuf Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb al-Sibā'ī). L'une de ces notes est datée de 1217/1802.

Il peut être utile de donner ici la concordance des trois manuscrits (Table 4.1).

Ainsi, ces trois manuscrits identiques se caractérisent par des éléments singuliers qui demandent de les ranger à part :

– La présence de l'histoire du *Troisième vieillard* (dans *Le marchand et le génie*).

– L'absence des histoires suivantes : *Le mari et le perroquet* ; *Le vizir, le prince et la goule* et *Sindbād et le faucon* (dans *Le pêcheur et le génie*) ; *L'envieux et l'envié* et *La seconde dame* (dans *Les dames de Bagdad*).

– L'intercalage entre l'*Histoire des Trois Dames de Bagdad* et celle de *Qamar al-Zamān*, de deux autres récits ; celui des *Sept vizirs* et celui de *la chaise volante*.

– Les manuscrits se terminent avec la naissance d'al-Amğad et al-As'ad dans l'*Histoire de Qamar al-Zamān*, ce qui correspond à la nuit 217 de l'édition de Būlāq. Cette histoire est donc plus longue que celle de Galland, mais moins longue que celle de ZER (Zotenberg Egyptian Recension).

– Ils sont divisés en parties et seulement dans les deux contes intercalés que les débuts correspondent aux débuts des récits. Les parties sont intitulées « ... *min Sīrat Alf layla wa-layla* ».

– Les trois premières parties et le début de la quatrième sont divisées en nuits, sans que les nuits ne soient numérotées.

– La répartition en nuits et les registres linguistiques du texte sont plutôt proches de ceux du manuscrit Galland et ses descendants.

Or, nous sommes devant trois manuscrits qui ont essentiellement circulé en dehors des zones habituelles (la Syrie et l'Égypte) ; trois manuscrits de même recension qui diffèrent considérablement des autres recensions des *Mille et une nuits*, comme le montre l'histoire du *Troisième vieillard*, dont voici la traduction française :

Puis le troisième vieillard s'avança et fit son récit au génie...

Le temps du sommeil étant venu, Schéhérazade s'était tue.

« Si le roi me fait demeurer, acheva-t-elle, je vous dirai encore ce qu'il en est du vieillard à la mule. »

Alors quand la nuit suivant arriva, et que le roi fut d'elle satisfait, sa sœur Dunyāzād entra.

« Ô ma sœur, lui dit-elle, nous conteras-tu quelque chose, que nous veillions cette nuit ?

Nous conteras-tu, en effet, l'histoire du vieillard à la mule ? demanda le roi.

Bien volontiers et avec grand plaisir, répondit-elle.

« Ô roi bienheureux, quand le troisième vieillard s'avança et s'adressa au génie, voici ce qu'il lui dit :

« Sache, ô roi des djinns, que cette mule qui m'accompagne est ma cousine. Je l'ai prise pour épouse quand elle était encore petite et ai pris soin

de son éducation. Devenue femme, belle dans son port et ses manières, elle allait et venait ceci dit tant qu'elle n'en devint pas moins légère et adultère, sans que je ne pusse désormais corriger sa conduite ! Elle prenait des amants et mes amis de m'apprendre ses agissements m'exhortaient :

« Débusque-la et maîtrise-la ! »

Mais j'en étais incapable. Je commençais bien à la menacer de divorcer si elle ne cessait pas ses sorties qu'elle sortait toujours, adonnée à ses affaires, allant et venant donc comme elle le voulait.

Un jour vint cependant où, n'y tenant plus, je me cachai dans une armoire afin de découvrir ce qu'elle faisait. Pensant que j'étais à l'extérieur, elle se leva, prit ses habits et sortit. Je la suivis à son insu et à bonne distance. Elle arriva dans une impasse où je la vis entrer dans un palais délabré, passer la porte et monter un escalier. Je montai à sa suite et trouvai là un esclave : aussi haut qu'une colonne, aussi large qu'un banc ! Sa tête était tel un chaudron, ses narines des trompettes et sa bouche semblable aux babines d'un chameau...

Elle entra et le salua sans qu'il ne lui répondit.

« Tu es revenue, garce ! lui dit-il bien plutôt sans cérémonie. Je n'ai que faire de ton salut.

Ô mon amour, mon cœur... mon maudit mari me surveille jalousement et plus que de coutume, lui dit-elle. Dès que j'ai pu détourner son attention, je suis venue ! Allons, viens, et satisfait le désir qui me brûle ! »

Elle commença à jouer avec son sexe qui durcit et l'embrassa. Puis elle le déshabilla et découvrit sa tête, pareille à celle d'un gros chat. Elle ne cessait de le caresser et l'embrasser que l'esclave, impassible, n'accédait toujours pas à ses avances. Elle monta alors sur lui, câline et chagrine, et fit là ce que, de ma vie, je ne lui avais jamais vu faire... L'esclave la souleva et la jeta sous lui. Il la prit vertement et jusqu'à évanouissement, opérant en elle et s'affairant ainsi qu'un manoeuvre sur une planche sans vie. Son but atteint, il arrosa d'eau son visage et elle reprit ses esprits.

« Par Dieu, mon maître, lui dit-elle, ne me punis pas et ne sois pas contre moi en colère... Je me meurs d'amour pour toi !

Charogne imbécile, bourrique ! Une bouchée nous suffit, lui dit-il, à moi comme à toi. Ne resteras-tu donc pas avec moi ?

Ô mon amour, ma vie est à toi...

Si tu ne restes pas avec moi, et dès aujourd'hui, alors ne reviens plus. Je ne te verrai plus.

Ô mon maître, patience ! Je me débarrasserai de lui et reviendrai vers toi. »

Entendant cela, je descendis l'escalier.

« Ô Dieu Tout-Protecteur ! invoquai-je en moi-même. S'ils m'avaient remarqué, ils m'auraient assurément taillé en pièces ! »

Je me mis à courir et retournai prestement à ma boutique. J'étais bouleversé par ce que je venais de voir et n'aurais même jamais pu le concevoir...

Une heure plus tard, je retournai chez moi. Elle était là, ses habits changés et le teint pâle. Craignant sa ruse, je gardai le silence et m'en allai demander en mariage la fille d'un juriste et l'épousai en effet.

Elle m'aima et je l'aimai. Or, ayant pris mes distances avec ma cousine, la fille du juriste me demanda un jour ce que j'avais fait de ma femme.

« Ne m'interroge pas à son sujet, lui dis-je.

Par Dieu, insista-t-elle, mon cœur est inquiet... »

Je soupirai et me rappelai alors sa conduite.

« Mais enfin, par Dieu ! reprit-elle en baisant ma main, veux-tu bien me dire ce qu'il y a ? »

Je lui racontai ce qui était arrivé, du début jusqu'à la fin.

« Ô mon maître, si quelqu'un en ce monde la punissait, avant qu'elle n'atteigne l'au-delà, que dirais-tu ?

Et comment la punirais-tu donc ? lui demandai-je.

Si cela plaît à ton cœur, je lui jetterai pour toi un sort. Il sera fait selon ton souhait.

Tu saurais faire cela ?

Oui... »

Je pensai qu'elle mentait.

« Tu pourrais la changer en mule ? hasardai-je tout de même, dans la peine où j'étais.

Oui... dit-elle.

Cela me rendrait bien service, lui dis-je... Le moment s'y prête.

Conduis-moi jusqu'à elle, et tu verras se produire l'extraordinaire. »

Je l'emmenai donc et nous arrivâmes chez elle. Si tôt rentrés, elle se mit contre nous à marmonner. Alors ma femme fit de même, elle marmonna et d'une voix décidée ordonna contre elle :

« Quitte cette forme humaine et prend la forme d'une mule ! »

Elle fut prise de convulsions et se changea en mule, en effet. Pour une surprise... j'étais fou de joie ! Je l'emmenai avec moi et allai au marché. Je lui achetai une muselière ainsi qu'une selle et pris l'habitude de la monter chaque jour.

Ainsi, je vais et je viens, depuis lors et jusqu'à présent. J'ai trouvé le marchand, l'homme aux gazelles et l'homme aux chiennes. Je les ai interrogés

sur leurs états et ils m'ont certes appris ce qui leur était arrivé, ainsi qu'à vous. Or, voici mon histoire, ô roi des djinns. »

Le génie en fut très étonné et même tout à fait charmé.

« Je t'accorde certainement le tiers de son sang, dit-il, et vous le libère. Tout est pardonné. »

Puis le génie partit.

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PART 2

Galland's Translation and the Eighteenth Century



Métissage and the Literary Field of the French Enlightenment

The Impact of Galland's Translation of the Arabian Nights

Anne E. Duggan

In French, the term *métissage* can be understood in terms of 'cross-breeding' or 'miscegenation'. While *métis* can be used to designate a person of mixed race, *métissage* is also used in the context of culture. In the course of a debate organized by the conservative Polish journal *Political Theology* (*Teologia Politycna*) in 2011, the French intellectual Alain Finkielkraut openly denounced the 'civilizational problem' of immigration from North and West Africa, and rejected what he dubbed the 'pathetic apology of *métissage*' on the part of French elites. He states, sarcastically:

It is through *métissage* that we will solve the problem. So the values, the ways of being, the styles will, in some way, mix together, and from this mix will emerge a happy civilization ... they tell us that France has always been a *métis* country, that *métissage* is inherent to France, to Europe, to Western culture in general ... Historically, this strictly makes no sense. But it is also a way for France ... to devalue itself. (my translation).

What he opposes to the supposedly damaging effects of *métissage* on French culture is the culture of the Enlightenment, which he apparently considers 'unmixed', void of non-European influences.

However, the very Enlightenment culture Finkielkraut wants to oppose to *métissage* in fact would be inconceivable without a very important French-Arab *métissage* that was foundational to the French Enlightenment: Antoine Galland's translation of *The Arabian Nights*. Not only did this translation of a Syrian manuscript give a renewed impulse to the fashion of fairy tales that began in the 1690s, launched by Marie-Catherine d'Aulnoy and Charles Perrault, among others, but it also nourished a generation of Enlightenment thinkers, including Montesquieu, Voltaire, and Diderot, whose work would be unthinkable without the integration of this Arab tale collection into the French literary field, which it significantly altered.

One of the targets of Finkielkraut's anti-*métissage* position is the anthropologist Jean-Loup Amselle, whose work *Logiques métisses* (1990), translated as *Mestizo Logics*, argues that identity exists only 'in terms of originary syncretism'.¹ While anthropologists – as well as, I would add historians, folklorists, and literary scholars – tend to work within paradigms that are founded on notions of singular or somewhat self-enclosed ethnic groups or national entities with specific and bound identities, Amselle insists instead on an 'interfecundity' that connects cultures in a sort of 'chain of societies'.² He criticizes the opposition that underlies Finkielkraut's position between 'universal' human rights – tied of course, to the French Enlightenment – and 'ethnic or cultural fundamentalism', which Finkielkraut dubs the 'defeat of thought'. Amselle insists: 'Rather, we must advance the idea of a mixture or an originary interbreeding among different groups that have formed throughout human history'.³

Madeleine Dobie, on the one hand, and Rebecca Johnson, Richard Maxwell, and Katie Trumpener, on the other, have brought similar ideas to bear specifically on the impact of *The Arabian Nights* in Western Europe. Dobie draws on Mary Louise Pratt's notion of 'contact zones', which 'are defined as "social spaces where disparate cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in highly asymmetrical relations of domination and subordination – like colonialism, slavery, or their aftermaths"'.⁴ Dobie expands this notion of 'contact zone' to include, as she puts it, 'translation as a privileged site of intercultural contact'.⁵ Like Amselle's notion of 'originary syncretism', Dobie's use of 'contact zones', which includes translation, challenges the idea that cultures have clear and impermeable boundaries. Although this will not be my focus here, Dobie insists, moreover, on the back-and-forth movement between French and English translations of the *Nights*, on the one hand, and (real or fake) Arabic manuscripts, on the other, in the constitution of a transnational tradition of the *Nights* that indeed embodies the spirit of *métissage*.

In their intriguing essay on what they call 'the novel's transnational origins',⁶ Johnson, Maxwell, and Trumpener examine the impact of *The Nights* on the form of the French and English novel. Like Dobie, Johnson, Maxwell, and Trumpener acknowledge the problematic nature of Galland's translation, which 'obscured the *Nights*' structuring principles, reduced the heteroglossic linguistic and literary aspects of the Arabic original (flattening its multiple

1 Amselle 1990, p. x.

2 Ibid., pp. xi–xiii.

3 Ibid., p. 21.

4 Dobie 2008, p. 26.

5 Ibid., p. 34.

6 Johnson, Maxwell, and Trumpener 2007, p. 244.

linguistic registers and omitting most of its interpolated poetry), and added unrelated material'.⁷ Notwithstanding, they insist that 'because the *Nights* overencodes its thematics in the plots of individual stories, in the relationship between stories, and in the narrative situation itself, the force of the original comes through vividly'.⁸ They argue that the work 'pushed eighteenth-century novelists not only to reconsider the relationship of episode to overall narrative arc but also to explore the novel's large-scale formal and philosophical possibilities'.⁹ In particular, '[t]he *Nights* dramatized the clash of moral codes and worldviews, offering contradictory perspectives on fate, agency, and the interactions between the human and the supernatural worlds. Enlightenment novelists interpreted these features of the *Nights* as an incitement to relativistic thinking'.¹⁰

Drawing from the studies outlined above, in this chapter I would like to first map out the diffusion of *The Nights* within the French literary field to emphasize the truly monumental 'interfecundity' the translation represents within the French literary field; that is, its importance as a 'contact zone' between East and West. Indeed, the very concept of an 'Arab' or 'oriental tale' does not pre-exist Galland's translation. I will then move into a cursory discussion of which aspects of the collection in particular might have appealed to Enlightenment philosophers.

Figure 5.1 charts the larger lines of the diffusion of oriental tales that Galland's translation of the Syrian manuscript of the *Nights* set into motion.

Immediately in the wake of Galland's translation, the important collections by François Pétis de la Croix, Jean-Paul Bignon, and Thomas Gueullette began to emerge around 1710 and 1712. These scholars and writers began to carry out real or supposed translations and adaptations of their own. Pétis de la Croix produced *Contes turcs* (*Turkish Tales*) in 1707, followed by *Mille et un jours, contes persans* (*A Thousand and One Days, Persian Tales*, 1710–12), which blends translation, adaptation, and the author's invention to create an inverted version of the *Nights* in which a princess (instead of a sultan) mistrusts men (instead of women), and whose *nourrice* hopes to cure her aversion to men through storytelling.¹¹ Riding the tide of the success of Galland and Pétis de la

7 Ibid., p. 248.

8 Ibid., p. 248.

9 Ibid., p. 248.

10 Ibid., p. 248.

11 Pierre Brunel, in his preface to the 2011 edition of *Mille et un jours*, notes that Pétis de la Croix presents what are for the most part Turkish tales as Persian tales. Brunel notes that Pétis's affirmation that the tales come from the dervish Moqlès is invented (2011: 9–11). For Franz Hahn, Pétis carries out a creative work: 'C'est ce travail de conception et de création à l'aide de motifs empruntés qui élève Pétis au rang d'écrivain, à qui la littérature doit un chef-d'oeuvre français' (53).

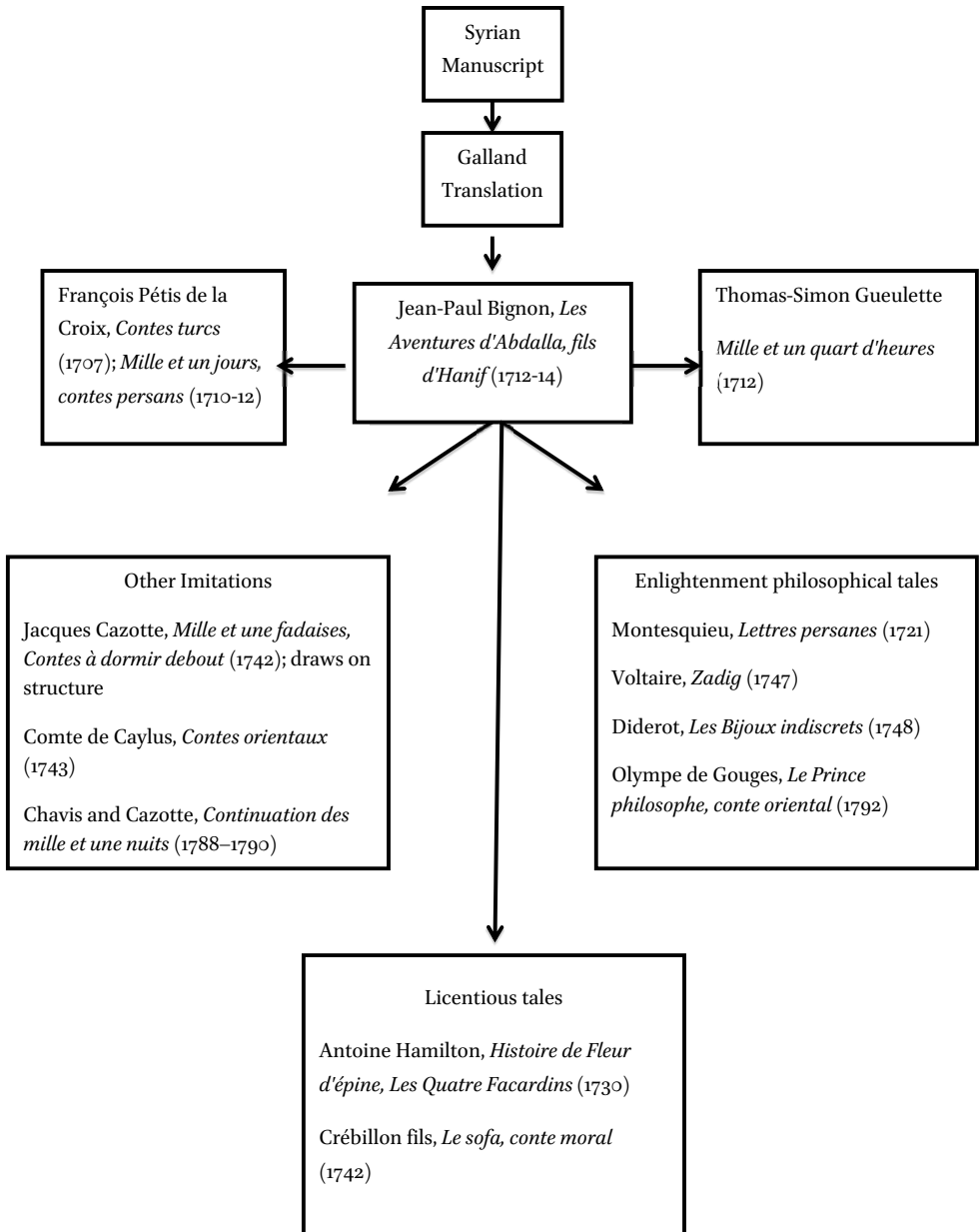


FIGURE 5.1 Genealogy of Oriental Tales from Galland

Croix, Bignon published *Les aventures d'Abdalla, fils d'Hanif* (*The Adventures of Abdalla, Son of Hanif*, 1712–1714), presented as a translation but in fact a work of Bignon's own invention; Gueullette wrote *Mille et un quart d'heures, contes tartares* (*A Thousand and One Quarters of the Hour, Tatar Tales*, 1712), in a similar vein. Later translators and writers, such as Jacques Cazotte and the Comte de Caylus, drew from the structure, style, as well as Arab or Turkish manuscripts to produce their own volumes of oriental tales, organized much in the style and tradition of Galland's collection.

For their part, writers and philosophers, including Montesquieu, Voltaire, Diderot, Olympe de Gouges, Antoine Hamilton, and Crébillon fils, took inspiration from the *Nights* to produce philosophical and licentious tales that then paved the way for a further deluge of oriental tales. Some writers, such as Hamilton, Crébillon, and Diderot, created explicit lineages with *The Arabian Nights*, taking up where Galland's text left off or having the main characters of their works be descendants of Scheherazade and Shariar (see Table 5.1).

For instance, in Hamilton's *Histoire de Fleur d'épine* (1730), Dinarzade tells a story to Shariar to spare the life of her sister Scheherazade, who has run out of material. In Crébillon's *Le Sofa* (1742), the sultan Schah-Baham is the grandson of Schah-Riar, while the sultan Schachbaam of Diderot's *Bijoux indiscrets* (1748), is described as the grandson of Scheherazade; the appearance of two Scha-Bahams, grandsons of Scheherazade and Shariar, also demonstrates connections among fictitious works created out of the popularity of the *Nights*.

Other *Nights*-inflected stories share implicit connections with Galland's translations by creating analogous situations: Montesquieu's Usbek proves to be a sort of Shariar in his treatment of his wives, while Caylus's sultan, the cruel Hudjiade, threatens his porter Fitéad with death if the porter cannot find a storyteller who will cure his insomnia, a narrative mechanism Cazotte will also use in modified style in his *Mille et une fadaïses*, in which a marquise has insomnia, and an abbot comes to tell her stories to put her to sleep. As evidenced by these examples, the *Arabian Nights* clearly registered a significant impact on the eighteenth-century French literary field, providing narrative models and structures as well as recurring characters and character-types that became fully integrated into the very practice of fiction writing during the Enlightenment.

While these better-known collections already signal the import of Galland's translation on the French literary field during this period, it still doesn't come close to mapping out the full extent of its impact. Table 5.2 includes a non-exhaustive list of lesser-known writers who produced oriental tales fairly regularly from the late 1720s through the 1780s, including one oriental tale from the period of the Revolution that allegorizes from the position of a monarchist the

TABLE 5.1 Explicit and Implicit Relatives of the *Nights*

Explicit Connection to <i>The Nights</i> through lineage	Hamilton, <i>Histoire de Fleur d'épine</i> (1730) – Dinarzade tells a story to Shariar to spare the life of her sister Scheherazade, who has run out of material Crébillon, <i>Le Sofa</i> (1742) – Sultan Schah-Baham is the grandson of Schah-Riar Diderot, <i>Les Bijoux indiscrets</i> (1748) – Mention of Schachbaam, the grandson of Scheherazade – Mangogul marries Mirzoza, who is a good storyteller, but runs out of material
Implicit Connections through parallels	Montesquieu, <i>Lettres Persanes</i> (1721) – Usbek is a sort of Shariar, master of a disorderly harem, betrayed by wives Caylus, <i>Nouveaux contes orientaux</i> – The cruel sultan Hudjiade has insomnia and threatens the porter Fitéad with death if he cannot find someone to tell him stories to sleep; Fitéad's 12-year-old daughter Moradbak plays the role of a Scheherazade Cazotte, <i>Mille et une fadaïses, Contes à dormir debout</i> (1742) – A marquise has insomnia; an abbot comes to tell stories to put her to sleep

events of the French Revolution entitled *Le règne du prince trop-bon dans le royaume des fols, conte oriental ou plutôt histoire occidentale*, in which the sultana Zulime asks her confidant Fatime to tell her a story, and Fatime goes on to relate the story of a prince from 'once upon a time' who lived in a land where queens should not go.

Table 5.3 gives a glimpse of the presence of the oriental tale within the periodical press, a list that, again, is not exhaustive.

It should come as no surprise that the *Mercur de France* dominates in the publication of oriental tales: in its earlier incarnation as the *Mercur galant*, it published tales by Charles Perrault. Finally, nearly 60% of the seminal collection of tales compiled by Charles-Joseph Mayer from 1785 to 1789 that represents the eighteenth-century 'canon' of fairy tales, the *Cabinet des fées*, consists of oriental tales that grew out of Galland's translation (see Table 5.4). In other words, by the end of the eighteenth century, the oriental tale, a genre that emerged and blossomed after Galland's translation, was a very central part of the French literary and fairy-tale landscape.

TABLE 5.2 Tale collections and books not included in the *Cabinet des Fées*:

Jean-François Melon. <i>Mahmoud le Gasnévide</i> (1729)
Charles Rivière Du Fresny, 'Conte arabe', 'Conte oriental' (1731)
Fromaget, 'Kara Mustapha, conte oriental' (1745)
Mademoiselle Fault (Fauques), 'Abassâi, conte oriental' (1752)
Mlle Fault, <i>Les Contes du Serail</i> (1753)
Chevalier de Duclos, <i>Les Cinq Cent matinées et une demie, contes syriens</i> (1756)
H.B. Deblanes. <i>Nerair et Meloe, roman oriental</i> (1759)
Marianne Robert, 'Des trois nations, conte oriental' (1760)
A.J.J. de la Riche de la Poupelinière. <i>Daïra, histoire orientale</i> (1761)
Gautier de Montdorge, Antoine. <i>Conte oriental</i> , par <i>Nadir</i> (1767)
Martine de Morville. 'Mirloh, conte oriental' (1769)
'Alma Moulin, conte oriental' (1779)
Mme Mouet (Moreau, dame Monnet), <i>Contes orientaux, ou les recits du Sage Caleb, voyageur persan</i> (1784)
'Almamoulin, conte oriental'. <i>Les soirées amusantes, ou recueil choisi de nouveaux contes moraux</i> (1785)
Mme la Comtesse de*** 'Le règne du Prince Trop-Bon, dans le royaume des fols, conte oriental, ou plutôt histoire occidentale' (1792); published in <i>L'ami du roi, almanach des honnêtes gens</i> de M. Montjoye

Although a figure like Finkielkraut might consider the genre of the fairy tale to be marginal to French Enlightenment culture (although it was not), thereby minimizing the impact of *The Nights*, he might still acknowledge the reach the *Nights* had on recognized Enlightenment philosophers like Montesquieu, Voltaire, and Diderot. Unsurprisingly, Enlightenment philosophers themselves hesitated to acknowledge their debt to *The Nights*. Dobie recounts an anecdote in which Montesquieu was supposedly caught reading *The Nights*. He 'first confessed that the stories made him happy – that they were the only thing he read – then begged that his secret be kept lest his reputation for seriousness be compromised, finally concluding that in reality 'jamais je ne fus plus sage'

TABLE 5.3 Periodical Press

<i>Journal étranger</i> (<i>Foreign Journal</i>)	'L'histoire d'Omrah, fils d'Abulsaïd, conte oriental' (1760; translated from <i>British Magazine</i> , Jan. 1760)
<i>Journal encyclopédique</i> (<i>Encyclopedic Journal</i>)	'Le songe de Carazan, conte oriental' (1762; translated from English)
<i>Journal helvétique</i>	'La vanité corrigée, conte oriental' (1764)
<i>Journal de Bruxelles ou le penseur</i>	F. D. M. 'Iphraïm, conte oriental' (1766)
<i>Bibliothèque des sciences et des beaux arts</i>	Madame ***, 'Memnon, conte oriental' (Apr–May–June 1768) Madame ***, 'Ali et Bozalda, conte oriental' (July–Aug–Sept 1768)
<i>Mercure de France</i>	'Balky, conte oriental' (1768) M. B** 'Zaman, histoire orientale' (1770) M. Bret, 'Almanzo et Zehra, conte arabe' (1772) 'Almerine et Zetima, ou les Dangers de la Beauté, conte oriental' (1773)
<i>L'esprit des journaux françois et étrangers</i>	'Le mépris de la gloire, conte oriental' (1788); reprinted from <i>Mercure de France</i>

[‘I was never wiser’].¹² In the dedicatory epistle of *Zadig*, Voltaire also denies the value of the oriental tale, while Diderot anonymously published his oriental tale, *The Indiscreet Jewels*, which revolves around talking vaginas (which also might explain his desire to publish anonymously). Despite hesitation to acknowledge their debt to *The Arabian Nights* even as they wrote oriental tales, certain themes and narrative strategies became useful to all three of these philosophers in their own writing, including: the representation of despotism and arbitrary power; the role of chance; the privileging of intelligence over physical or political power; the desire to know, or knowledge as desire; and, as Johnson, Maxwell, and Trumpener have pointed out, the ‘inquiry into the status, situation, and character of women’.¹³

While despotism was often figured in orientalist terms in early modern France, Galland’s *Arabian Nights* both complicated and solidified such imagery

¹² Dobie 2008, pp. 40–41.

¹³ Johnson, Maxwell, and Trumpener 2007, p. 248.

TABLE 5.4 Cabinet des fées, 37 volumes (1785–1786)

Contes orientaux make up 22/37 volumes = nearly 60% of the *cabinet*

Galland, *Les mille et une nuits*, vols. 7–11

Bignon, *Les aventures d'Abdalla, fils d'Hanif*, vols. 12–13

Pétis de la Croix, *Mill et et un jours*, vols. 14–15

Chéc Zadé, *Histoire de la Sultane de Perseet des visirs, contes turcs* (1707) trad. Galland/Pétis, vol. 16

Voyage de Zulina dans le pays des Fées, vol. 16

Ali Tchélébi-ben-Saleh, *Conteset fables indiennes de Bidpai et de Lokman*, trad. Galland/Cardonne, vols. 17–18

Gueullette, *Contes chinois*, vol. 19

Hamilton, *Contes*, 20

Gueullette, *Mille et un quart d'heures*, vols. 21–22

Gueullette, *Les Sultanes de Guzarate, ou les songes des hommes éveillés, contes mongols* (1733), vols. 22–23

Caylus, *Nouveaux contes orientaux*, vol. 25

Charles Morell (from Persian to English), *Les contes des génies, ou les charmantes leçons d'Horam, fils d'Asmar* (1766), vols. 29–30

François Augustin de Moncrif, *Les aventures de Zeloïde et d'Amanzarifdine, contes indiens* (1717), vol. 32

Frances Chamberlaine Sheridan, *Histoire de Nourjahad, nouvelle orientale* (1769), trans. from English L.J.N. Monmerqué, vol. 33

Henri de Pajon, *Histoire des trois fils d'Hali Bassaet des trois filles de Siroco, gouverneur d'Alexandrie, traduit du turc* (1745), vol. 34

with the appearance of Shariar, the sultan who took revenge on all women for the betrayal of a few. Unlike earlier representations of the oriental despot, as in, for instance, Pierre Boaistuau's tragic 1559 story about a Turkish sultan who violently executes his lover, the *Nights* presents a more complex image of the sultan Shariar, who had ruled wisely until he was deceived by his wife. Scholars have noted the connection between Montesquieu's Usbek, the often-wise Persian who also reveals himself to be blind to his own tyranny over his harem wives, who, like Shariar's wife, betray him. Usbek, like Shariar, is a complex and

contradictory character who is both good and evil, wise and ignorant. Moreover, as critics such as Roger Boesche have pointed out, 'Montesquieu's analysis of despotism [in the *Letters*] is partly an attack on the monarchies of Louis XIV and Louis XV'.¹⁴ Although it is a problematic gesture to figure despotism in terms of Eastern governments, we can also see how the *Nights*, in its critique of Shariar, marks an opposition to and provides a remedy for despotic practices, which also plays out in the philosophical oriental tale.

Sultans are not the only figures of arbitrary power in *The Nights*. Scheherazade weaves stories into the larger narrative concerning, for instance, genies who seek to punish the innocent for an arbitrary act, such as the genie who wishes to punish the merchant who unknowingly and quite accidentally killed his son with the pit of a date, or the genie freed by the fisherman who wishes to kill his saviour. In each case, and like the frame narrative, the arbitrary exercise of either political or physical power over an apparently weak or defenceless character can be overcome through wit, that is, through *knowledge*. Knowledge is power in *The Nights*, which plays out in works like Voltaire's *Zadig* and Diderot's *Indiscreet Jewels* in various ways. *Zadig*, for instance, is constantly subject to the arbitrary exercise of power, and he consistently outwits his opponents, which gets him both out of and into trouble. However, in the end it is by solving an enigma that *Zadig* is crowned; thus, knowledge is eventually rewarded and is able to overcome (through reason or logic) the vicissitudes of destiny, often caused, again, by the arbitrary exercise of power.

In *The Indiscreet Jewels*, Diderot's sultan Mangogoul resembles Shariar in his desire for stories, which his wife Mirzoza, a Scheherazade-like figure, can no longer provide for him to his satisfaction. Here, Diderot plays with *The Nights'* dynamic of power and knowledge: the sultan acquires the power to make women's sex organs 'speak the truth' of women: he forces the truth to come out, feeding his insatiable desire to know the secrets of all of the women of his court. Amy Joan Staples very astutely remarks upon relations between Diderot's oriental tale and Foucauldian notions of knowledge and power; Foucault actually cites Diderot's text in his *History of Sexuality*. She furthermore suggests a connection with Diderot's encyclopaedia project, which he was conceiving at the time he wrote *The Indiscreet Jewels*. Staples remarks: 'Although there are officially only thirty numbered *essais* [or trials] in the novel, all told, the total number of women whose *bijoux* [sex] are interrogated is likely in the hundreds, running literally from A to Z: the first woman interrogated is named Al-cine, and immediately preceding the final, decisive *essai* on Mirzoza, the last

14 Boesche 1990, p. 746.

woman is Zaïde'.¹⁵ It is as if the novel allegorizes the drive for a totalizing knowledge that would eventually take the shape of Diderot and d'Alembert's seventeen-volume *Encyclopedia*.

Works by Montesquieu and Diderot also speak to the fascination Galland's translation elicited with respect to female sexuality. Whereas earlier misogynistic texts by writers like Nicolas Boileau speculated on women's ability to betray their spouses, *The Nights* actually stages such moments of betrayal, representing what can happen behind closed doors. Works by Montesquieu, Diderot, and later Cazotte reveal a male anxiety over an active and possibly duplicitous female sexuality. However, *The Nights* also challenges any kind of certitude one could arrive at through the contrasting examples of good and bad women, good and bad husbands, good and bad sultans, good and bad genies, and so forth. Although the frame narrative suggests that all women are evil, the examples of Scheherazade, Dinarzade, and many other female characters points to a reality that is far more complex. While Shariar and his brother provide a model of brotherly love, the stories narrated by Scheherazade sometimes suggest that a wife is more trusting than a brother, only to negate such a lesson in a subsequent story. While Shariar is the sultan who needs to be re-educated, Haroun al-Rachid represents the good sultan who repairs wrongs and rewards virtue; he serves as the model monarch. In general, *The Nights* does not allow for universalizing statements about any particular group of people – unlike the seventeenth-century French moralist tradition – but rather, it consistently challenges readers to base their observations on empirical evidence rather than resort to preconceived ideas or *idées reçues*. Indeed, *The Nights* anticipates the French Enlightenment's focus on inductive reasoning as the best means of arriving at an understanding of the world.

In this very brief and cursory overview of the impact of *The Arabian Nights* on eighteenth-century France and the Enlightenment, I have not meant to suggest this was a simple, unilateral process. As is evident in works by Molière and Racine in the latter part of the seventeenth century, the French were increasingly becoming interested in the Orient, and the fairy-tale vogue of the 1690s further prepared the terrain for the welcome reception of *The Nights* in the eighteenth century. However, the extent to which *The Nights* would influence the literary field was indeed unprecedented: Galland's translation truly grafted the Syrian manuscript onto French and more generally European literary and philosophical traditions. While it is important to account for the problematic ideology of orientalism that often inflects the tradition of the oriental tale, we also cannot let such ideological concerns blind us to the significance of this

15 Staples 2000, p. 159.

grafting of an Arabic manuscript onto French texts. Galland's translation represents an important 'contact zone' that points to the permeability of what we tend to perceive – or what we construct – as national traditions and all that implies about boundaries and fixed identities. With all of its problematics, this important instance of cultural, literary, and philosophical *métissage* speaks to the very fruitful and lasting results of Eastern and Western cross-breeding, which would be revived in England and again in France in the nineteenth century with the new translations of other Arabic manuscripts of *The Nights* undertaken by Edward Lane, Richard Burton, and Charles Mardrus, among others, which continued to feed the European cultural, literary, and philosophical terrain with new or at least renewed material. Historically, it makes perfect sense that, 'France has always been a *métis* country, *métissage* is inherent to France, to Europe, to Western culture in general'. Indeed, where would Finkielkraut's Enlightenment be without *The Arabian Nights*?

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Genie in a Bookshop

Print Culture, Authorship, and 'The Affair of the Eighth Volume' at the Origins of Les Mille et une nuits

Arafat Abdur Razzaque

On 12 December 1709, Antoine Galland wrote a brief entry in his journal about a meeting he had that day with an important patron and friend, the abbé Jean-Paul Bignon.¹ Galland had just three days earlier given his manuscript for the ninth volume of *Les Mille et une nuits* to Bignon, who supposedly read it eagerly by candlelight in his carriage on the way back from Versailles. Returning the copy to Galland, Bignon suggested that he apply for a *privilege* and find a publisher for this and other forthcoming volumes. But Galland had a rather dramatic reaction to this: 'Je lui marquai que ie ne voulois plus songer a faire imprimer, pour m'epargner des mortifications pareilles a celles que l'impression du 8^e Tome me causoit.'² The source of this chagrin was Galland's ongoing dispute with the publishing house of Barbin, following their release a few weeks earlier of volume eight of the *Nuits*. As is well known, that volume contained a translation by Galland himself, but also two other stories seemingly out of nowhere. In fact, Bignon's mention of a printing license is a clue to this peculiar case that has intrigued aficionados of the *Nights* ever since and remains perhaps the most infamous publishing scandal in its history. In this chapter, I review the history of the first edition of the *Nuits* and suggest that the expiration date of the bookseller's original *privilege* may explain the hasty, anomalous eighth volume. Even beyond this particular episode, the course of Galland's work and the representations of his authorship bear the heavy imprint of his publishers. Focussing on the book as an object of negotiation between the author/translator and the editor/publisher thus allows us to better contextualize the European remaking of the *Thousand and One Nights*.

1 Galland's colleague at the *Académie royale des inscriptions et médailles* and later royal librarian, l'abbé Bignon (1662–1743) was a tremendously influential figure in reforming academic life and book policies under Louis XIV: see Clarke 1973. Interestingly, Bignon himself would anonymously publish one of the first examples of a *conte oriental*, titled *Les Aventures d'Abdalla* (1712).

2 Bauden and Waller 2011, 1:518. Note: in this chapter, all quotations from primary texts are reproduced as seen, without standardizing the orthography, capitalization or italics.

Starting with doubts already in the eighteenth century as to the cultural authenticity of the *Nuits*, the verdict on Antoine Galland's role as a translator has varied widely and changed considerably from time to time. Whereas to many earlier readers, Galland's mediation had become an obstacle to the original Oriental sources, more recent critics have come to celebrate the same Galland as progenitor of an amazingly successful literary enterprise. Thus, Raymond Schwab's 1964 biography of Galland was boldly titled *L'auteur des Mille et une nuits*. The terms of this debate have been dictated by the question of various innovative elements in Galland's translation, whether regarded positively or negatively: his literary style and diction, his mastery and creative use of classical French prose, and his fidelity to the Arabic text or lack thereof – notwithstanding the early modern convention of so-called *belle infidèle* translations.³ These analyses of Galland, along with much of *Nights* studies, are in some ways heirs to the old obsession with origins ever since the modern encounter with these tales; a recurring concern with the legitimacy of various editions was inflected by a quest to recover and publish a complete and authoritative text. And yet this very legacy of the 'phenomenon of the *Arabian Nights*'⁴ tends to reinforce the pioneering and hence authorial role of its first European translator. Insofar as Galland continues to remain the centre of attention, however, we also risk projecting anachronistic notions of authorship onto a figure pre-dating, for instance, modern discourses of copyright or intellectual property. After all, it was not until 1793 that an author's right (*droit d'auteur*) to literary and artistic property came to be formally recognized in French law.⁵

To fully explain and understand Galland's *Nuits* requires us to look beyond individual agency and situate the text in the circumstances of its time. That includes the emergence in just the previous decade, around the mid-1690s, of the French *conte* and especially the *conte de fée* or 'fairy tale'. Of course, the significance of this context in terms of literary genre is well recognized by scholars of the *Nights*.⁶ But the connection between the *contes* and the *Nuits* was also quite material: they fundamentally shared a sphere of production and consumption inhabited by many of the same people. The most prominent

3 The bibliography on Galland's authorship of the *Nuits* is vast. Some classic and more recent analyses include: Hawari 1980; Hagège 1980; Mahdi 1995, pp. 11–49; Larzul 1996; Muhawi 2005; Sermain 2008; Stead 2017. On the *belles infidèles* as a paradigm for Galland, see Larzul 1995.

4 The idea of the *Nights* as a broad cultural 'phenomenon' is proposed in Marzolph, et al. 2004, xxiv.

5 See Pfister 2010 for an instructive précis on the history of authorship in France as a function of the *privilege* system, leading up to the legislation of *droit d'auteur*.

6 See the concise treatment in Reynolds 2006, pp. 279–80. In current fairy-tale scholarship in France, as represented by Sermain 2005, a poetics of the *conte de fée* necessarily includes Galland's *Nuits*.

French fairy tales were all first published by the same trendsetting house of Claude Barbin that would also bring out Galland's *Nuits*. This invites us to consider recent developments in fairy-tale studies, which have strongly emphasized the historical implications of print culture.⁷ The *Nights* presents book historians with a singular case study given its remarkable proliferation in print ever since its first appearance in Paris.⁸ The literary market and the book trade were as crucial to the larger fate and the idiosyncratic formation of *Les Mille et une nuits* as was the authorial role of Antoine Galland. Seen in this light, Barbin's bookshop becomes a major site in the history of the tales' first European translation, revealing how the business's tortuous fortunes intertwined with those of the *Nuits*. It is a story that underscores both the fluidity of texts and the complexities of authorship, absolving Galland from being the sole and narrow target of either praise or blame.

1 From Fairies to Genies

Muhsin Mahdi's reserved appraisal of Galland's historical role as an author, that he 'did introduce a new genre to French literature', is only partially accurate.⁹ Strictly speaking, Galland's *Nuits* had appealed to an already existing genre, even as it would take on a distinct life of its own. The very first review of the *Nuits* in the *Journal des Sçavans* on 19 May 1704 explicitly pondered the

7 Recent monographs on the print history of fairy tales include Bottigheimer 2009 and Blécourt 2012. The trend has instigated fierce, renewed debates on orality and literacy, as covered in the special issue of *Journal of American Folklore* 123, no. 490 (2010). For a compelling attempt to think beyond the impasse by historicizing both authorship and folklore as mutually constitutive paradigms, see Hafstein 2014. Interestingly, Bottigheimer's views parallel those of Muhsin Mahdi 1995, pp. 142–4, skeptical of undocumented oral tradition beyond known textual history. This is noteworthy because, for example, Jack Zipes's (2010) scathing review of Bottigheimer claims the *Nights* as a major counterpoint. While revising many of Mahdi's conclusions, other Arabists have also often set aside 'folklorist' models as methodologically unhelpful when studying the *Nights*, notably Chraïbi 2008, pp. 18–9. That said, Chraïbi's concept of 'middle literature' promises a third way out of the simplistic dichotomy. See also: Chraïbi 2016, pp. 62–4; Marzolph 2017, pp. 42–6.

8 Irwin 2011 offers a survey of this publishing history in Europe, with a particular focus on book illustrations. As for the Islamic world, note that 'manuscripts of the *Arabian Nights* were among the first texts produced by the new printing establishments founded in Near and Middle Eastern countries by the Western European colonial powers of Britain and France'. Marzolph, et al. 2004, p. 54.

9 Mahdi 1993, p. 18, criticizing those who overestimate the *Nuits*'s originality. Regarding it as a fairly serious if flawed translation of a core Arabic text, Mahdi (1995, p. 40) also insists that 'there is no comparison' between Galland and his fairy-tale counterparts like Perrault or the Grimms.

relationship between the French *contes de fée* and what now appeared to be their Oriental antecedents, focussing on the shared element of the *merveilleux* as represented by fairies and genies.¹⁰ More recently, however, some scholars have contested the classification of the *Nights* as fairy tales, insisting that this requires overly broad definitions of the genre and its characteristic themes or motifs: in fact, not every *Nights* tale involves magic or fantasy.¹¹ But of course, the scope and coherence of the term 'fairy tale' has itself long been subject to debate. Regardless, this was a two-way relationship and the definitive influence of Galland's *Nuits* in turn on the *contes de fée* and its instigation of a new subgenre, the *conte oriental* are integral aspects of its reception history, explored quite extensively by scholars of eighteenth-century French literature.¹²

The fairy tales not only defined its reception, but may have actually inspired the translation of the *Nights* in the first place, as implied by Galland's own surviving correspondence. He wrote to his friend and learned mentor, the bishop Pierre-Daniel Huet on 25 February 1701: 'J'ai aussi une autre petite traduction, faite sur l'arabe, de contes qui valent bien ceux des Fées que l'on publia ces années dernières avec tant de profusion qu'il semble que l'on en soit rebuté'.¹³

10 *Le Journal des sçavans* 1704, Issue xx, pp. 315–8: 'Il n'y a pas long-temps que les Contes des Fées estoient fort à la mode en France... On ne sçait pas bien d'où ces sortes de Contes ont tiré leur origine ; nos vieux Romanciers François en sont pleins. Mais il y a bien de l'apparence qu'ils n'en sont pas les premiers inventeurs ; il les avoient sans doute tirez des Orientaux, & sur tout des Arabes. Ces peuples appellent les Fées *Genn* ou *Ginn*'. On this book review, see the comments by May 1986, pp. 35–7. Note that Galland's aforementioned colleague l'abbé Bignon served as the journal's 'all-powerful' editor from 1701 to 1714: Clarke 1973, pp. 224–6.

11 This was primarily the position of Mia Gerhardt, who argues in her seminal study (1963, p. 278): 'contrary to a wide-spread but ill-founded notion, the "1001 Nights" is decidedly not in the first place a book of fairy-tales. In fact, it may be said that the genre is, proportionally, scantily represented'. An updated effort to classify the stories of the *Nights* according to genre is Chraïbi 2008.

12 By some accounts, up to 700 oriental romances were published in eighteenth-century France: Irwin 2004, p. 241. The most important study to date of the *contes orientaux* remains the magisterial three-volume work of Dufrenoy 1946–1975. More recent research is covered in a special issue of *Féeries*, No. 2 (2005).

13 BnF MS Français 6138, p. 137. Quoted in Zotenberg 1887, p. 170; Mahdi 1995, p. 189 (n 28). It may be worth noting that Pierre-Daniel Huet (1630–1721), a legendary bibliophile, was the original owner of at least part of the Bibliothèque Nationale's rare albeit incomplete first edition of the *Nuits*, in which vol. 1 (BnF Y2-8921) bears the 1692 bookplate issued by the Jesuits of Paris to recognize the donation of Huet's books, eventually acquired by the Royal Library after the order's dissolution in 1763. See Pélisson-Karro 1998. Another major bequest to the Jesuits was the library of Gilles Ménage, who coined the phrase *belle infidèle* and whose witticisms Galland compiled and published in *Menagiana* (1693). The sale catalogue for the Jesuit library, prepared before the withdrawal of Huet's collection, lists under 'romans' a copy of Galland's *Nuits* in 8 vols. (*Catalogue des livres de la bibliothèque*

The text was *Sindbād the Sailor*, which soon led Galland to seek out the *Nights* collection that same year, and this now-famous letter remains one of our main sources for helping establish a chronology for his work.¹⁴ But the remark reveals more: we witness Galland treating his tales as akin to the recently-published *contes*. In other words, it was not merely the case that the fairy-tale vogue was ‘part of the background to the favourable reception’ of the *Nights*, nor even that Galland himself first read it ‘as the Arabic equivalent’ to the French *contes*.¹⁵ Rather, more remarkably, the popularity of the *contes de fée* appears to have been the very instigation for Galland’s pursuit of the *Nights*. After all, his own interest in folklore dated much further back to his Ottoman travels of 1670–1674, when he first acquired various literary manuscripts (including a copy of *Ferec ba’d eṣ-ṣidde*, of later significance as discussed below) and even recorded tales he heard from a number of oral informants.¹⁶ Three decades later, he would translate *Sindbād* exactly during the fairy-tale craze in France, and it was surely no coincidence that his Orientalist rival François Pétis de la Croix (1653–1713) also produced another translation of it around the same time.¹⁷

As his letter to Huet suggests, Galland saw his *contes arabes* almost in competition with the existing French genre: they were just as good, and deserved their place in a market saturated with fairy tales. Eventually, his foreword to the *Nuits* would further declare its superiority above everything published thus far, because ‘les Arabes surpassent les autres nations en cette sorte de composition’.¹⁸ Interestingly enough, Galland had temporarily withheld from demonstrating this to the French public by deciding not to capitalize on *Sindbād* right away. As explained in his epistle dedicatory to the Marquise d’O (whose father, the ambassador Guilleragues he had served in Constantinople

de la Maison Professe des ci-devant soi-disans Jesuites, Paris 1763, 304, no. 5045). But only the first pair of the BnF set (vol. 2 being a 1705 reprint) share a similar calfskin binding, inlaid with Huet’s coat-of-arms on vol. 1 as well as two title-page features common to his books: an ex libris inscription by the Jesuits, and a non-circulation warning label. The rest of the volumes (BnF Y2-8924 thru 8932, missing vol. 3) are all bound in red morocco and include the royal coat-of-arms. The copy has been recently digitized: <<https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k9624074c>>.

14 See the ‘Dossier: Galland au travail’ in Sermain and Chraïbi 2004, 1:439–52. Galland’s source for this translation of *Sindbād* is identified by Akel 2017, pp. 205–6.

15 Irwin 2004, p. 100; Reynolds 2006, p. 280.

16 On his Constantinople diary of 1672–1673, see Marzolph 2015.

17 Galland translated *Sindbād* sometime around 1698. See Mahdi 1995, p. 189 (n 28). Pétis’s unpublished *Sindabad le marin* of 1701 has only now been edited by Chraïbi and Marzolph: Pétis de la Croix 2016.

18 ‘Avertissement’ in Galland 1704, Tome 1, x; Sermain and Chraïbi 2004, 1:21.

in the early 1680s), upon realizing its purported relationship to the larger *Nights* collection, Galland felt compelled to postpone the release of *Sindbād* and retract it from the printer's.¹⁹ Thus, even before laying hands on the complete text, Galland imagined a coherent whole and began to seek it specifically with a view to publication. Moreover, as a book, it had to be printed in full and in order of progression, as if the tales of *Sindbād* could not be allowed a premature birth. In this regard, perhaps upon realizing the complexity of the *Nights*, Galland seemed to later change his mind as he would insert *Sindbād* into volume three of his ongoing translation.

Galland's apparent perception of a flood of *contes* was not an exaggeration. Between 1690 to around 1715, there were some 114 fairy-tale books in France, by sixteen different authors – of whom Charles Perrault, Marie-Catherine d'Aulnoy, and Marie-Jeanne Lhéritier are only the best known.²⁰ This so-called first 'vogue' peaked around 1697, the year that saw d'Aulnoy's four-volume *Les Contes des fées* (whence the term), appearing just months after the genre's most iconic compilation, Perrault's *Histoires ou contes du temps passé*, otherwise known as 'Les contes de ma mère l'Oye', i.e. the Mother Goose tales. The year after was similarly prosperous, with new books by Henriette-Julie de Murat, François Nodot, and Jean de Préchac. The *privilège* issued for Nodot's *Histoire de Mélusine* (1698), explicitly acknowledges this publication boom: 'dans ce tems, où l'on a tant d'empressement pour les contes des Fées...'²¹ Moreover, as Gervais Reed points out, it was printed in the book not under the usual heading of 'Privilège du Roi' but rather 'Privilège en faveur de Fées', as if thus blessing the genre as a whole. But if Galland was already fed up in 1701 with the 'tant de profusion' of such books, he said so arguably at a time when *contes de fée* had nearly run their course. True to his aspirations, the publication of the *Nuits* would inject the *merveilleux* with a fresh, exotic spirit manifest in the emerging *conte oriental*, before the whole scene began to give way to the *conte philosophique* in the 1710s. Ultimately, even past the second vogue of the mid-eighteenth century, the fairy tales and the *Nights* would fully converge and consummate in the monumental, forty-one volume *Le Cabinet des*

19 'Cette découverte m'obligea de suspendre cette impression, et d'employer mes soins à recouvrer le Recueil,' 'Épître' in Galland 1704, Tome I, vi; Sermain and Chraïbi 2004, 1:20. Incidentally, the house of Barbin served both Galland and his former employer Guilleragues – believed to be the real author behind Claude Barbin's most sensational publication, *Lettres Portugaises* (1669). See Green 1926.

20 These numbers are from Seifert 1996, pp. 3, 5–6. Of the sixteen authors, seven were women and contributed the vast majority (nearly 70 percent) of the fairy tales published in this period.

21 Quoted in Reed 1974, pp. 45–6.

fées (1785–1789), which compiled and reprinted a century of French *contes* in all their variety from Perrault to Rousseau, attempting to unify and materially preserve for posterity a glorious tradition (of the Ancien Régime, as it were) that was by then more or less dying.²²

2 La Boutique de Barbin

Contemporary witnesses were quite conscious of the role of publishers in facilitating the vogue for fairy tales. In an oft-cited letter to the *philosophe* Pierre Bayle in 1697, Jean-Baptiste Dubos remarks condescendingly about their generation's infantile taste in such popular books and then berates those authors who thereby enabled profiteering *libraires* and Dutch printers notoriously engaged in pirating French bestsellers.²³ This may well have been a reference to just one *libraire* in particular: Claude Barbin (1629–1698). Indeed, in the history of the *contes* as just outlined, Barbin's publishing firm was the single pivotal agent that also happened to serve as a conduit between the mainstays of the genre and its subsequent phase of the Oriental tale. The six major fairy-tale authors mentioned above had all shared this same editor/publisher. In the print record of the Louis XIV era, the Barbin name ranked among its most recognized imprints, with an address that would have been familiar to an entire generation or more of Parisian readers: 'au Palais, sur le second perron de la Sainte-Chapelle'. This was a bourgeois shopping arcade by the law courts that inspired Pierre Corneille's 1632 play *La Galerie du Palais*, and by Barbin's time had become 'prime real estate for *libraires*' specializing in the *nouvautés*.²⁴ From his first publication in 1656 until his death in 1698, Claude Barbin came to be associated with Molière, Racine, La Fontaine, La Rochefoucauld, and Madame de Lafayette – an illustrious career that has been documented in

22 The 'Bibliothèque des Génies et des Fées' series from Honoré Champion, inaugurated in 2004 and with eighteen volumes to date, is basically an effort to reproduce the *Cabinet de fées* albeit in critical editions, and with the stated ambition of incorporating the *contes orientaux* more extensively: <<http://perso.modulonet.fr/~tgheeraert14/contes>> (accessed 4 April 2016).

23 From letter dated 1 March 1697: 'Nostre siècle est devenu bien enfant sur les livres; il lui faut des contes, des fables, des Romans et des historietes...Ce sont ceux là qui enrichissent les libraires et que l'on r[é]imprime en Hollande'. Bayle 1890, pp. 293–4.

24 Turnovsky 2011, p. 487; Call 2015, p. 177. Thus, in contrast to the historic heartland of Paris's publishing industry around Rue Saint-Jacques in the Latin Quarter, where Barbin too had his humble beginnings as a printer's apprentice, he became one of 'a very successful group of booksellers [who] set themselves up inside the buildings of the Law Courts and in the neighbouring streets'. Febvre and Martin 1976, p. 176.

detail by Gervais Reed.²⁵ With an editorial charge behind such names, Barbin was a decisive figure in the formation of the classics of seventeenth-century French literature.

The publisher-as-editor is key to understanding both the distinction of Barbin's bookshop and the literary-historical forces linking the *contes de fées* and the *Nuits*. While the early modern *libraire* was indeed often the one and the same as the *imprimeur*, Barbin did not have an in-house printing setup and outsourced production to the printers of Rue Saint-Jacques, primarily his partner Denis Thierry.²⁶ Barbin's accomplishments lay in the domain where 'le commerçant rencontre l'artiste': that is, as a bookseller managing the finances of publication and the marketing of books to readers, and as an *éditeur* very much shaping the tastes of the reading public.²⁷ His catalogue therefore reflects a certain corpus of sorts, determined by a combination of his own and his clients' proclivities and the network of relations at his disposal. Barbin is now hailed for instance as 'un libraire pour dames', given his record of publishing a significant number of female authors.²⁸ His mark on the career of Madame de Villedieu in particular has garnered attention due to the intrigues around his publication of her love letters without consent.²⁹ Clearly, the editorial relationship in late seventeenth-century France was fraught with multiple tensions, underpinning a publisher's considerable influence on the construction of both text and author. And the reverse was surely also the case: as Keller-Rahbé argues, de Villedieu became central to the making of Barbin's identity as a publisher, as much as he was essential to securing her status as an author.³⁰

We have some limited knowledge of such negotiations in the case of Antoine Galland, including a fortuitous glimpse of him in Barbin's only two known autograph letters to a prospective client, the antiquarian Jacob Spon of Lyon.³¹ One of Galland's main professional contacts, it was Spon who had first introduced him to Claude Barbin. Of course, Galland's association with Barbin long pre-dated the *Nuits*. As is well known, Galland edited and wrote a preface for the weighty *Bibliothèque orientale* of Barthélemy d'Herbelot, released

25 Reed 1974, based on his Brown University PhD dissertation of 1964. Previously, Lonchamp 1914–1915 drew attention to Barbin's unique significance. The current bibliography on various aspects of Barbin's publishing career include: Green 1926; Harneit 2006; Keller-Rahbé 2004; 2010; Grande 2010; 2011; Jasmin 2002, pp. 429–32; Call 2015.

26 Reed 1974, p. 71.

27 Grande 2010, p. 72.

28 Grande 2011.

29 Harneit 2006; Keller-Rahbé 2010.

30 Keller-Rahbé 2010.

31 Both letters are transcribed and published in: Reed 1974, pp. 77–8; Bauden 2001, pp. 59–60. On Galland's relationship to Spon, see Abdel-Halim 1964, pp. 55–7.

posthumously in 1697 by Claude Barbin with the additional backing of a publishers' consortium.³² But nearly two decades prior to this, Galland had worked with Barbin on his very first publication: *La Mort du sultan Osman*, a brief chronicle of Ottoman history by Hüseyin Tugi that Galland translated from a manuscript in the royal collection. The book came out in 1678, with printing rights transferred to Claude Barbin from Antoine Cellier of Lyon, who was Jacob Spon's regular publisher.³³ But as it happens, that first experience barely escaped a 'disaster'.³⁴ Apparently, as Spon was informed by a scornful Charpentier about 'la sottisse de nos Libraires', Barbin had given the book manuscript to an abbé for inserting into the text some amorous intrigues!³⁵ Barbin was thankfully convinced otherwise by the intercession of Jean Foy-Vaillant, sometime patron to Galland.

Whereas that publication met with success, several subsequent projects simply never materialized. Consistent with Barbin's minor specialty in geographic/travel literature, sometime at the end of 1678, Galland submitted a copy of his *Smyrne ancienne et moderne*, based on his expeditions in the

32 See the excellent chapter on 'the making of d'Herbelot's *Bibliothèque orientale*' in Dew 2009, pp. 168–204. Since it was also in 1697 that Barbin published Perrault's fairy tales, Genardière 1998 uses this coincidence of unclear significance as a point of departure for her comparative analysis of Galland and Perrault, rightly drawing attention to the fact of their mutual publisher.

33 'Privilege du Roy' in Galland 1678, xii–xvi [Harvard Houghton *FC6 G1353 678m]. The *privilege* is dated 16 June 1678 and the printing 'achevé pour la première fois' on 28 September 1678. Gervais Reed says in his dissertation (1964, 100) that he could not locate anything of Galland in Barbin's publishing record beside the *Nuits*, but he somehow missed *La Mort du sultan Osman* at both Harvard (held since 1899) and the BnF; this left him unable to explain why Barbin's extant correspondence shows previous familiarity with Galland: Reed 1974, p. 66. A pirated edition of the book also appeared in 1678 and has been frequently mistaken as the original (e.g. Miquel-Ravenel 1994, p. 148), but it has the known fictitious imprint 'A Cologne, chez François Dubois'; see: <http://data.bnf.fr/16197669/francois_dubois>, accessed 6 April 2016. Lastly, Abdel-Halim 1964, p. 476 also lists a third imprint, probably pirated: Lyon 1679 by Cellier. This looks suspicious because the first edition (1678, xvi) declares: 'Antoine Cellier a cede et quitté son droit de Privilege à Claude Barbin'.

34 Bauden 2001, p. 15.

35 Letter dated 2 March 1678 from François Charpentier to Jacob Spon, reproduced in *ibid.*, pp. 60–61. See also Abdel-Halim 1964, pp. 270–71, who scoffs: 'Sans l'intervention de Vaillant, la révolte des janissaires, décrite dans le livre, eût été transformée en une relation des amours du sérail!' Charpentier's reporting of this anecdote seems characteristic of his antipathy to booksellers, examined by Trivisani-Moreau 2010. In fact, it is hard not to see Claude Barbin evoked in Charpentier's dialogue, 'Le Libraire du Palais' (on which, see Turnovsky 2011, pp. 489–90). Note also that Barbin was actually his publisher for *Défense de la langue française* (1676) and its two-volume sequel, *De l'excellence de la langue française* (1683).

eastern Mediterranean. In a letter to Jacob Spon the following year, Barbin proposed to augment the book by appending a second text, *État présent des îles de Samos, Ikaria, Patmos et du Mont Athos*, which Galland had translated from the Greek original by his acquaintance Joseph Georgirènes.³⁶ In his study of the recently discovered autograph manuscript of *Smyrne*, Frédéric Bauden has detailed the sparse archival witnesses to these editorial discussions, which do not entirely reveal why the planned book never came out. A plausible explanation is Barbin's reluctance to jeopardize his publishing relationship with Guillet de Saint-George, against whom Spon (with Galland's support) was engaged in a serious academic dispute.³⁷ To Gervais Reed, this kind of persistent loyalty to an author serves as counterevidence to the oft-repeated allegations against Barbin of shallow commercialism.³⁸ But Galland would fail to attain any such professional allegiance from him. In 1696, he proposed for publication the *Fables de Bidpai*, the ancient Indo-Persian story cycle known in Arabic as *Kalīla wa Dimna*, which Galland recast in his partial translation of *Hümāyūn-nāme*, a sixteenth-century Ottoman Turkish version by Ali Çelebi. But as Galland recounts in a letter to Huet, even after an agreement, Barbin made certain demands of the text that he could not accept.³⁹ Undeterred, Barbin proceeded in 1698 to instead reissue an earlier edition by someone else.⁴⁰ Thus, if 'ce libraire opérait une sélection sévère', as Nathalie Grande has portrayed Barbin's editorial policies,⁴¹ then his vexed history with Galland betrays not only perhaps his careful risk assessment for any publishing venture, but also the extent to which a *libraire* could determine the fate of literature.

There is something to be said in the fact that Antoine Galland's biggest success in print came not through his otherwise quite prolific scholarly translations but with the *Arabian Nights*, which most closely resembled the fairy tales and for which he would ultimately revert to la maison Barbin after having

36 Bauden 2001, pp. 15–7; Abdel-Halim 1964, p. 307 (n 30).

37 In fact, Jacob Spon was at the same time soliciting Barbin in vain to publish a Paris edition of his rejoinder to Guillet's book on Athens: Reed 1974, pp. 65–7; Bauden 2001, p. 16 (n 50); Abdel-Halim 1964, pp. 62–4.

38 Reed 1974, pp. 66–7.

39 Galland simply explains: 'je n'avois pas voulu consentir aux changemens qu'il y vouloit faire'. Letter to Pierre-Daniel Huet on 25 February 1701, BnF MS Français 6138, pp. 136–7 (See also Abdel-Halim 1964, p. 96). Eventually, the translation would be published posthumously by Jacques Ribou as part of *Contes et fables indiennes de Bidpai et Lokman* (1724). On this text, see: Robert 2009.

40 Gilbert Gaulmin's 1644 translation from a Persian source, published as *Les Fables de Pilpay, philosophie indien; ou la conduite des rois* with a *privilege* dated 30 January 1698. Listed in Reed 1974, p. 113.

41 Grande 2011, p. 27.

published two other works elsewhere.⁴² It is as if his *contes* could conceivably only have been released and sold *chez* Barbin, dubbed by Grande 'l'éditeur à la mode, l'éditeur de la mode'.⁴³ In Abdel-Halim's still authoritative biography of Galland, which rightly seeks to establish and emphasize his larger oeuvre beyond the *Nuits*, this very trait made the publisher something of a nemesis to the quasi-sacred author figure ('lui qui fut la probité même', as Galland has even been extolled lately).⁴⁴ In contrast to a scholar's habitual integrity, reproaches Abdel-Halim: 'Barbin en particulier était passé maître dans l'art de plaire au lecteur'.⁴⁵ In a sense, this is actually rather accurate. For in historical terms, Barbin's publishing business was but directly a symptom and correlate of the emergent, expanding sphere of readers in the late seventeenth-century *salons* thriving on the newly prominent genres of *nouvelles* and *contes*. Indeed, already in its time, the bookshop had achieved a solid reputation for the latest in literary fashion, albeit also derided for pandering to popular tastes. Its apparent predominance in the market for leisure reading in small format printings (the pocket-size duodecimo) even led to a pejorative neologism: *barbinade*, defined as 'ces nombreux colifichets de petits livres qui ne servent qu'à faire perdre inutilement du temps'.⁴⁶ Needless to say, for some this would apply perfectly to the fairy tales.

While the boutique at the Palais de Justice had always specialized in belles-lettres – especially drama, poetry, and fiction – the *conte de fées* was a genre it helped launch almost single-handedly, and which became its distinct forte since the mid-1690s. In fact, this literary vogue must have been a welcome source of profit for a *libraire* who had just recently experienced considerable financial difficulty. Amidst gloomy economic circumstances for a book trade plagued by piracy and provincial competition which forced bankruptcy even

42 Namely, *Les Paroles remarquables, les bons mots, et les maximes des Orientaux* (1694), published jointly by Simon Bénard and Michel Brunet, and *De l'Origine et du progrès du café* (1699), released in Caen by Jean Cavalier and in Paris by Florentin Delaulne – the latter eventually publisher of the last four volumes of the *Nuits*.

43 Grande 2010, p. 81. In the same vein, Nadine Jasmin (2002, 431) has observed with regard to Madame d'Aulnoy's choice of Barbin: 'postulée l'existence d'un public « barbiniste » relativement fidèle et régulier, il est permis de supposer à la conteuse un socle, une assise éditoriale susceptible d'assurer ultérieurement à ses *Contes* une audience potentielle'.

44 Miquel-Ravenel 1994, p. 151, for whom the relative elusiveness of Galland's scholarly oeuvre ('le paradoxe de la rareté de ses publications imprimées', 148) further compounds the pathos of his story.

45 Abdel-Halim 1964, p. 270.

46 From *Dictionnaire de Trévoux* (1711), quoted in Keller-Rahbé 2010, p. 95. On the more direct insults, including Madame de Sévigné's reference to 'ce chien de Barbin' and Fléchier's poem on 'Le terrible homme que Barbin', see: Reed 1974, pp. 63–4.

on publishing giants like Cramoisy, a small bourgeois businessman like Claude Barbin, whose shop was always a '*petite entreprise*' compared to the largest, wealthiest publishers linked to the royal court, struggled to stay afloat.⁴⁷ Between 1695 and 1697, Barbin had to sell off the business and then take out loans to buy it back as one of multiple partners in a reconstituted *Compagnie de Barbin*.⁴⁸ The peak of the fairy-tale vogue thus coincided with a turning point for this publishing house and came in the very late years of Claude Barbin's own life. Of course, *la maison Barbin* outlived its eponym and went through several incarnations – with particular ramifications for Galland's *Nuits*, as discussed later.

After Barbin's death in December 1698, the bookshop passed into the hands of his widow Marie Cochart (c. 1643–1707), who had already worked with her husband earlier and now began to serve as manager and eventually owner of a newly incorporated publishing company.⁴⁹ By and large, the successors maintained existing relationships and continued to bring out the same genres Barbin was known for, and especially so with regard to the recent trend in fairy tales. Cochart published a sequel by Nodot, *Histoire de Geoffroy* in 1700, and then *La Tour ténébreuse* by Marie-Jeanne Lhéritier (Perrault's niece) in 1705. The time-lapse between these two titles seems interesting: although Cochart would go on to reprint Perrault's *Contes* in 1707,⁵⁰ the conspicuous absence of

47 Febvre and Martin 1976, p. 243; Reed 1974, p. 47. In 1695, Barbin's business (comprising assets of over 25,000 copies of some 48 titles, and *privilèges*, engraved plates, and so forth) was valued at 40,000 livres. According to Reed (p. 53), this was fairly modest in comparison to wealthier publishers: Sébastien Cramoisy left behind an estimated fortune of 400,000 livres in 1669, and Guillaume Desprez's inventory of books was valued at 226,357 livres upon his death in 1709.

48 Reed 1974, pp. 49–50. This was a corporation of twelve small-business publishers. Barbin had to borrow from his sons Jules-Paul and Charles, as well as from his long-time collaborator, the notable *imprimeur-libraire* Denis Thierry – also known for his role as a specialized lender in a kind of deal in which, 'when a bookseller needed ready cash to back a new publication he arranged with a richer colleague for a loan under the form of a lease agreement'. Febvre and Martin 1976, p. 127.

49 On Marie Cochart, see Barbier, et al. 2007, pp. 133–4; Arbour 2003, p. 52. She was Barbin's second wife (married in 1669) and inherited the shop while their son Jules-Paul Barbin (d. 1701) and another partner initially owned the company; see on the succession: Reed 1974, pp. 55–6. Years earlier, l'abbé Dubos mentioned her inappropriately in a letter to Pierre Bayle on 28 May 1686: 'Autrefois la meilleure pièce de sa boutique estoit sa femme'. Bayle 1890, p. 663. Quoted, along with other misogynistic references to Barbin, in Reed 1974, p. 17.

50 In fact, she disguised this 1707 reprint under a different title and as a new edition of Perrault's tales, 'dating them, in the interests of publicity, from that very year, or four years after the author had died, but she reproduced the Claude Barbin edition of 1697 page for page'. Velay-Vallantin 1989, p. 98.

any new fairy tales in nearly five years may indeed suggest a waning of the vogue by this time as mentioned earlier – notwithstanding the print run of previous editions and the activity of other publishers. But of course, it was precisely at this juncture that the trend was being altogether recast in a different flavour, with the first appearance of Galland's *Nuits* in early 1704 and the publication of six successive volumes within just over a year.

In fact, the paradigm appears to have shifted so swiftly that Lhéritier's 1705 book was given the subtitle 'Contes Anglois', the phrase itself being highlighted in print over the rest of the title page with a bold and prominent typeface.⁵¹ No doubt, for readers at the time this would have had an immediate resonance with the newly popular *contes arabes* of Galland. While the designation *contes anglais* seems to have come from the author herself, publishers certainly expected the tales to appeal to the same market as the *Nuits*, as for instance is evident from an announcement appearing that year in the Lyon reprint of Galland's fifth volume, on the last page: 'On imprime chez le même Libraire un livre intitulé la Cour [sic] tenebreuse ou les Contes Anglois du Roi Richard'.⁵² In other words, upon acquiring its new life in print, the *Nights* immediately entangled the various other kinds of *contes* circulating among the French reading public.

3 Storybook, Storied Book: Printing History of the *Nuits*

It was expressly with that public in view that on 27 December 1703 the official censor in charge of belles-lettres, Bernard de Fontenelle approved the publication of the *Nuits*, which he also appears to have regarded as marvellous Eastern tales and not so much the work of Galland: 'j'ay cru que le public verroit avec plaisir quel est le genie & le caractere des Contes Orientaux'.⁵³ This *approbation* is printed with the preliminaries in the first volume; beginning just below on the same page is the royal *privilège*, granted on 7 December 1703 to 'Marie

51 L'Héritier de Villandon 1705 [British Library 241.h.16]. Like the *Nights*, *La Tour ténébreuse* also has a frame tale, in which Richard the Lionheart passes time in captivity by telling himself entertaining stories – which takes up ninety percent of the book.

52 *Les Mille et une nuit* (Lyon: Chez Antoine Briasson, 1705), tome v, 328 [Bayerische Staatsbibliothek A.or. 1542–5]. As for *contes anglais*, Lhéritier (1705, 'Preface') explains her subtitle as follows: 'C'est de ce Manuscrit que j'ay tiré les Contes du Roy Richard, que je donne aujourd'huy au Public, sous le titre de *Contes Anglois*. Il est aisé de voir que je les nomme ainsi à cause qu'il ont été composez par un Roy d'Angleterre'. Here a literary trope, the genealogical claim to an old manuscript may have also resonated with Galland's readers.

53 'Approbation' in Galland 1704, tome I, xx [BnF Y2-8921].

Cochard, veuve de Claude Barbin Libraire à Paris'. Significantly, the *privilège* still has an earlier version of the title: '*Les Mille et une Nuit, Contes des Arabes, mis en François par le Sieur Antoine Galland*'.⁵⁴ Galland had explained to his friend, the learned Gisbert Cuper in a letter of August 1702 that he chose the phrase *mis en français* to avoid implying a 'slavishly' literal translation.⁵⁵ But then the publisher, as it has been generally assumed, modified the subtitle to its final version, 'Traduits en François par M^r Galland'. Could this small change, perhaps a first glimpse of 'la querelle qui oppose Galland à son éditeur', be held responsible for some of the criticisms the translation has faced ever since?⁵⁶ In any case, the book came out of the press in January 1704, closely followed by the second volume, since the 19 May book review in *Journal des Sçavans* describes the *Nuits* as '2 vol. in 12'.⁵⁷ It continued to be a very active year in Galland's collaboration with la veuve Barbin, who released volumes three and four sometime later in the summer. Galland informed Cuper on 3 October that four volumes had been printed but the fifth was already prepared and he was working on the sixth.⁵⁸ The *Journal des Sçavans* mentioned the *Nuits* again later that year in a brief notice at the end of the 17 November issue, observing that 'Ces volumes de Contes Arabes, ne sont pas moins amusans que les deux premiers, & n'exciteront pas moins la curiosité qu'on a d'en voir la suite'.⁵⁹ Galland's translation was evidently well received by its first public audience.

On 5 December 1704, Galland wrote to Cuper that 'l'impression du 5^e volume doit estre achevée présentement, et le 6^e est prest à mettre sous la presse.

54 'Privilege du Roy' in *ibid.*, 1704, tome I, xxi. The formulation 'contes *des Arabes*' resonates with d'Aulnoy's title *Contes des fées* (on which, see the reflections in Jasmin 2002, pp. 441–51). Interestingly, the same *privilège* reprinted at the end of vol. 7 of the *Nuits* (1706, 389ff) has the phrase 'corrected' to *contes arabes*, but leaves *mis en français* unchanged. On the archaic use of the singular 'nuit' in Galland's title, preserved in most eighteenth-century editions, see Bauden and Waller 2011, 1209 (n 110).

55 'L'original est en arabe et je dis *mis en français* parce que ce n'est pas une version attachée précisément au texte, qui n'aurait pas fait plaisir aux lecteurs. C'est autant qu'il m'a été possible, l'arabe rendu en bon français, sans m'estre attaché servilement aux mots'. Quoted in Abdel-Halim 1964, p. 193.

56 Sironval 1992, p. 45, who goes on to suggest nevertheless: 'la veuve Barbin ne s'y était pas trompée...contes traduits' conservait l'ambiguïté d'un auteur potentiel et avait plus de chance d'attirer un public lettré'. The change has been attributed to the publisher also by: Abdel-Halim 1964, p. 267 (n 40); May 1986, p. 70.

57 *Le Journal des Sçavans* 1704, Issue XX: 315. On the chronology of the first publication, see: MacDonald 1932, p. 389; Abdel-Halim 1964, pp. 267–8.

58 Letter quoted in Abdel-Halim 1964, p. 267. Galland was among the most frequent correspondents of Gisbert Cuper (1644–1716), with a total of around 118 known letters exchanged between them. See the interesting analysis of Cuper's social network by Chen 2009.

59 *Le Journal des Sçavans* 1704, Issue XXXVII: 592.

J'en suis au 7^e.⁶⁰ This suggests that Marie Cochart may have adopted a common bookselling strategy by slightly postdating the fifth volume, since it has a 1705 imprint. The sixth volume carries a fresh *approbation* from Fontenelle dated 14 April 1705, and the next volume was likewise separately reviewed by the censor, bearing an *approbation* of 4 October 1705 and a likely post-dated imprint of 1706. By then, the earlier volumes were selling out and had to be separately reissued: while we do not have data on the print runs, the sheer variety of known imprints may offer an idea of the profusion of the *Nuits* in its early years.⁶¹ The incomplete copies of the first edition at the Bibliothèque Nationale de France and in Duncan MacDonald's famed *Nights* collection now at the Hartford Seminary indicate reprints of the first two volumes already in 1705, within a year of publication.⁶² Simultaneously springing into action was the provincial traffic in pirated copies, characteristically proclaimed 'Suivant la Copie de Paris'. A two-volume set from 1705 by an unnamed Dutch printer even purports to be a revised third edition; revealing a sense of urgency and excitement, volume 2 of this set includes an *avertissement* behind the title page declaring: 'La Presse roule actuellement sur le III Tome de ces Contes Arabes. Et on donnera les Tomes suivans à mesure qu'on les recevra de Paris'.⁶³ Otherwise authorized reproductions also appeared soon: starting just over a year after the book's first release, Antoine Briasson in Lyon was printing the *Nuits* with Marie Cochart's *privilege* and an appended notice that she had yielded him a part of it through a contract dated 5 March 1705 (The same Briasson would eventually take charge of Galland's last two volumes).⁶⁴ The *Nights* thus

60 Quoted in Abdel-Halim 1964, p. 267.

61 For a general sense of print runs at the time, see Febvre and Martin 1976, pp. 219–20. Note one specific example: when Claude Barbin sold his book stock on 28 February 1695, the inventory included 700 of copies of d'Aulnoy's just-published novel *Mémoires de la cour d'Angleterre* (*privilege* dated 1 December 1694). Reed 1974, p. 82.

62 BnF Y2-8922; MacDonald 1932, p. 388. Given the imperfect copy at BnF, the most reliable bibliographic description of the *editio princeps* remains Elisséeff 1949, pp. 69–76 based on a copy at Bibliothèque de l'École des langues orientales. Note also the possibility of duplicate first editions, where an almost identical reprint involves recomposing the type. Barbin had this done for d'Aulnoy's 1697 *contes*, as Volker Schröder has observed: 'Les Contes des fées,' *Anecdota* (blog), 10 April 2018, <<https://anecdota.princeton.edu/archives/720>>.

63 MacDonald 1932, pp. 401–2. This anonymous reprint was evidently by Pierre Husson in The Hague, whose imprint appears in so-called *troisième* and *quatrième* editions from 1706 onwards: *ibid.*, p. 403. On the trade of French books in the Dutch Republic, see Febvre and Martin 1976, pp. 196–7.

64 *Les Mille et une nuit* (Lyon: Chez Antoine Briasson, 1705), tome 1, xxiv [Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale di Firenze MAGL.21.8.85.1].

flowered into a veritable cornucopia of editions almost instantaneously upon its advent in Europe.

The publication of volume seven in 1706 marked a textual turning point, for with it Galland exhausted the material he could mine from the three-volume Arabic manuscript he had acquired from Syria – besides another from which he adopted two more stories.⁶⁵ There was then a three-year hiatus until the appearance of the controversial eighth volume in 1709. Earlier that same year, on 17 March, Galland was introduced to Ḥannā Diyāb, the young man from Aleppo who came to Paris with the *voyageur* Paul Lucas.⁶⁶ And so the Maronite Syrian became Galland's propitious source for the so-called 'orphan tales' compiled in the last four volumes of the *Nuits*. The tantalizingly brief reference to their encounter in the newfound autobiography by Diyāb himself suggests that his stories were indeed meant to fill in for 'some nights that were missing' from the book *Ḥikāyat Alf layla wa-layla* translated by the unnamed 'old man' i.e. Galland.⁶⁷ Our understanding of the nature and scope of Diyāb's contribution must also contend with Bottigheimer's compelling recent argument that he narrated his stories in French rather than Arabic and that Galland's notes reflect several on-the-spot recordings and not just later summaries.⁶⁸ But unsurprisingly, it is in the later parts of the *Nuits* growing out of Diyāb's stories that scholars have tended to locate stylistically 'the transition from adaptation to creation', and hence the most obvious case of Galland's authorship.⁶⁹

A year and a half after his meetings with Ḥannā Diyāb, Galland began preparing the new material for his expansion of the *Nuits*. Volumes nine and ten came out in 1712, and these were released not *chez* Barbin but by Florentin Delaulne of 'ruë Saint Jacques à l'Empereur', heir to a longstanding family business that had earlier published the *Menagiana* (1693) edited by Galland and also co-published his short tract on the history of coffee.⁷⁰ The modified look

65 Possibly the mysterious fourth volume mentioned in the epistle dedicatory, this other manuscript (BnF MS Arabe 3893) is identified by Akel 2017, p. 208 as Galland's evident source for 'Histoire de Ganem' and 'Le dormeur éveillé'.

66 Bauden and Waller 2011, 1:286.

67 MS Sbath 254, folio 128a; Dyāb 2015, p. 334. Not that we must accept Diyāb's words at face value, but the discovery of this text therefore invalidates Mahdi's (1995, 33) observation about the orphan tales, that 'neither Hanna nor [Galland's] Journal claimed that they belonged to the *Nights*'.

68 Bottigheimer 2014; 2018.

69 Larzul 2004, p. 270. The last four volumes are even dubbed 'les conte de fées d'Antoine Galland' by Sermain 2008.

70 *De l'Origine et du progrès du café* (1699), based on Galland's translation of a sixteenth-century Arabic treatise on the topic, was published jointly by Jean Cavelier of Caen and the house of Delaulne in Paris. Florentin Delaulne became sole operator of the business

of the title page of volume nine of the *Nuits* and its typeface hint at its different printing provenance compared to the earlier volumes.⁷¹ It also appeared with a new *privilege*, dated 26 April 1711 and valid for eight years. In contrast to the previous license held by the publisher, this time it was granted instead to Galland himself, and moreover denotes him not so much as a translator but as the author/composer of the book!

Notre bien amé le sieur ANTOINE GALLAND notre Lecteur & Professeur en Langue Arabe, & de notre Academie des Medailles et Inscriptions, Nous ayant fait remontrer qu'il desireroit donner au Public un ouvrage de sa composition, intitulé, *Les Mille & une Nuit, contes Arabes, Tome neuvième & la suite traduits de l'Arabe*, s'il nous plaisoit luy accorder nos Lettres de Privilege sur ce necessaires.⁷²

This differs overtly from the language in Cochart's original *privilege*, which had described the book as: '...mis en François par le Sieur Antoine Galland'.⁷³ These contrasting if ambivalent representations of Galland within the documentary paratext of the *Nuits* thus already signal a 'transition from adaptation to creation', marking two distinct phases of the text. Not to mention, from the legal purview of this license to publish, 'tome neuvième et la suite' was effectively an independent project. Incidentally, these last four volumes also came to be reviewed by a different censor, Antoine Danchet. Volumes eleven and twelve, which Galland finished preparing by 1712 and 1713 respectively, appeared posthumously in 1717 again with Delaulne's imprint, and were printed by (or at least published jointly with) Antoine Briasson of Lyon.⁷⁴ But of course, the decision to move away from la maison Barbin and indeed to obtain the new

from 1702 onwards after the death of his brother Pierre II, whose widow retained ownership (<http://data.bnf.fr/12263498/florentin_delaulne>, accessed 20 September 2017).

71 The heavy, blotted impressions throughout the volume leads MacDonald 1932, p. 395 to remark that 'this ninth volume is not as well printed as the earlier volumes'. From vol. 9 onwards, the title page also notes under the by-line Galland's new academic credentials as of 1709, when he was appointed to the chair of Arabic at the Collège royal (See his journal entry of 7 June 1709: Bauden and Waller 2011, 1:378).

72 'Privilege du Roy' in Galland 1712, tome IX, vi [BnF Y2-8929]. The process of obtaining this new *privilege* was facilitated by l'abbé Gilles-Bernard Raguét according to Galland's journal entries of 24 and 27 November 1710: Bauden and Waller 2012, 2:265, 268.

73 'Privilege du Roy' in Galland 1704, tome I, xxi.

74 Galland's fair copies of vols. 11 and 12 were completed on 23 May 1712 and 8 June 1713, respectively: 2015, 3:76, 262. The published title pages of both feature Briasson's decorative device of intertwined A and B, with the phrase 'Imprimé à Lyon & se vend' below it. Vol. 11 includes the new *privilege* printed at the end, with a postscript stating that Delaulne had partially ceded rights to Briasson.

privilège in Galland's own name, was not without cause and had to do with the curious case of volume eight.

4 L'affaire du Tome VIII⁷⁵

The eighth volume of *Les Mille et une nuits* begins with the tale of Ġānim Ibn Ayyūb, translated by Galland from a separate Arabic manuscript where it is framed within the romance-cycle of *Sīrat ʿUmar al-Nuʿmān*.⁷⁶ In the first edition, 'Histoire de Ganem' runs from pages 1 through 152, about half the length of the entire volume. Following this appears 'Histoire du Prince Zeyn Alasnam' (pp. 153–208), and then 'Histoire de Codadad et de ses freres' (pp. 209–304, including an embedded tale within, 'la Princesse de Deryabar' on pp. 237–63). Neither of the second and third stories in the volume was Galland's contribution, even though the title-page still carries the same by-line. As a matter of fact, the tales of Zayn al-Aṣṣnām and Ḥudādād do not even originate in the *Nights* tradition *per se*, but in the fifteenth-century Ottoman Turkish collection *Ferec ba'd eṣ-ṣidde*.⁷⁷

Before his public disavowal of these two stories several years later through a preface in volume nine, Galland recorded in his journal on 17 January 1710: 'M. Petis de la Croix, Professeur et lecteur Royal en langue Arabe, qui me fit l'honneur de me venir voir le matin, fut extremement surpris de voir deux des Contes Turcs de sa Traduction imprimez dans le 8^e vol. des Mille et une Nuit que lui monstra[i], et que cela se fust fait sans sa participation'.⁷⁸ For students of the *Nights*, this intriguing anecdote has raised more questions than it has answered. Did Pétis de la Croix really not know about his own translations being published in disguise, or was he just feigning surprise to conceal what Miquel-Ravenel condemns as his 'malhonnêteté'?⁷⁹ Opinions on this vary, not least since Galland and Pétis are known to have remained on amicable terms. It is quite plausible that this happened without Pétis's knowledge or consent, but the matter is further complicated by the long suspected editorial

75 Adopted by Abdel-Halim 1964, p. 271, the phrase is indeed Galland's own, from his journal entry of 5 December 1709: 'Le matin j'allai sur les dix heures a l'audience de M. L'Abbé Bignon sur l'affaire du huitieme tome des mille et une nuit'. Bauden and Waller 2011, 1:514.

76 Long a mystery, Galland's source for Ġānim has been confirmed by Akel 2017, pp. 206–9. An earlier redaction of Galland's translation of this story survives in a brief autograph fragment, edited and published in: Bauden and Waller 2011, 1:169–80.

77 These two enigmatic stories are closely examined in a recent study by Karateke 2015, comparing the significantly altered French translation with the Turkish original.

78 Bauden and Waller 2012, 2:66. First quoted in Zotenberg 1887, p. 193.

79 Miquel-Ravenel 1994, p. 151.

involvement of a third party, the novelist Alain-René Lesage, possibly engaged by the publisher 'to rework the stories into marketable French'.⁸⁰

Whatever the exact nature of these dealings, they would soon culminate in Pétis de la Croix's magnum opus, the five-volume *Les Mille et un jours* (1710–1712), published by the very same *libraire*.⁸¹ Within weeks of its release, Galland privately recorded his first reaction to the book, a curiously terse critique: 'Je lus chez M. Le President d'Olede environ La moitié du premier volume des mille et un iour, compose a l'imitation des mille et une nuit sous le nom de M. Petis...J'y trouvai un nombre d'endroits susceptibles de Critique, de la part de ceux qui ont un peu de connaissance du Levant'.⁸² Apparently then what irked Galland was not the mimicry but an inadequate representation of the Orient. But neither was this the first sequel to Galland's *contes arabes*, for in 1707, during the hiatus after volume 7 of the *Nuits*, la veuve Barbin had published Pétis's *Histoire de la sultane de Perse et des visirs*, billed as *contes turcs* attributed to 'Chéc Zadé' i.e. Şeyhzāde. An adaptation of the Ottoman *Kırk Vezir* (Forty Viziers) stories 'ont été tirez la Bibliotheque de M. Pétis', the book opens with a preface apparently explaining the absence of Pétis's name on the title page: 'Ils ne sont point l'ouvrage d'une imagination Française, qui, à la faveur d'une titre étranger, ait voulu hazarder ses fictions'.⁸³ Not least an exaggerated claim to authenticity, this reads almost like a jab at Galland's *Nuits*. If

80 Karateke 2015, p. 213, who claims a relative consensus on Lesage's collaborations with Pétis. For a review of the debate, see Christelle Bahier-Porte's 'Introduction' in Pétis de la Croix 2011, pp. 35–50. Lesage's relationship to la maison Barbin dates back to his famous *Le Diable boiteux* (1707), an instant bestseller that generated an oft-cited anecdote about the bookshop, reported in a December 1707 periodical: 'on travaille à une troisième [édition] ; deux seigneurs de la Cour mirent l'épée à la main dans la boutique de la Barbin, pour avoir le dernier exemplaire de la seconde édition'. Quoted in Reed 1974, p. 59.

81 Intriguingly, the *Jours* is a playful inversion on the frame tale of the *Nights*: in contrast to the misogynist Shahryar, the protagonist is a woman with an aversion towards men; the narrator, a wet nurse, tells stories to convince her princess that some men can still be faithful. Despite the subtitle 'contes persans', the book was based on the *Ferec ba'd eş-şidde*. The Turkish tales and their correlates in the Persian *Ġāmi' al-hikāyāt* collections are examined in Marzolph 2017.

82 Journal entry of 16 June 1710, Bauden and Waller 2012, 2:164.

83 Zadé 1707, iii [Bayerische Staatsbibliothek A.or. 6092]. Galland had mentioned *Kırk Vezir* in his Constantinople journal: see Marzolph 2015, p. 286. There is yet another book that Pétis de la Croix would produce *chez* Barbin, collaborating with la veuve Jombert to publish his late father's *Histoire du grand Genghizcan* (1710). Incidentally, he showed Galland a proof sheet on 17 July 1710, explaining that Pétis Senior was unable to publish it due to 'la difficulté que faisoient les Libraires de la faire imprimer in 4°. comme il souhaitoit'. Bauden and Waller 2012, 2:191. Pétis presented Galland a copy of the printed book three months later, on 27 October 1710: *ibid.*, 2:250.

this was a publishing gamble, it clearly paid off: with pirated copies and even an English translation within a year, the book was a success.⁸⁴

What then to make of the publisher's role in the affair of the eighth volume? Echoing Zotenberg's description of the incident as a deception (*supercherie*) on the part of the bookseller, Abdel-Halim suggests that 'Le débit considérable des sept tomes parus et le désir d'allécher les lecteurs par la grosseur du nouveau volume poussèrent la librairie Barbin à une supercherie grossière'.⁸⁵ No doubt, we must take commercial incentives into consideration, but this harsh judgment is otherwise a bit superficial. At 304 pages of text, this new volume was actually not that substantial: it still fell short of the preceding seven instalments that ran to an average length of around 350, and remains the slimmest of all twelve volumes of the *Nuits* (the outlier by far is volume 5 at 460 pages).⁸⁶ More importantly, however, the attribution of blame is somewhat misdirected: la veuve Barbin herself had passed away on 3 December 1707, nearly two years before this publication.⁸⁷ In fact, Abdel-Halim and others have failed to appreciate what Chauvin, MacDonald and Elisséeff had all pointed out much earlier in their bibliographic descriptions, that the imprint at the foot of the title page in volume eight is slightly different.⁸⁸ The previous volumes all have:

A PARIS,
 Chez la Veuve de CLAUDE BARBIN,
 au Palais, sur le second Perron
 de la Sainte Chapelle.⁸⁹

While instead, the eighth volume has:

A PARIS,
En la Boutique de Claude Barbin,
 Chez la Veuve RICOEUR, au Palais,
 sur le second Perron de la sainte Chapelle.⁹⁰

84 *Turkish Tales, consisting of several extraordinary adventures: with the history of the Sultanness of Persia, and the Visiers* (London: Jacob Tonson, 1708); see MacDonald 1932, p. 412. The Dutch reprints are listed in Chauvin 1904, 8:19.

85 Abdel-Halim 1964, p. 269. Cf. Zotenberg 1887, p. 193: 'Galland fut très irrité de cette supercherie'.

86 This observation is also made by May 1986, p. 85.

87 On her death, see Reed 1974, p. 59. The blaming of 'la malhonnête veuve Barbin' is reiterated in, for example: Bauden and Waller 2012, 2:362 (n 1149).

88 Chauvin 1900, 4:25–26; MacDonald 1932, p. 394; Elisséeff 1949, p. 72.

89 Galland 1704–1706 [BnF Y2-8921 thru 8927].

90 Galland 1709 [BnF Y2-8928].

In other words, although still sold *in* the shop of Barbin at the same address, the book was actually published by someone else: the widow of one Ricœur – whom Raymond Schwab hence condemns as ‘la maléfique veuve Ricœur’.⁹¹ MacDonald inferred from this imprint that ‘evidently there had been a change in this publishing house and the publisher had grown tired of waiting for Galland to furnish more “copy”’.⁹² His guess was right on the mark: indeed, by the time volume eight appeared and compelled Galland to discontinue his relationship with the publisher, the house of Barbin was actually coming to an end.

As already recounted, Galland’s *Nuits* was released from Barbin’s after the death of its eponym and under the proprietorship of his widow Marie Cochart. Unfortunately, in his archival research on Barbin, Gervais Reed seems to have been unable to recover much detail on the fate of the company beyond Cochart’s lifetime. The bookshop at the perron of Sainte-Chapelle continued to be known by Barbin’s name for another decade, until at least 1717.⁹³ We can tell from the bibliographic evidence alone that Jean II Ricœur’s widow (née Anne Gontier)⁹⁴ acquired or at least rented the company, and published and sold a number of books from the boutique of Barbin – among which the eighth volume of the *Nuits* seems to have been one of her first productions.⁹⁵ This may explain the sales catalogue she inserts in this volume just after the title page, listing more than a dozen works of literature available ‘en la même boutique’, including: *Les Contes Arabes*, *Les Contes des Fez* [sic], *Contes Turcs*, and *Contes Anglois*.⁹⁶ La veuve Ricœur’s most noteworthy and original publishing

91 Schwab 1964, p. 167.

92 MacDonald 1932, p. 394.

93 Apparently operated by la veuve Ricœur until 1710, and then until 1712 by la veuve Jombert (née Françoise Baronchin, see: Arbour 2003, p. 298), the bookshop thereafter passed on to the publisher Pierre Huet. See: Reed 1974, p. 60, who identifies a 1714 title page as the last to mention Barbin. But in fact, I have come across several imprints after that date still referring to ‘la Boutique de la Veuve Barbin’, the latest being in: *Passe-temps joyeux, contes à rire et gasconnades nouvelles* (Paris: Chez Pierre Huet, 1717), Bibliothèque Municipale de Lyon B 509356. Thereafter, Pierre Huet continued to operate at ‘sur le second Perron de la Sainte-Chapelle’, but the shop was no longer associated with Barbin’s name. The address itself still appears in Huet’s imprints as late as the mid-1720s, such as in Antoine Danchet’s *Nitétis: tragédie* (Paris: Chez Pierre Huet et al., 1724), BnF YF-6573.

94 Arbour 2003, 456. Her husband, deceased 26 November 1704, must be the same *libraire* Jean Ricœur who helped conduct an inventory of the Barbin company on 29 December 1698 after Claude’s death: Reed 1974, p. 51.

95 A few months prior, on 7 September 1709, la veuve Ricœur had secured a new *privilege* in her own name for Madame d’Aulnoy’s *Contes des fées*, which she reissued with a likely postdated imprint: d’Aulnoy 1710 [Harvard Houghton *88–503].

96 ‘Catalogue’ in Galland 1709, tome VIII, iii.

achievement is quite clearly the aforementioned *Les Mille et un jours*, for which she obtained a printing *privilège* in her own name on 25 May 1710, a week after it got Fontenelle's *approbation*.⁹⁷ The *Jours* was thus ready for the press barely six months after the debacle with Galland, and would bear the same imprint as that infamous volume.

But the change of hands at the bookshop and this editorial liaison with Pétis de la Croix were not the only relevant facts bearing on the circumstances in which the eighth volume was published. A small but important detail that has been previously overlooked is the issue of the *privilège* and the publishing rights that la veuve Ricœur was exercising. Volume eight happens to include the text of the original 'Privilège du Roy' of 7 December 1703 printed at the end, as MacDonald also noted without realizing its implications.⁹⁸ The royal printing license for Galland's *Nuits* had been granted to la veuve Barbin for a fairly standard term of six years 'consécutives, à compter du jour de la date des dites Présentes'. It was therefore set to expire by the first week of December 1709, just after the eighth volume in fact came out. The first time that the publication of volume eight is mentioned in Galland's journals is on 30 November, 1709, indicating that it had been printed at the end of that month.⁹⁹ The fact that on 12 December l'abbé Bignon advised Galland to apply for a new *privilège* means they were both aware that the original had expired.¹⁰⁰

It would appear, then, that following her acquisition of the company and the licenses it held, and pending any possibility of a renewal of this particular *privilège*, la veuve Ricœur was under a clear time constraint to make use of it and rush to publish one more volume under the title *Les Mille et une nuit*. We thus encounter here a scenario resembling that in George Hoffman's landmark

97 'Approbation' (dated 16 May 1710) and 'Privilege du Roy' in Pétis de la Croix 1710 [Harvard Houghton *59-1530]. Vols. 2 and 3 of the *Jours* were published in 1711, also 'en la boutique de Claude Barbin' but by the successor la veuve Jombert. Perhaps unfamiliar with her other imprints *chez* Barbin around that same year, Bauden and Waller (2012, 2:325, n 1006) have disputed this attribution; based on a 1713 reprint of the *Jours*, they note that la veuve Ricœur ceded the *privilège* to a group of Parisian publishers, including Michel Clousier and Hilaire Foucault – whose imprints appear in vols. 4 and 5 respectively of the copy at Harvard, dated 1712.

98 MacDonald 1932, p. 393. The *privilège* appears in vol. 8 from pages 304 through 2^r of a gathering of two leaves signed Cc. As in vol. 7, it has the subtitle 'Contes Arabes' rather than 'Contes des Arabes' of the original version.

99 Bauden and Waller 2011, 1:511. Note that Karateke 2015, 211 (n 2) happens to misread this crucial date as 30 November 1708 instead of 1709 (and also that of the aforementioned entry on 'l'affaire du huitieme tome'), leading to some confusion in chronology as well as an incorrect suggestion that the 1709 imprint in volume 8 was postdated from the previous year.

100 Bauden and Waller 2011, 1:518.

study of the literary by-products of the French *privilège* system.¹⁰¹ Whereas in his analysis, expiration deadlines instigate new editions and textual revisions by authors (notably Montaigne) so as to enable renewed rights for their publishers, here we have a case of editorial intervention driven by a need to pass off material as belonging to the same text so as to utilize existing rights while still valid. In effect, this turn of events in the book's print history ended up determining its textual corpus: the practical implications of the *privilège* and its juridical recognition of the categories of title and author (or rather, translator) were key factors in the authorization of this outlier volume as a part of *Les Mille et une nuits*.

Galland was very upset, but at first only because the publisher refused to give him any copies of the new volume as the author's due: he lodged a complaint about this with Bignon on 30 November 1709.¹⁰² One may well wonder if this was mainly a financial squabble, or if la veuve Ricœur did not even regard Galland as the volume's rightful author since half of it was the work of Pétis and Lesage. Had Galland perhaps already been told as much by the publisher, but nevertheless insisted that the book's by-line earned him his due? Eventually, three weeks later on 19 December, he was given a dozen copies bound in calfskin, with two more in red morocco leather promised for Christmas Eve. No doubt impatient after the three-year-long hiatus in the *Nuits*, he immediately took two copies as gifts to his former employer Nicolas-Joseph Foucault and his wife.¹⁰³ This is recorded nonchalantly in his journal, with no further comment. But the next day at a session of the *Académie des Inscriptions*, Galland indignantly presented the volume before his fellow members, complaining about 'le grand suiet que j'avois d'en estre mecontent'.¹⁰⁴ Again a few days later on 23 December, when presenting a copy to one M. de Vaubreuil, he shared his distress about 'la malhonnesteté dont avoit usé envers moi'.¹⁰⁵ These are clearly serious if vague allusions to the fact that the volume had been tampered with, but which itself remains curiously unmentioned in Galland's journals for nearly a month and a half after it was printed: his self-described mortification was

101 Hoffmann 1993.

102 '...ie lui presentai en mesme tems un Mémoire, sur le refus que l'on m'avoit de me donner les exemplaires de present, et des exemplaires qui m'estoient dus du 8^e. Tome des Mille et une nuit, qui venoit d'estre imprimé'. Journal entry of 30 November 1709, Bauden and Waller 2011, 1:511.

103 *Ibid.*, 2011, 1:523. Foucault was the royal intendant of Caen, and Galland served him from 1697 to 1708 as a librarian to his renowned collection of antiquities (see *ibid.*, pp. 76–9).

104 Journal entry of 20 December 1709, *ibid.*, p. 523. The matter is interpreted by Schwab 1964, p. 168 to mean both issues: 'Entendez par ce pluriel d'avaries l'addition des apocryphes imposés avec les exemplaires refusés'.

105 Bauden and Waller 2011, 1:524.

perhaps too much for him to record in any detail what had happened. It was only on 17 January 1710, in the entry on Pétis de la Croix's surprised reaction, that Galland first mentions the two inserted stories.¹⁰⁶ Regardless, on New Year's Eve, Galland presented the two special morocco-bound copies to his patron the Marquise d'O, lady-in-waiting to Marie-Adélaïde of Savoy; he even takes care to note that the duchess's copy was inlaid with her coat-of-arms.¹⁰⁷ Galland reports the next day that the marquise ('tout l'ouvrage lui était dédié', he recalls) had dutifully passed on 'l'exemplaire qui était destiné pour cette princesse qui avait été si occupée qu'elle n'avait pu en commencer la lecture comme elle l'eût souhaité'.¹⁰⁸ Notwithstanding the fault lines between social and scholarly circles, these contrasting affective responses seem to depict a conflict in Galland's sense of ownership over the text, or even a reticence that betrays his indignity over loss of control – tensions that would play out more clearly within the covers of the subsequent volumes.

5 Plotting with Scheherazade

In the production of this so-called *Tome VIII* of the *Nuits*, the scope of the publisher's role actually went beyond the insertion and false attribution of the two stories. What seems to have most upset critics like Abdel-Halim is the fact that she dared to intervene within the text itself, by creating fake linkages, so to speak, between the otherwise unrelated stories.¹⁰⁹ Thus at the end of the story of Gānim, the last paragraph on page 152 reads:

Après que Schéhérazade eut achevé l'Histoire de Ganem fils d'Abou Aïoub, le Sultan des Indes, témoigna qu'elle lui avoit fait plaisir. Sire, dit alors la Sultane, puisque cette Histoire vous a diverti, je supplie tres-humblement Votre Majesté de vouloir bien entendre celle du prince Zein

¹⁰⁶ Bauden and Waller seem to infer from this that Galland did not notice the additions until then: 'Il est étonnant que Galland n'ait remarqué l'indelicatess comise par la maison Barbin que si tard...ce qui signifie qu'il n'avait pas daigné ouvrir un des exemplaires reçus', 2012, 2:66 (n 53). However, it is hard to believe that Galland would not even have opened the volume to its table of contents behind the second page, while continuing to hand it out as a gift to various friends and colleagues.

¹⁰⁷ Journal entry of 31 December 1709, *ibid.*, 2011, 1:528. On the significance of these two women's patronage for Galland's *Nuits*, see Couvreur 2014.

¹⁰⁸ Journal entry of 1 January 1710, Bauden and Waller 2012, 2:51.

¹⁰⁹ 'Avec une outrecuidance sans bornes, elle les relia, sans aucun avertissement, au cadre général des *Nuits*, par la phrase transitoire rituelle de Scheherazade s'adressant au sultan Schahriar', Abdel-Halim 1964, p. 269.

Alasnam & du Roy des Genies. Vous n'en serez pas moins content. Schahriar y consentit ; mais comme le jour commençoit à paroître, on la remit à la nuit suivante. La Sultane la commença de cette maniere.¹¹⁰

And likewise, at the end of the tale of Zayn al-Aṣṅām:

La Sultane des Indes n'eut pas plûtôt fini l'Histoire du Prince Zeyn Alasnam qu'elle demanda la permission d'en commencer une autre. Ce que Schahriar lui ayant accordé pour la prochaine nuit ; parce que le jour alloit bientôt paroître, cette Princesse en fit le recit en ces termes.¹¹¹

That we regard the above passages as being alien to the stories to which they are appended is based entirely on extra-textual information. The early printings present these in continuous, uniform typography, unlike some recent editions where such narrative refrains may be marked off with italics or other visual distinctions. Contrary to how Galland's translation has been conventionally reprinted ever since, Sermain and Chraïbi's three-volume critical edition of the *Nuits*, published on its tercentennial in 2004, relegates the tales of Zayn al-Aṣṅām and Ḥudādād to an annex at the end of the whole collection and altogether eliminates the above portions from the text.¹¹²

Of course, the inserted passages are merely formulaic, and the basic element recurs throughout the *Nights*. While the prose is not always identical across all instances, the function remains the same, which is to bring the reader out to the first order narrative of the frame tale and then to allow Scheherazade to jump right back into her storytelling. There are two such narrative breaks where she can typically re-emerge, which relate to the two structural – and temporal – units within the text: the night, and the story. But already Galland's third volume, published in mid-1704, came with a brief *avertissement* stating his decision to abolish a part of the refrain at the beginning of each night, when Dīnārzād intervenes and entreats her sister Scheherazade to resume her storytelling should she still be awake. Galland explains: 'Comme cette répétition a choqué plusieurs personnes d'esprit, on l'a retranchée pour s'accommoder à leur délicatesse.'¹¹³ But he also hopes that scholars (*les sçavans*) would forgive the translator this infidelity, since elsewhere he has 'religiously' conserved the genius and character of the Oriental tales. Ironically, as

110 Galland 1709, 152–3.

111 Ibid., p. 208

112 Sermain and Chraïbi 2004, 1:374–422.

113 Ibid., 1:225. Note: the BnF's rare copy of Galland's first edition has been missing vol. 3 since at least 1913, hence observed as 'incomplete' by MacDonald 1932, p. 388.

Mahdi points out, Galland's Arabic source had also abandoned Dīnārzād's plea from Night 60 onward, so in this sense he was really following the original, while having already edited and standardized the text in his preceding volume by *adding* this refrain to Nights 60–69.¹¹⁴ More significantly, left unmentioned in the foreword is Galland's actual deviation from the Arabic: inserting into volume three his previous translation of the *Sindbād* stories from an independent manuscript.¹¹⁵ Incorporating *Sindbād* into the scheme of the *Nuits* required Galland to depart from the numbering of his principal Arabic source, so that when he resumes it with the story of 'Les trois pommes', the original Night 70 becomes his Night 91 and so forth.

Until volume six, Galland retained these nightly divisions, indicated in the text by subheadings and also listed (presumably by the editor) at the beginning of each volume in a lengthy table of contents spanning five to ten pages. Volume seven opens with another preface, reaffirming the rationale for 'remedying the defect' of Dīnārzād's tiresome interruption: 'Il suffit qu'ils soient instruits du dessein de l'Auteur Arabe qui en a fait le recueil'.¹¹⁶ A benign textual manipulation, we are to understand, as long as the reader keeps in mind the original structure. As such, Galland now announces a further decision to remove the nightly breaks altogether, observing that some Arabic versions do not have them, nor even any mention of Scheherazade or Shahryar. Although partly accurate, this downplays the framing device as merely instrumental and even awkward, and which 'tous les Arabes n'ont pas approuvé'.¹¹⁷ Whereas volume three imposed Scheherazade's voice and nightly divisions on *Sindbād* precisely so as to appropriate it for the *Nights* (just as Arabic scribes also did with other stories), volume seven entailed the reverse intervention of deleting these features present in the original text. The laborious demands of the earlier experience itself may have led to this subsequent infidelity, since Galland explains: 'On avoit voulu s'y conformer dans cette traduction; mais

114 Mahdi 1995, pp. 28–9. In the Galland manuscript, this opening refrain appears again a few more times, on Nights 75–6, 161 and 201: BnF MS Arabe 3609–3611, ed. Mahdi 1984 (At several points especially after Night 204, there is a scribal error in which Scheherazade responds 'yes' to Dīnārzād's omitted request). For the most part throughout the manuscript, the closing refrain continues, in which Dīnārzād exclaims wonder at the story and Scheherazade promises a sequel the next night.

115 We can confirm from the specific manuscript used by Galland (*per* Akel 2017, pp. 205–6), that his original for *Sindbād* has no reference to Scheherazade nor any division into nights: BnF MS Arabe 3645, <<http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b11003031m>>.

116 'Avertissement' in Galland 1706, tome v11, iii; Sermain and Chraïbi 2004, 2:257.

117 *Ibid.* Perhaps reflecting the overall state of the *Nights* corpus by his time, Galland seems to have viewed similar Arabic tales as part of a single tradition, such as in the case of *Sindbād*.

sans parler des difficultez si grandes, qu'on a été obligé de ne s'y plus arrêter'. From now on, 'Schéhérazade parle toujours sans être interrompuë'.¹¹⁸ In other words, she must be allowed to speak without herself getting in the way. And so, Scheherazade remains absent throughout volume seven, except for a single interruption within 'Histoire de Noureddin'.¹¹⁹ What Margaret Sironval has otherwise considered the 'effacement' of Scheherazade upon the *Nights*' passage into print was therefore now complete.¹²⁰

Yet the plan is changed again in the last four instalments of the *Nuits*, following the controversial eighth volume. From volume nine onwards, Galland re-introduces Scheherazade overtly in the role of narrator, even as the tales themselves are entirely foreign, so to speak: apart from 'Le dormeur éveillé', taken from the same 'Umar al-Nu'mān manuscript as the tale of Ġānim in volume eight, the rest are Ḥannā Diyāb's stories first recorded in Galland's journals *without* any reference to Scheherazade.¹²¹ In other words, much like the editor/publisher of volume eight, Galland reverts to creating his own fake linkages. This may seem especially intriguing in light of a very forthright *avertissement* that he includes at the beginning of volume nine, published in 1712:

Les deux contes par où finit le huitième Tome, ne sont pas de l'Ouvrage des *Mille & une Nuit* : ils y ont été insérez & imprimez à l'insçû du Traducteur, qui n'a eu connoissance de l'infidelité qui luy a été faite, que quand ce Tome eut été mis en vente. Ainsi, le Lecteur ne doit pas estre surpris, que l'Histoire du *Dormeur éveillé*, contenuë dans ce neuvième Tome, soit marquée, comme racontée par Schéhérazade, immédiatement après l'Histoire de Ganem, qui fait la plus grande partie du huitième. On aura soin dans la seconde Edition, de retrancher ces deux contes, comme estrangers.¹²²

Responding in print to la veuve Ricœur's handling of the eighth volume, Galland thus publicly reasserts his authority and attempts to exercise control over the oeuvre of *Les Mille et une nuits*. He recruits Scheherazade herself in

118 Ibid.

119 This occurs at a point where Galland feels the need to clarify a convoluted narrative: 'Pour bien entendre ce qui va suivre, dit ici Scheherazade en s'interrompant ; il est à remarquer...', Galland 1706, tome VII, 149; Sermain and Chraïbi 2004, 2:303.

120 Sironval 1992, pp. 43–4.

121 With the exception of 'Aladdin', which Galland did not record in his journals but received from Diyāb in a purported, lost manuscript on 5 May 1709; Bauden and Waller 2011, 1:321.

122 'Avertissement' in Galland 1712, tome IX; Sermain and Chraïbi 2004, 2:423. Unfortunately for Galland, his promised new edition with the two stories removed would not materialize for three centuries, until the critical edition of 2004.

excising any memory of the two interpolated stories, as the narrative in volume nine opens with a full two-page prelude in which she recalls the tale of Ġānim and promises the Sultan another exciting story. In fact, even Dīnārzād makes an abrupt return, and from now on is said to wake up her sister each new day that she begins another story.

Ironically, Galland's claim to authority in this last published foreword relies on his self-presentation as *le traducteur*, even as this hardly describes the nature of his work on the final four volumes of the *Nuits* – not to mention the failure to acknowledge Ḥannā Diyāb in print. Doubly ironic, then, is the aforementioned fact that the new publishing *privilege* in Galland's name refers to the ninth and subsequent volumes as 'un ouvrage de sa composition'.¹²³ We have good reason to believe, including the corroborating reference in Diyāb's memoirs, that Galland sincerely understood the stories shared by Diyāb to be part of the *Nights* tradition. Regardless, by insisting on the structural continuity of Scheherazade's narration and thereby also instructing his readers to disregard the preceding two stories as alien and unauthorized, Galland deploys a key textual device from the *Nights* to convey the legitimacy of his work – just as the editor of the eighth volume had done to connect three unrelated stories. I do not mean to suggest that Galland rediscovered this strategy through the publisher's 'misdeeds' that he otherwise sought to rebuke, although that is not impossible. However, in the dialogue between text and peritext, we witness here the printed book emerging as a site for the contestation of authority between different actors. Far from being a sole, pristine agent behind the making of a text fully of his own vision let alone volition, Galland was actively interacting with and reacting to his editor and publisher.

As luck would have it, Galland's troubles with publishing did not go away. His contract with Florentin Delaulne was signed on 21 November 1710, almost a year after l'abbé Bignon advised him to find a different publisher for the continuation of the *Nuits*.¹²⁴ But it took them five months to secure the new *privilege* in Galland's name and have the rights transferred to Delaulne on 28 April 1711.¹²⁵ It was another month before the *privilege* was registered on 30 May.¹²⁶

123 'Privilege du Roy' in Galland 1712, tome IX, vi.

124 Bauden and Waller 2012, 2:264: 'Le matin ie m'accordai avec M. Floretin de Laune March and Libraire pour l'impression de mon neuvieme volume des Mille et une nuit'.

125 Journal entry of 28 April 1711 (ibid., 2:362). Note that 28 April is when Galland himself says he saw the *privilege* – issued two days earlier – and signed an agreement ceding it to Delaulne. However, the appended notice below the *privilege* as printed in vol. 9 (p. viii) and subsequently also in vols. 10 and 11, gives the date as 28 August 1711, which must therefore be a typographical error; Galland's diary records other business on this latter date.

126 Galland 1712, tome IX, viii.

But apparently Delaulne then kept delaying the printing of volume nine for months on end – a negligence that must have felt all the more frustrating when Galland visited Pétis de la Croix on 16 July and was presented with volume three of the *Jours*, published ‘depuis environ un moins’.¹²⁷ On 19 September, Galland heard from ‘mon Libraire...qu’il faisoit enfin travailler a l’impression’, with proofs promised the following week; accordingly, on the twenty-third Galland acknowledged receiving the first sheet the day before, albeit noting with obvious displeasure: ‘Ily avoit pres de quatre mois qu’il en differoit l’impression’.¹²⁸ It was not until 13 January 1712 that he would be sent printed sheets of volume nine for making a list of errata, which he ‘accomplished the same day’.¹²⁹ Later that month on Saturday the thirtieth, Galland finally saw the published volume, six copies bound in calfskin and the usual two in red morocco – which immediately on Monday he took to Versailles for the Marquise d’O and her mistress Marie-Adélaïde, now dauphine.¹³⁰ Delaulne was a bit more efficient with volume ten, out of the press by that summer: Galland saw a first printed copy on 6 June 1712, incidentally just two days after Pétis offered him the fifth and final volume of the *Jours*; Galland would then duly reciprocate with a gift copy of the latest *Nuits* on 10 June.¹³¹ But while the rival colleagues remained cordial, unfortunately Galland’s fate with his publisher was sealed. What appears to have been a substantially renegotiated author’s due of twenty-six copies for volume ten, more than double the number Galland was getting previously, may suggest that Delaulne no longer found the venture financially satisfactory – even if he retained an editorial interest in the *Nuits*.¹³² Although volume eleven already had an *approbation* as of 17 February 1712, it would still

127 Bauden and Waller 2012, 2:391.

128 *Ibid.*, 2012, 2:416, 418. He corrected a second sheet three days later on 26 September 1711 (2:419), but subsequent proofs remain unmentioned in the journal.

129 *Ibid.*, 2015, 3:37.

130 *Ibid.*, 3:47, 49. The next morning, on 2 February 1712 (3:49), the marquise informed Galland that the dauphine received the volume ‘avec bien du Plaisir’. But just ten days later on 12 February, Marie-Adélaïde died of measles at age 26 (her only surviving son became Louis xv). Galland went to pay his respects to the marquise on 3 March, finding her ‘dans une grande affliction de la mort de Madame la Dauphine qui l’avoit honoré d’une confiance toute particuliere depuis quatorze ans’. See Couvreur 2014, pp. 117–8 on Galland’s desire for courtly influence with the *Nuits* as ‘littérature pédagogique féminine’.

131 Bauden and Waller 2015, 3:84–6.

132 Galland notes in his journal on 6 June 1712 (*ibid.*, 3:85) that when he stopped by Delaulne’s shop that day, he was given a first copy ‘broché en papier marbrez’, while still awaiting the binding of two copies in red morocco and two dozen in calfskin. I suspect this detail about author’s dues offers a clue as to what has been speculated as ‘querelle avec Delaulne’ (Abdel-Halim 1964, p. 288).

linger in unexplained limbo three years later when Galland passed away.¹³³ He did not live to see the last line printed in a small italic type at the end of volume twelve that would declare, thirteen years after the book's launch: *Fin du XII. & dern. T. des mille & une Nuit*.¹³⁴

6 Whither Galland? The Difficult Birth of Authorship

In the field of *Nights* studies, our analyses of Antoine Galland's 'authorship' may have suffered from an overestimation of coherence and constancy in his relationship to the tales, a lurking assumption that over the course of the decade and a half since his first discovery of the collection, his view of it and of himself would remain unchanged. If we closely follow Galland through all the paratextual elements surrounding his translation, we can observe how his conception of the oeuvre seems to have evolved, with consequences for the nature of the text itself. Indeed, as Évanghélia Stead has declared so aptly: 'Dans le cas Galland, l'inventeur change sans cesse de visage'.¹³⁵ At the same time, the indeterminacy and unstable early history of the *Nuits* was often precisely the effect of its production at the nexus between a number of agents, including its patrons, publishers, printers, pre- and post-publication reviewers, and readers: dynamics that often remain invisible to strictly literary critical analyses. Instead of bemoaning the corruption of an assumed pure text once upon a time, as many critics of Galland have done since early on, it proves far more insightful to view the printed book as a heterogeneous object of various historical forces comprising what may be called the 'communications circuit', in Robert Darnton's classic formulation.¹³⁶

To this end, book history helps deconstruct the author – a point that also speaks to some of the intense and polemical debates recently in fairy-tale studies. Several critics of 'author-centred', print-based accounts of fairy tales have accused such scholarship of professing an elitist history of their transmission and erasing the role of 'the folk'.¹³⁷ However, this implies a narrow, somewhat misleading interpretation of print culture as well as an ahistorical view of au-

133 'Approbation' in Galland 1717, tome XI, 343.

134 Galland 1717, tome XII, 345.

135 Stead 2017, p. 184.

136 Darnton 1982.

137 See the discussion on the 'politics of inequality' in Bacchilega 2013, pp. 196–202, a superb monograph on fairy-tale adaptations in contemporary popular culture. My comments here are not concerned with questions of origin and orality, but rather specifically with the role and nature of print culture.

thorship, neglecting key finds of early modern book history. Far from overlooking non-elite, subaltern involvements in literary history, careful attention to the production of the book has often helped to reveal and recuperate figures otherwise erased by the Romantic cult of authorship: from the invisible secretary accompanying an assumed solitary genius like Montaigne, to the countless 'ignorant' compositors who laboured at the print shop and left their mark on the text, even if by way of errors.¹³⁸ To this one might add the succession of *veuves*: as we have seen, no less than three different women operated the publishing house of Barbin for nearly a decade and a half (1698–1712).¹³⁹ Thus, far from just 'a bookish past' as in Bacchilega's censure, the object of the field is rather printed matter situated fully in the wider socio-economic complex. Specifically with respect to fairy tales, Velay-Vallantin's significant study of the *Bibliothèque bleue*, for example, has shed light on the many fascinating adaptations and small but notable changes made by printers: in a case of moralizing intervention from the 1830s, the publisher Gangel in Metz simply deleted from one of Perrault's stories a facetious remark about a woodcutter's reproductive fertility.¹⁴⁰

For the study of the *Nights* in its European reception, this approach to authorship means having to diffuse an almost obsessive attention on the person of Galland, and broadening our focus to encompass not only a crucial yet marginalized collaborator like Ḥannā Diyāb, but even other unnamed actors. This chapter has highlighted merely a few of the links in the communications circuit around Galland's *Nuits*, in particular the decisive role of la maison Barbin at the origins of the book. The case of volume eight and its aftermath throws into relief Galland's chronic difficulties with his publishers, and the literary effects of the *privilège* regime. In spite of such disputes, as Galland would have known only too well, it was principally the *libraire* who made the *Nuits* into the bestselling phenomenon it became. And thanks to the polymorphous world of printing, the legacy of the eighth volume and the *Nuits*' multiple textual entanglements with other *contes* and imitations would play out variously ever since. In 1726, under the generic imprint of 'la Compagnie des Libraires', the Parisian booksellers Nicolas Gosselin and Magasin de Guinet brought out the first officially licensed reissue of the *Nuits*, an elegant reprint of the complete set in six volumes, marked as 'nouvelle édition corrigée'. By quite a remarkable irony, it was published with a joint *privilège* issued for both '*Les Mille & un Jour, Contes*

138 Hoffmann 1998, pp. 39–62; Chartier 2007, 29–37. On the impact of book history on authorship studies, see the review essay by Haynes 2005.

139 On the flourishing 'printer widows' of eighteenth-century France, see: Juratic 1999; McLeod 2015.

140 Velay-Vallantin 1989, p. 119.

Persans; les Mille & une Nuit, Contes Arabes.¹⁴¹ Indeed, Pétis's imitation is named first and Galland's *Nuits* second in order. The two authors remain simply unmentioned in the document.

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141 'Privilege du Roy' dated 18 May, 1724 in *Les Mille et une nuit* (Paris: Compagnie des Libraires, 1726), tome VI, 549 [BnF Y2-8938]. Detail observed earlier by MacDonald 1932, 400. Before this *privilege* in his own name, Gosselin was apparently reprinting the *Nuits* since 1711 with rights ceded to him by Delaulne: see Bauden and Waller 2012, 2:264n775.

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PART 3

The Nights, World Literature, and the Arts



Eugénie et les deux rêveurs

Abdelfattah Kilito

Reprenons l'histoire des deux rêveurs. Un homme de Bagdad perd ses biens. Une nuit, une voix lui annonce en songe que sa fortune se trouve au Caire et lui enjoint de s'y rendre. Lorsqu'il y arrive, il est confronté au gouverneur qui, apprenant son histoire, se moque de lui. « Pauvre sot, dit-il, j'ai vu, moi, en songe, et par trois fois, quelqu'un qui me disait qu'il y avait à Bagdad, en tel quartier, telle maison ainsi faite, avec une cour et un petit jardin au bout duquel est une fontaine et, là-dessous, une fortune considérable : je n'avais qu'à me rendre sur les lieux et la prendre. » Compatissant, le gouverneur donne ensuite un peu d'argent au Bagdadien et le renvoie dans son pays. Le Bagdadien se rend compte de sa bonne chance. « La maison décrite par le gouverneur était celle-là même où il vivait. Il creusa sous la fontaine et y découvrit une fortune »¹.

Quoique ruiné, le rêveur de Bagdad, remarquons-le, n'a pas perdu sa maison, avec une cour, un petit jardin et une fontaine, et c'est dans cet espace, sous la fontaine, que le trésor est enfoui. On pourrait, à propos de ce conte, développer l'idée qu'il faut se quitter pour se retrouver, qu'il faut perdre pour gagner, se perdre pour se rejoindre. On pourrait aussi, s'appuyant sur une vieille sagesse, se perdre en considérations sur l'idée déraisonnable de partir au loin à la recherche d'un trésor, alors qu'il se trouve chez soi. Seulement, pour le savoir, il faut quitter sa demeure et recueillir ailleurs l'information sur l'emplacement de l'or. Si le trésor se trouve chez soi, à proximité, la carte qui indique son endroit exact est au loin.

Si je devais parler aujourd'hui de l'histoire de Sindbad, je mettrais l'accent sur un détail qui passe généralement inaperçu : un banc de pierre près de l'entrée de la maison de Sindbad le Marin. C'est sur ce banc qu'un jour de grande canicule, Sindbad le porteur, épuisé, dépose sa lourde charge pour se reposer. Jetant un coup d'œil à l'intérieur de la maison, il aperçoit un jardin, version du paradis. On est bien entendu à Bagdad, mais la mer est toute proche puisqu'il s'agit de la maison de Sindbad le marin. Dans la chaleur intense, le seuil de la demeure est, précise le texte, arrosé d'eau de rose. Une maison, un jardin, l'eau, un banc... C'est dans ce lieu que Sindbad le porteur trouvera sa fortune.

¹ « Conte de la fortune enfouie », in *Les Mille et une nuits*, 2006, t. II, pp. 68–69.

D'une certaine manière, c'est aussi ce qui se passe dans *Eugénie Grandet*. Chez Balzac, comme chacun sait, la recherche d'une jeune fille bien dotée, d'une riche héritière, est au centre de la plupart de ses romans. Et Eugénie, dans la ville de Saumur, est la fille du Père Grandet, homme d'une avarice sordide, mais immensément riche. Les prétendants se font une concurrence acharnée, mais l'élu de son cœur est Charles Grandet, son cousin parisien.

Or, le père de Charles est ruiné. Autant dire que l'intrigue démarre avec la perte d'une fortune, tout comme pour le rêveur de Bagdad. Le père de Charles se suicide, mais il a pris soin auparavant d'envoyer son fils à Saumur, là où il y a un trésor tant convoité, Eugénie. L'arrivée de Charles ne réjouit pas son oncle qui n'a alors qu'un seul souci, se débarrasser de lui ; il n'est pas question de le retenir, de le marier à sa fille, aussi lui ordonne-t-il d'aller chercher fortune aux Indes. C'était d'ailleurs aussi le désir du père de Charles : « qu'il parte, qu'il aille aux Indes ! » Le Père d'Eugénie renchérit : « Il va partir pour les Grandes-Indes, où, selon le vœu de son père, il tâchera de faire fortune. » La voix du père. C'est un peu la voix nocturne dans le conte des deux rêveurs. Va au Caire... C'est aussi la voix du père de Sindbad le marin qui, ruiné, se souvient d'une maxime paternelle et entreprend son premier voyage. Également démuné, Charles Grandet se voit dans l'obligation de partir au loin pour faire fortune.

Dans la demeure du Père Grandet, de l'or, beaucoup d'or. Charles ne le sait pas, Eugénie non plus. Toute la ville est au courant de l'immense richesse du Père, mais la fille n'en a qu'une idée vague, bien en dessous de la réalité. Elevée dans une maison modeste, ne disposant que du strict nécessaire, soumise au contrôle paternel pour les dépenses les plus infimes, elle ne mesurera vraiment l'étendue de sa fortune qu'au moment de l'agonie de son père. Le destin d'Eugénie et de son cousin est commandé par l'ignorance. Pourtant, durant les quelques jours que Charles passe dans la maison de son oncle, une idylle naît entre lui et Eugénie, et c'est sur un banc qu'ils se jurent « un éternel amour ». Un vieux banc « sous le noyer », « au bord du puits », dans un « jardinet ». Un banc sous un noyer : dans sa réécriture du conte des deux rêveurs, Borges a placé un figuier à côté de la source, dans la maison à Bagdad (il est à ma connaissance le seul à évoquer un arbre). Charles parti, Eugénie « restait pensive sous le noyer, assise sur le banc de bois [...]. Elle pensait à l'avenir en regardant le ciel par le petit espace que les murs lui permettaient d'embrasser ; puis le vieux pan de muraille ». Ce pan de mur sera, tout comme le banc, un leitmotiv dans le roman. Comment ne pas penser, à ce propos, au « petit pan de mur jaune » que l'écrivain Bergotte, dans *La Prisonnière*, évoque juste avant de mourir ?

S'étant procuré une mappemonde, Eugénie suit en pensée les déplacements de son cousin, elle est aussi du voyage, pourrait-on dire. Il s'absentera sept ans,

durant lesquels elle vient le matin s'asseoir sur le banc et penser à lui. Durant sept ans, elle va, lit-on, « travailler à une broderie, ouvrage de Pénélope ». Tout comme Pénélope, elle est entourée de prétendants ; seulement, cette fois-ci, Ulysse ne retournera pas à Saumur, il boudera Ithaque, il ira dans une autre direction, comme l'Ulysse de Dante. Son père mort, Eugénie dispose d'un trésor inespéré. Mais que faire d'un trésor quand l'être aimé n'est pas là ? Charles n'écrit pas, ne donne pas signe de vie. Enfin, elle reçoit une lettre où il l'informe qu'il a fait fortune, mais, ajoute-t-il avec muflerie, étant donné sa nouvelle situation qu'il estime à tort privilégiée, il n'épousera pas Eugénie qu'il imagine pauvre. Il s'est déjà engagé avec l'héritière d'une famille aristocratique. « Il entre dans mes plans de tenir un grand état de maison, de recevoir beaucoup de monde, et je crois me souvenir que vous aimez une vie douce et tranquille. » Lyrique, il lui fait en passant l'aumône d'un rappel : « je me suis toujours souvenu dans mes longues traversées du petit banc de bois ». Eugénie était, on s'en doute, assise sur ce banc lorsqu'elle lut que Charles rompait son vœu de l'épouser. « Elle se leva [...] et alla s'asseoir sur une des marches de la cour ». Elle s'éloigne du banc, il n'en sera plus question par la suite. Le lecteur, malgré tout naïf, c'est du moins mon cas, est révolté par le cynisme du cousin indigne. Il se dit que cette crapule ne devrait pas s'en tirer à si bon compte, qu'il mérite un châtement. Son souhait sera quelque peu exaucé : Charles a fait fortune aux Indes, certes, mais elle est infime, quasi nulle comparée à celle d'Eugénie ; il ne le sait pas, il ne le saura que lorsqu'il sera trop tard pour en profiter, il découvrira le trésor au moment où il le perdra. D'où sa stupeur lorsqu'on le renseigne sur l'état de fortune d'Eugénie : « elle est donc riche », dit-il d'un air hébété. La révélation sera son châtement.

Que deviendra Eugénie ? Elle acceptera, pour des raisons religieuses et sociales, d'épouser l'un de ses prétendants qui, depuis des années, attendait son bon vouloir. Seulement, elle exigera « de demeurer en état de virginité dans le mariage » et elle se montre ferme là-dessus. « J'ai dans le cœur un sentiment inextinguible », dit-elle à celui qu'elle allait épouser. Elle reste fidèle, elle, au banc, à l'esprit du banc sous le noyer, dans le jardinet.

Dans un épisode de *Dites-moi le songe*, j'ai parlé d'une histoire d'amour dont le témoin est un escabeau. Je m'étais inspiré d'une histoire chinoise² rapportée par Roland Barthes dans *Fragments d'un discours amoureux*, mais à mon insu, dans mon inconscient littéraire, d'autres histoires étaient en jeu, d'autres bancs. En particulier celui de *L'Éducation sentimentale*. Sur le bateau qui l'em-mène de Paris vers Nogent, Frédéric Moreau voit pour la première fois Mme Arnoux, assise sur un banc, en train de broder quelque chose. Ce fut le début

2 Du moins je la suppose telle, Barthes n'ayant pas cité de référence.

d'une histoire d'amour sans espoir. L'image ultime de Mme Arnoux dans le roman sera celle d'une femme vieillissante et passablement ruinée, qui vit loin de Paris, en Bretagne, dans une maison avec un jardin d'où l'on découvre la mer. « Je vais m'asseoir là, sur un banc, que j'ai appelé : le banc Frédéric. »

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Subtile influence des *Mille et une nuits* dans le Rimbaud des *Illuminations*

Rafika Hammoudi

Faut-il toujours que le matin revienne ? L'empire de ce monde ne prend-il jamais fin ?

Une fatale activité engloutit les élans divins de la Nuit qui s'approche.

Ne va-t-il donc jamais, le sacrifice occulte de l'Amour, éternellement brûler ?

NOVALIS, *Hymnes à la Nuit*, II



1 L'interminable fontaine littéraire

Il serait erroné de penser, dans une vision limitée et biaisée de la préface des *Orientales* de Victor Hugo, que *Les Mille et une nuits* n'offrirent à la littérature du XIX^{ème} siècle, notamment française, qu'un prétexte à l'utilisation stéréotypée d'un imaginaire oriental, figé entre une éternelle sensualité féminine cachée de tous, et une violence masculine excessivement dangereuse pour tous. Ainsi est-il nécessaire d'aller plus loin et de souligner que *Les Mille et une nuits* proposèrent également au XIX^{ème} siècle, le renouveau d'une certaine littérature médiévale, non dans son thème mais dans son fond, dans la philosophie littéraire qu'elle inspira à son public. Dominique Jullien note dans son ouvrage intitulé *Les amoureux de Schéhérazade : variations modernes sur « Les Mille et une nuits »*, que la renaissance d'une littérature non seulement populaire mais socialement hétéroclite, ne saurait être étrangère à cette irruption des *Mille et une nuits* dans le paysage littéraire français. En effet le XIX^{ème} siècle, qui se veut l'âge d'or du roman feuilleton¹, est marqué par une écriture où le divertissement est au cœur des intérêts *auctoriaux*, moment de ravissement face à une société, et un temps, bousculés par les révolutions et une instabilité politique

1 Sur le sujet : Jullien 2009, pp. 33–47.

constante. L'horizon d'attente du lecteur ne se cristallise plus, uniquement, dans un discours fortement structuré et intellectualisé : il y a en apparence, et en apparence seulement², une certaine légèreté du propos dans cette succession d'actions où tout n'est pas marqué par la logique et la rationalisation, où à chaque instant le merveilleux à savoir l'extraordinaire, magique dans le cadre des *Mille et une nuits* et mystérieux dans le roman feuilleton, vient bousculer le récit narratif.

L'autre point important de cette influence des *Mille et une nuits* dans le paysage littéraire français du XIX^{ème} siècle, c'est cette ambiguïté de la morale ou plus précisément de ce que l'on pourrait presque nommer d'une immorale moralité. Les bains de sang, les viols, les vols sont constants dans les *Mille et une nuits*³ et ceux qui en sont victimes ne seront pas toujours les vainqueurs, justice ne leur sera pas toujours rendue. Prenons tout simplement le cas de Schahriar, héros du récit-cadre, victime de l'infidélité de sa première épouse et à qui est donnée une fin heureuse auprès de Schéhérazade, notamment dans la version Galland. Mais ne fut-il pas le meurtrier impitoyable de plusieurs dizaines voire de centaines d'autres femmes ? Dès lors s'il existe une morale dans *Les Mille et une nuits*, elle est marquée du sceau de l'intelligence. Il n'est pas tant question de justice que de justesse : dans le choix des actions, des paroles en fonction de la situation à laquelle est confronté le héros ou l'héroïne. Il s'agit pour ce dernier de redevenir maître de son existence dans un parfait équilibre entre destinée et libre-arbitre : si la première est du domaine de Dieu, la seconde se veut celle de l'homme et de sa raison. Or la raison, c'est-à-dire la

2 Conjointement instructif et divertissant, sans aucune supériorité de l'un sur l'autre : « Comment lire *Les Mille et une nuits* ? D'abord, et heureusement pour nous : pour le plaisir. Aucune étude, aucune hypothèse, aucune démonstration érudite ne pourra faire que les *Nuits* ne soient d'abord cela : un formidable magasin d'histoires où nous puisons pour nous recréer. [...] Mais on peut se demander, au moins pour certains contes, si le plaisir est aussi innocent que cela, s'il n'est pas – dans le goût du temps qui consiste à délivrer une connaissance ou un enseignement tout en distrayant – le voile heureux et coloré sous lequel se cache autre chose de plus sérieux, un « autre chose », pour lequel le conte a été bâti. » (Bencheikh et Miquel 2006, p. 16.)

3 Malgré les règles de bienséances observées par Antoine Galland (1704–1717) dans sa traduction, et poursuivies par Guillaume-Stanislas Trébutien (1828), il faut comprendre que, pour le lecteur contemporain habitué à cette censure et aux modulations langagières qu'elle impose, le caractère sensuel et érotique du récit reste, si ce n'est lisible, tout du moins perceptible. En témoigne les indications de Galland dans le récit-cadre : « La pudeur ne me permet pas de raconter tout ce qui se passa entre ces femmes et ces noirs, et c'est un détail qu'il n'est pas besoin de faire. » (Galland 1949, t.1, p. 40.) De plus est-il nécessaire d'ajouter que dans la seconde moitié du siècle, l'apparition et l'engouement artistique pour l'odalisque, contribue à cette vision d'un Orient hautement sexualisé, dissimulé au regard de l'étranger derrière des voiles et des portes.

faculté pensante de l'homme, n'est pas obligatoirement morale dans *Les Mille et une nuits*.⁴

Parmi les auteurs qui semblent avoir parfaitement saisi cette subtilité des contes orientaux, se détache la figure de Théophile Gauthier au travers de sa nouvelle intitulée *La mille et deuxième nuit*. Dans cette dernière il imagine Schéhérazade, venant quémander à son narrateur, auteur de roman-feuilleton à succès, une nouvelle histoire afin de plaire au roi, car, selon elle, Galland a menti et Schahriar n'est pas rassasié de récits, continuant de menacer sa vie à chaque lever de soleil. Cependant malgré l'histoire que lui offre le narrateur, il reste persuadé que Schéhérazade a été exécutée ; car pour ce dernier dès l'instant où elle s'est présentée à lui, elle a failli, en démontrant les limites de ses capacités intellectuelles et imaginatives. Il est intéressant de constater que dans cette même nouvelle, Théophile Gauthier compare ce roi impitoyable au public parisien. La précarité de l'existence dans les *Les Mille et une nuits* vient faire écho à la précarité du succès littéraire dans le Paris du XIX^{ème}.

Mais il y a là, également, une sorte de jouissance de l'instant que tente de partager avec le lecteur Théophile Gauthier, dans ce narrateur qui, à la minute où il accueille Schéhérazade, était heureux de profiter d'un moment d'absolu abandon à toute activité et à tout danger. Dès lors peut-on comprendre dans un parallélisme voulu aux *Mille et une nuits*, que dans cette imprévisibilité du destin, dans cette irrémédiable proximité d'une mort réelle ou littéraire, l'être humain ou le romancier parvient à ce que nous nommerons des *épiphanies ataraxiques*, c'est-à-dire de réelles pacifications de son esprit et de son âme en marge de toute action, ou mieux encore, d'instant de relativisme absolu. C'est cette logique de révélations spirituelles, de soulèvement du voile, qui guidera aujourd'hui notre pensée sur ce rapport entre Rimbaud et *Les Mille et une nuits*. Ainsi s'il paraissait nécessaire de s'arrêter aussi longuement sur Théophile Gauthier, c'est que ce dernier est décrit par Rimbaud dans sa lettre du 15 mai 1871 comme « très voyant » et son influence critique non seulement sur le jeune poète mais sur celui qu'il considère comme son prophète, Baudelaire, est considérable. Dès lors son admiration et sa vision des *Mille et une nuits* ne sauraient être écartées comme source d'influence de ces deux grands poètes.

4 Ici se pose également, en pointillés, le difficile problème de la conscience dans *Les Mille et une nuits*. Si l'on considère que cette dernière est la connaissance par l'homme de son état intérieur et sa prise en compte dans les décisions de son existence, alors celle-ci ne transparaît pas dans *Les Mille et une nuits*.

2 La collusion des Génies

Si l'on en vient à présent au cœur de notre présence à ce colloque aujourd'hui, à savoir Arthur Rimbaud, il nous est nécessaire de revenir sur quelques détails de son rapport en pointillés, à l'Orient, avant de réellement analyser cette subtile influence des *Mille et une nuits* dans ses *Illuminations*. Il y a chez Rimbaud une dualité de l'Orient. Par Orient rimbaldien nous entendons simultanément, géographiquement, l'Afrique du Nord et le Proche-Orient. Cette dualité s'illustre dans sa double représentation temporelle : passé et présente.

Dans un premier temps l'Orient est antique et judéo-chrétien, lieu de toutes les origines et de tous les préceptes de son Occident moderne. Cet Orient qui fut païen, devenu chrétien, lui semble avoir été connu, vécu, tant le récit biblique a été appris et digéré par Rimbaud. Dans un second temps, se présente cet Orient islamique, lieu littéraire et politique, qui se retrouve au cœur même de sa biographie dans la figure de ce père militaire en Algérie. Certes ce dernier déserta bien vite le foyer familial mais il n'en laissa pas moins un certain nombre d'ouvrages qui ne purent qu'aiguïser l'intérêt du *lecturophage*, que fut Rimbaud : notamment une traduction du Coran et des ouvrages de grammaire et de vocabulaires sur la langue arabe et le dialecte algérien (jeux de mots etc...)⁵ Il est primordial de préciser et d'insister sur le fait qu'aucun de ces deux Orient ne saurait être supérieur ou inférieur à l'autre. En réalité la poésie rimbaldienne illustre une existence de ces deux mondes dans un même espace-temps : l'Orient est tantôt l'un, tantôt l'autre et fait cohabiter ces deux reflets dans un unique espace poétique. Il est tout de même possible d'avancer, sans trop de risque, que l'Orient chrétien prédomine dans les *Proses en marge de l'Évangile* et la *Saison en enfer* ; tandis que l'Orient musulman marque de sa présence les *Illuminations*.

Cette affirmation semble confirmée par ce que certains pourraient qualifier de détail biographique, mais qui, nous le croyons, ne saurait être vu, ne devrait être considéré comme anodin. En 1876, de retour de ces pérégrinations à Java, Rimbaud déambulant dans les rues de Paris revêtu d'un costume de marin anglais, se voit revêtir par son ami et poète Germain Nouveau, du sobriquet de « Rimbald le marin »⁶. Or c'est ce même Germain Nouveau, qui accompagna un temps (de mars à mai 1874) Rimbaud à Londres, lieu de rédaction partiel des *Illuminations*, et c'est recopié de sa main qu'ont été conservés deux poèmes dudit corpus (« Villes » [L'acropole officielle...] et « Métropolitain »). Dès lors

⁵ Lefrère 2001, pp. 14–15.

⁶ Delahaye 1927, p. 10.

par ce surnom, Germain Nouveau propose un indice, glisse un clin d'œil lié à Rimbaud et à cet ensemble poétique qu'il a fréquenté de très près.

Si nous avons évoqué cette notion de subtilité, à l'image de ce titre, dans l'incorporation rimbaldienne des *Mille et une nuits* dans le corpus des *Illuminations*, c'est parce que ces contes sont esquissés sans jamais être l'objet premier du texte. *Les Mille et une nuits* dans les *Illuminations* sont l'occasion pour Rimbaud d'ouvrir son champ imaginaire, de se laisser entraîner à la réflexion, presque à une rêverie, qu'elles ont suggérée mais dont elles ne sont la finalité. Prenons le cas de « Génie », poème que René Char a considéré comme l'illustration d'un ultime testament métaphysique rimbaldien. La réalité critique du poème laisse tout lieu de croire que ce que Rimbaud décrit, en cet instant, c'est l'illustration d'une force abstraite⁷, d'un génie en tant qu'élément de la pensée, impalpable, mais visible dans son action et qui viendrait guider presque sauver l'humanité. Or le procédé utilisé par Rimbaud pour décrire cette intangibilité c'est celui de la personnification. Dès lors le poème se veut une sorte de recouplement, d'union dans l'imaginaire de l'artiste, entre un génie moderne scientifique, c'est-à-dire une aptitude intellectuelle abstraite et un *Génie*⁸ (traduction du terme Djinn) oriental religieux, entité physique considérée comme réelle.⁹ Loin du génie, en tant que divinité antique, bon ou mauvais esprit, le *Génie* de Rimbaud, certes surnaturel, se veut écho des *Djinns* de Hugo dans le poème éponyme, et, se lit comme une évocation de ces autres résidants de la terre qui peuplent *Les Mille et une nuits*. Créatures marquées par leur rapidité et leur violence, leur déplacement est instantané et gigantesque en témoigne le nuage de poussière, ou le fracas, qui les précède à chaque apparition dans les histoires du recueil.¹⁰ Le *Génie* de Rimbaud obéit à une même représentation

7 Margaret Davies note que le mot sert de « générateur au texte ». (Cité par Brunel 2004, p. 721.)

8 Pour des raisons de compréhension textuelle, dans le cadre de cette analyse, le *Génie*, à savoir l'être oriental, sera noté en italiques.

9 « génie de la réunion des contraires » note Pierre Brunel. (Brunel 2004, p. 727.)

10 Citons simplement la toute première apparition d'un *Génie* dans le recueil de Galland : « Il n'y avait pas longtemps qu'ils s'entretenaient, lorsqu'ils entendirent assez près d'eux un bruit horrible du côté de la mer, et un cri effroyable qui les remplit de crainte. Alors la mer s'ouvrit, et il s'en éleva comme une grosse colonne noire qui semblait s'aller perdre dans les nues. Cet objet redoubla leur frayeur ; ils se levèrent promptement, et montèrent au haut de l'arbre qui leur parut le plus propre à les cacher. Ils y furent à peine montés, que regardant vers l'endroit d'où le bruit partait et où la mer s'était entr'ouverte, ils remarquèrent que la colonne noire s'avancait vers le rivage en fendant l'eau ; ils ne purent dans le moment démêler ce que ce pouvait être, mais ils en furent bientôt éclaircis. C'était un de ces génies qui sont malins, malfaisants, et ennemis mortels des hommes. Il était noir et hideux, avait la forme d'un géant d'une hauteur prodigieuse, et portait sur sa tête une grande caisse de verre, fermée à quatre serrures d'acier fin. » (Galland 1949, t.1, pp. 44-45.)

simultanément bestiale et extraordinaire : « Ô ses souffles, ses têtes, ses courses ; la terrible célérité » puis « Son pas ! les migrations plus énormes que les anciennes invasions ». C'est une entité colossale dans son fond, à savoir l'abstraction occidentale motrice d'une nouvelle humanité, qui semble avoir trouvé écho dans la forme orientale du génie entité supranaturelle – « surhumain » – s'opposant à Dieu.

En effet, est-il juste de souligner que la plupart des *Génies* qui peuplent *Les Mille et une nuits* sont damnés. Ils sont ceux qui ont refusé l'autorité de Salomon et par là-même celle de Dieu, réactivant la révolte satanique originelle.¹¹ Le *Génie* rimbaldien s'octroie une logique similaire et démontre la supériorité de l'orgueil, pêché démoniaque par excellence, à la charité chrétienne : « l'orgueil plus bienveillant que les charités perdues. » Il y a donc dans cette symbiose des deux acceptions du terme, une parfaite illustration de ce nous évoquions précédemment, à savoir l'influence du recueil oriental comme réflexion critique moderne chez Rimbaud. Si la fusion semble réellement désirée par le poète à travers ce titre de « Génie », son harmonisation est telle que l'impulsion première, *Les Mille et une nuits*, apparaît comme difficilement discernable, presque dévorée par la finalité du discours critique. Dès lors peut-on s'étonner de notre volonté de vouloir lire dans ce *Génie*, l'être surnaturel oriental, et nous reprocher un désir de guetter *Les Mille et une nuits* dans ce corpus rimbaldien. En réalité, en faisant le choix de débiter cette analyse par « Génie », nous avons délaissé pour un temps, stratégiquement, le poème instigateur de cette étude. Un poème qui permet d'affirmer la connaissance, et la lecture, par Rimbaud de ces *Mille et une nuits* mais qui nous a, également, permis de retrouver ce *Génie* oriental même caché dans l'appareil poétique complexe rimbaldien. Ce poème se nomme, dans un jeu de reflet évident, « Conte ».

11 « Je suis un de ces esprits rebelles qui se sont opposés à la volonté de Dieu. Tous les autres génies reconnurent le grand Salomon, prophète de Dieu, et se soumièrent à lui. Nous fûmes les seuls, Sacar et moi, qui ne voulûmes pas faire cette bassesse. Pour s'en venger, ce puissant monarque chargea Assaf, fils de Barakhia, son premier ministre, de me venir prendre. Cela fut exécuté. Assaf vint se saisir de ma personne, et me mena malgré moi devant le trône du roi son maître. Salomon, fils de David, me commanda de quitter mon genre de vie, de reconnaître son pouvoir, et de me soumettre à ses commandements. Je refusai hautement de lui obéir ; et j'aimai mieux m'exposer à tout son ressentiment, que de lui prêter le serment de fidélité et de soumission qu'il exigeait de moi. Pour me punir, il m'enferma dans ce vase de cuivre ; et afin de s'assurer de moi, et que je ne pusse pas forcer ma prison, il imprima lui-même sur le couvercle de plomb, son sceau, où le grand nom de Dieu était gravé. » (Galland 1949, t.1, p. 82.)

3 Par-delà le Bien et le Mal

« Conte » ne laisse aucun doute quant à son influence première : le poème se veut le reflet du récit-cadre des *Mille et une nuits*, dans lequel le roi Schahriar, trompé par sa première épouse, jura sacrifice d'une nouvelle compagne à chaque aurore. L'histoire sanguinaire, d'une profonde déception d'un homme en la femme, est partiellement réécrite, pour ne pas dire réinterprétée, par Rimbaud. La déception dans la gente féminine laisse place, curieusement, à une grande foi, en une supériorité cachée de ses épouses: « Il prévoyait d'étonnantes révolutions de l'amour, et soupçonnait ses femmes de pouvoir mieux que cette complaisance agrémentée de ciel et de luxe. » Mais une foi corrompue, comme attendue et soupçonnée par le lecteur, viciée par la méfiance, puisque le Prince rimbaldien ne trouve ici qu'une justification perverse, dans ce possible dessein dissimulé par ces femmes, aux crimes qu'il compte commettre et à leurs exécutions futures.

Ainsi si la quête de ce Prince, quête métaphysique, peut être interprétée comme l'image d'une insatisfaction beaucoup plus spirituelle que matérielle dans les *Illuminations*, uniquement motivée par une volonté personnelle sans motif extérieur ; elle apparaît, simultanément, comme l'illustration d'une critique implicite à l'égard du personnage de Schahriar dans *Les Mille et une nuits*. Ce dernier a dû attendre une trahison, pour réaliser la futilité de ses richesses matérielles, de ses possessions féminines et par là-même de son existence : il reste, en quelque sorte, prisonnier de cette première épouse qui se joue de lui, même dans la mort, le faisant basculer d'un extrême à l'autre.

Dès lors le Prince de « Conte » est, dans un premier temps, tacitement, supérieur à Schahriar puisqu'il est instigateur de son changement. Il n'est rien à reprocher à ses épouses, le manque est personnel, intime et profondément égoïste : « Que ce fût ou non une aberration de piété, il voulut ». *Vouloir* : par ce verbe il reste souverain de son existence mais également de ces possibles erreurs, qu'il tente ou non de justifier ses actes, rien ne l'y oblige il reste, au-delà d'un homme, un roi qui ne saurait être contredit. Ainsi par cette proclamation : « Il voulait voir la vérité, l'heure du désir et de la satisfaction essentiels », le Prince s'approche dangereusement des portes du blasphème et de l'hérésie ; car ce n'est pas par un comportement ascétique, un renoncement véritable qu'il désire parvenir à cette élévation mais par un simple édit qui dans sa vision royale se veut performatif. Ce qui amène à penser que cette quête, en apparence spirituelle, n'est pour lui que nouvelle possession, nouvelle perversion royale, nouveau territoire à conquérir pour son orgueil, et non le premier pas vers un abandon terrestre : « Il possédait au moins un assez large pouvoir humain. » Tout revient à cette notion de possession. En cela le Prince de « Conte »,

malgré la dissemblance des routes choisies, fait écho à Schahriar dans sa décision extrême et sa plongée dans le sang et la tyrannie. Pourtant, et nous reviendrons ultérieurement sur cette notion, il ne faut pas croire que cette chute morale soit condamnée par Rimbaud. Au contraire il s'amuse de l'ambiguïté et la cultive.

Ainsi à l'image d'un cheminement mystique inversé dans sa forme, le prince décide dans un premier temps de faire tuer ses épouses, délégation de responsabilité qui lui permet de se prémunir du possible statut de meurtrier : « Toutes les femmes qui l'avaient connu furent assassinées. » Mais le miracle, ou la malédiction, tout dépend du point de vue observé, entraîne la nullité du crime : « Sous le sabre, elles le bénirent. Il n'en commanda point de nouvelles. — Les femmes réapparurent. » Dès lors ce pouvoir, qu'il souhaitait absolu, se voit annulé puisqu'il ne parvient à tuer, réellement, ses épouses. Certes l'iniquité de l'acte pourrait justifier à lui seul, cette intervention surnaturelle, mais ce serait faire impasse de son aspect blasphématoire : en ayant droit de mort sur ses femmes, le Prince souhaite concurrencer une capacité divine. Or il est intéressant de constater que dans *Les Mille et une nuits* cette notion d'une autorité divine, absolue, à laquelle même le plus grand roi doit se soumettre est primordial à tout succès, à toute décision, à toute pensée, à toute existence. Le Prince rimbaldien ne semble pas saisir ce postulat, il ne contrôle pas cet autre monde, métaphysique, auquel il aspire non seulement en tant qu'être mais également en tant que monarque. Ainsi plutôt que de faire marche arrière choisit-il d'agir par lui-même, de ne plus se cacher derrière des bourreaux, des machinations, et de possibles faux-semblants personnels ou politiques : notre Prince s'affranchit de son statut de stratège passif et devient activement maître de sa damnation : « Il tua tous ceux qui le suivaient, après la chasse ou les libations. — Tous le suivaient. Il s'amusa à égorger les bêtes de luxe. Il fit flamber les palais. Il se ruait sur les gens et les taillait en pièces. — La foule, les toits d'or, les belles bêtes existaient encore. » Par cette attitude le Prince rimbaldien revient, un temps, au texte premier puisque Schahriar assassine la Reine mais tue de sa main toutes ses suivantes.¹² Néanmoins en s'attaquant à tout être, il transcende le roi Perse, et n'incarne en cet instant, non uniquement, le mal royal mais toute la force maléfique contenue dans *Les Mille et une nuits* : la personnification d'un mal aveugle, furieux et anonyme lisible dans ces contes.

12 « À peine fut-il arrivé, qu'il courut à l'appartement de la sultane. Il la fit lier devant lui, et la livra à son grand vizir, avec l'ordre de la faire étrangler ; ce que ce ministre exécuta, sans s'informer quel crime elle avait commis. Le prince irrité n'en demeura pas là ; il coupa la tête de sa propre main à toutes les femmes de la sultane. » (Galland 1949, t.1, p. 47.)

Cependant dans le cas de « Conte », cette prise en charge de la destruction par le Prince, cette immersion dans le mal actif et non plus passif, ne parvient pas à être stabilisée. Cet état de néant, de dévastation, ne cesse de lui désobéir en se reconstruisant, voire en existant encore. C'est formuler ici l'échec, l'impossibilité, du chaos. C'est également, une nouvelle fois, justifier l'attitude du Prince qui, malgré sa volonté d'anéantir, fait face à un monde qui se reconstruit comme pour mieux être anéanti de nouveau : s'il est coupable de sadisme, son monde est coupable de masochisme – « Le peuple ne murmura pas. » – Il en va de même dans *Les Mille et une nuits*, malgré ses meurtres répétés, Schahriar parvient chaque nuit à retrouver une nouvelle épouse et à l'exécuter au matin, dans une logique de temporalité fermée et aliénante entre destruction et reconstruction. Son peuple malgré ses cris et ses imprécations est quant à lui coupable de ne pas physiquement se soulever : dans son immobilisme il est une victime consentante.¹³

Dès lors dans cette situation bloquée, dans ce qui apparaît comme un cercle vicieux qui préfigure un enlèvement et une apathie, comme lu au début du poème, dans cet instant apparaît le *Génie*. Il est, à la différence de ceux des *Mille et une Nuits*, décrit comme étant « d'une beauté ineffable » et s'oppose physiquement à ceux du texte originel marqués de leur laideur. Sur ce point, deux hypothèses s'offrent au lecteur : soit le Prince reconnaît dans cette hideur une beauté nouvelle et non admise de tous, soit le *Génie* est Schéhérazade, incarnation humaine et non surnaturelle.¹⁴ Cette seconde réponse, qui semble plus probable dans une logique de réécriture du texte premier, fait apparaître cette dernière comme un être extrêmement ambigu et non complètement salvateur chez Rimbaud.

13 « Le bruit de cette inhumanité sans exemple causa une consternation générale dans la ville. On n'y entendait que des cris et des lamentations. Ici c'était un père en pleurs qui se désespérait de la perte de sa fille ; et là c'étaient de tendres mères qui, craignant pour les leurs la même destinée, faisaient par avance retentir l'air de leurs gémissements. Ainsi, au lieu des louanges et des bénédictions que le sultan s'était attirées jusqu'alors, tous ses sujets ne faisaient plus que des imprécations contre lui. » (Galland 1949, t.1, pp. 47–48.)

14 Faisant écho à la description donnée par Galland : « Le grand vizir, qui, comme on l'a déjà dit, était malgré lui le ministre d'une si horrible injustice, avait deux filles, dont l'aînée s'appelait Schéhérazade, et la cadette Dinarzade. Cette dernière ne manquait pas de mérite ; mais l'autre avait un courage au-dessus de son sexe, de l'esprit infiniment avec une pénétration admirable. Elle avait beaucoup de lecture et une mémoire si prodigieuse, que rien ne lui était échappé de tout ce qu'elle avait lu. Elle s'était heureusement appliquée à la philosophie, à la médecine, à l'histoire et aux arts ; elle faisait des vers mieux que les poètes les plus célèbres de son temps. Outre cela, elle était pourvue d'une beauté extraordinaire, et une vertu très solide couronnait toutes ces belles qualités. » (Galland 1949, t.1, p. 48.)

À l'image du *Génie* du poème éponyme étudié précédemment, le *Génie* de « Conte » se veut avant tout une force motrice, un outil de modification et de mouvement, et c'est exactement ce qu'il sera pour notre Prince : « amour » et « bonheur ». Cependant, ces deux notions sont, pour Rimbaud, synonymes de fatalité : la première dans une logique de sacrifice christique pour l'amour de l'humanité, la seconde évoquée dans la *Saison* sous le prisme de la malédiction – « Le Bonheur était ma fatalité, mon remords, mon ver » –. Ainsi le *Génie* ne semble pas être une bénédiction pour ce Prince, pas dans l'optique d'un mysticisme descendant. En effet, si la majorité de ceux cités par *Les Mille et une nuits* porte la marque de l'anathème divin, de leur désobéissance à Salomon et donc à Dieu, ils sont dans les contes orientaux source d'opposition par le Mal, alors que dans le poème rimbaldien le *Génie* devient source d'opposition par le Bien, dépositaire d'une salvation. Dès lors par cette rencontre avec le *Génie*-Schéhérazade, par cette première mort commune « dans la santé essentielle » qu'expose le texte, Rimbaud évoque cette félicité conjugale : mort dans la mort, et à contre-courant de toute pensée traditionnelle, qui ne fait plus de Schéhérazade une héroïne mais un obstacle à une sorte de réflexion existentielle destructrice à travers ce retour à une vie simple qu'elle propose à Schahriar.¹⁵ Le Prince qui jusqu'alors avait poursuivi une avancée métaphysique inversée vers le mal, qui pourrait être qualifié de mysticisme irrégulier, se voit victime de cette rencontre puisqu'il « décéda, dans son palais, à un âge ordinaire ». Certes il y a ici ultime provocation et malédiction pour un homme qui s'était souhaité extraordinaire, Dieu sur terre mais il y a également épiphanie ataraxique, retour dans l'indolence à la nullité de l'existence.

Dès lors à l'issue du texte aucun des deux protagonistes n'est véritablement coupable ou innocent car « Le prince était le Génie. Le Génie était le Prince. » Tous deux sont meurtriers, tous deux sont forces motrices dans cette ambiguïté du bien et du mal qui les rend dépositaires d'un mysticisme. Rimbaud illustre cette complexité évoquée en début d'analyse : cette ambiguïté morale ou immorale moralité des *Mille et une nuits*. Mais qu'en est-il de l'ultime phrase du poème ? Il apparaît nécessaire de l'accepter comme elle est et se veut être, simultanément conclusion et commencement : « La musique savante manque à notre désir. » Elle est, dans un premier élan, le constat d'un échec marqué par

¹⁵ Un abandon admis par le roi lui-même dans cette notion de *renoncement* : « Je vois bien, lui dit-il, aimable Schéhérazade, que vous êtes inépuisable dans vos petits contes : il y a assez longtemps que vous m'en divertissez ; vous avez apaisé ma colère, et je renonce volontiers, en votre faveur, à la loi cruelle que je m'étais imposée ; je vous remets entièrement dans mes bonnes grâces, et je veux que vous soyez regardée comme la libératrice de toutes les filles qui devaient être immolées à mon juste ressentiment. » (Galland 1949, t.3, p. 431.)

le « manque » et dont la cause trouve son origine dans l'absence d'une « musique savante », expression qui suggère la nécessité d'une méthode ordonnée dans cette symphonie destructrice qu'ont tenté de mettre en place le Prince et le poète. Enfin, elle est également, dans un second élan, dans ce « notre » incertain, qui peut impliquer le conteur et son lectorat, le Prince et le *Génie* fusionné, ou les deux à la fois, elle est l'instant de l'éclosion d'un « désir » nouveau, d'un inassouvissement qui demandera à être satisfait. Ainsi dans cette fin qui se devrait absolue – la mort –, se créer une ouverture.

En effet, le poème n'a cessé de démontrer qu'aucun anéantissement, aucun épilogue n'était irrémédiable, laissant imaginer que le Prince, une nouvelle fois, n'est pas mort. C'est respecter en cela l'essence même des *Mille et une nuits* et revenir à la nouvelle de Gauthier : existe-t-il réellement une fin aux *Mille et une nuits* ? Et n'est-ce pas là toute la force du récit, son éternel recommencement narratif et littéraire ? Il n'est pas réellement nécessaire de répondre à ces questions car elles ne sont que les marques résiduelles d'un procédé critique qui occulterait le cœur même des *Mille et une nuits*, c'est-à-dire le reflet d'une parole qui ne mourra qu'avec la fin de l'homme.

4 Une parole magique

Il est indubitable qu'il existe, chez Rimbaud, un grand intérêt pour une parole active, vive, dans sa forme oralisée, dont la *Saison* se veut le témoignage, écrit formé de guillemets qui ne se fermeront jamais. Le poème « Vagabonds » obéit à cette même logique d'une parole qui s'écrit comme une confession de l'instant, concomitante à l'action. Ainsi à la différence de « Conte », l'influence des *Mille et une nuits* s'y veut beaucoup plus subtile : le poème se lit de prime abord comme témoignage autobiographique des déambulations Rimbaldo-Verlainiennes. Mais se contenter de cet aspect reviendrait à faire l'impasse de sa clause, qui ne peut qu'éveiller l'intérêt d'un lecteur, même non critique, des *Mille et une nuits* : « moi pressé de trouver le lieu et la formule. » Un lieu, dont l'ouverture serait intimement liée à une formule, un lieu qui fait encore référence aujourd'hui, dont l'évocation est une expression courante : la grotte d'Ali Baba.

Or celui dont souhaite se défaire le poète, ce second vagabond, il ne cesse de le nommer son « frère » et rappelle en cela cette relation fraternelle mais non amicale d'Ali Baba et de Cassim. Le poète reconnaît qu'il est celui qui l'a conduit à cette déchéance et souhaiterait le rendre à son « état primitif » de « fils du soleil », couleur de l'or et de richesse. Il illustre en cela la situation qui fut celle

de Cassim¹⁶, jusqu'à ce que Ali Baba ne le mène, involontairement, à sa propre perte en lui dévoilant l'entrée de cette fameuse grotte. Pourtant si le poète admet être responsable de l'infortune de son frère, la chronologie initiale y est bousculée, puisqu'il n'a pas encore trouvé la grotte magique du récit premier : grotte recherchée – lisible dans ces « cavernes » visitées – qui représente la fin d'une misère et d'une errance jugées insupportables. C'est la nécessité d'un merveilleux crédible au milieu d'une existence dont l'amère réalité devient étouffante pour le poète. Mais c'est également cette magie de la parole, qui devient action et force.¹⁷ Elle n'est pas seulement à même de déplacer une roche mais se veut, de plus, l'instant d'un changement du destin. Dès lors elle s'illustre comme étant en « avant de l'action » (lettre 15 mai 1871) et ce même si elle est tributaire du lieu où elle s'énonce : le cadre devient nécessaire à la révélation de son pouvoir.

C'est peut-être en ce point que se fait la plus implicite des références de Rimbaud aux *Mille et une nuits*. Au-delà du poème c'est dans la forme de son discours, dans sa position en tant que poète à l'égard de son lectorat qu'il se fait le véritable disciple de ces contes. Et c'est également, guidé par cette pensée, que s'ouvre l'ultime étape de cette analyse, sans doute la plus délicate, la plus périlleuse, dans l'entreprise de rapprochement effectuée jusqu'à présent, car il s'agit de revenir aux *Illuminations* dans leur structure même, à savoir leur mécanisme poétique.

16 « Dans une ville de Perse, aux confins des États de Votre Majesté, dit Schéhérazade à Schahriar, il y avait deux frères, dont l'un se nommait Cassim et l'autre Ali Baba. Comme leur père ne leur avait laissé que peu de biens et qu'il les avait partagés également, il semble que leur fortune devait être égale : le hasard néanmoins en disposa autrement. Cassim épousa une femme qui, peu de temps après leur mariage, devint héritière d'une boutique bien garnie, d'un magasin rempli de bonnes marchandises, et de biens en fonds de terre, qui le mirent tout à coup à son aise, et le rendirent un des marchands les plus riches de la ville. Ali Baba, au contraire, qui avait épousé une femme aussi pauvre que lui, était logé fort pauvrement, et il n'avait d'autre industrie, pour gagner sa vie et de quoi s'entretenir, lui et ses enfants, que d'aller couper du bois dans une forêt voisine et de venir le vendre à la ville, chargé sur trois ânes qui faisaient toute sa possession. » (Galland 1949, t.3, p. 232.)

17 Et c'est cet oubli des paroles, de la formule qui perdra Cassim, unique clef de cette grotte : « Il en prend un nombre de sacs, autant qu'il en peut porter ; et, en venant à la porte pour la faire ouvrir, l'esprit rempli de toute autre idée que ce qui lui importait davantage, il se trouve qu'il oublie le mot nécessaire, et, au lieu de : Sésame, il dit : « Orge, ouvre-toi », et il est bien étonné de voir que la porte, loin de s'ouvrir, demeure fermée. Il nomme plusieurs autres noms de grains, autres que celui qu'il fallait, et la porte ne s'ouvre pas. » (Galland 1949, t.3, p. 239.)

5 Fragment sur Fragment

En effet c'est sous le signe de la difficile unité critique et sous l'égide de deux thèses, celles de Bouillane de Lacoste (1949) et d'André Guyaux (1981), que s'inscrivent les *Illuminations* dans le corpus rimbaldien. Le recueil, factice, s'établit comme des « fraguemants en prose », le terme et son orthographe son de Rimbaud dans sa lettre dite de *Laitou* (mai 1873). Une spécificité qui crée, par ailleurs, toute la complexité et la difficulté d'analyse dudit corpus. Comme le souligne Steve Murphy, il s'agit soit de respecter l'éclatement de l'œuvre en analysant chaque poème de façon indépendante soit de rechercher des thématiques communes, des liens même fragiles, qui uniraient, de manière superficielle, ou profonde, certains poèmes de ce recueil artificiel. En somme il est demandé au lecteur et au critique de revêtir le rôle de Schéhérazade c'est-à-dire de narrateur premier du texte, de relier organique à l'ensemble des poèmes mais surtout au cœur même de chaque poème, dans une logique de fragmentation interne. Car ce qui constitue l'essence des *Mille et une nuits*, ce qui fait, son charme et sa notoriété, ce qui fascina de nombreux auteurs, c'est cette fragmentation des récits, des narrateurs et parfois même de l'action : d'une discontinuité qui se joue tous les niveaux.

Dans les *Illuminations* cette discontinuité ne réside pas seulement dans l'aspect bref et concis des textes, liés partiellement à leur statut de recueil factice, mais également dans une discontinuité interne propre à chaque poème, cette impression de parcelles manquantes qui viennent surajouter à l'hermétisme. Ainsi, une nouvelle fois, dans les *Illuminations*, Rimbaud utilise ce que nous avons nommé dans notre thèse *la tactique du vide* avec quelques nuances qui contribue à cette spécificité du corpus. Dès lors, ce vide n'est pas visible dans la ponctuation ou dans de possibles phrases non achevées du narrateur, mais dans une réelle incompréhension, presque une confusion dans laquelle se trouve plongé le lecteur à l'achèvement de chaque poème. Il ne s'agit pas d'un vide visible, tangible, mais d'un vide intérieur, de textes qui s'amorcent et se désamorcent sans que le lecteur ne comprenne le mécanisme exact de leur fonctionnement. De là naît une relation trouble entre lecteur et auteur : le premier devant son malaise de lecture se voit dans l'obligation de reconnaître son incapacité à saisir toutes les nuances pour ne pas dire les secrets du texte ; le second imprime et insiste sur sa supériorité auctoriale absolue et intemporelle : « J'ai seul la clef de cette parade sauvage ». Cette incapacité, pour ne pas dire infériorité, est nécessaire et primordiale à toute analyse du recueil, puisqu'elle admet le manque du lecteur, non plus comme une défaillance, mais comme un élément structurel de ces poésies et de leur réception. N'est pas Schéhérazade qui veut. Ainsi, le fragment n'est plus une finalité, mais une

introduction aux textes. Et nous pensons que la lecture des *Mille et une nuits* a joué un rôle chez Rimbaud, dans cette conception de la figure du lecteur dans l'œuvre : il doit se laisser entraîner par cette dernière, admettre être dépassé pour en arriver à se remettre entièrement au narrateur et à se laisser bercer par l'auteur du texte.¹⁸

N'est-ce pas là, après tout, la volonté première du *Génie* de « Conte » ? Amener le Prince à son monde et lui faire abandonner son existence de destruction. Et n'est-ce pas également la motivation première de Schéhérazade ? Amener le roi à s'abandonner à son récit pour lui faire oublier tout désir meurtrier finalement autodestructeur et le faire revenir à la vie. Nous n'avons fait ici que dévoiler, que proposer une piste rimbaldienne qui n'a encore été que très peu analysée, et qui mériterait une plus grande attention analytique.

En conclusion Rimbaud se veut le dépositaire de son époque, enfant d'un tissage des influences si complexe et jamais réellement déclaré qu'il divise profondément le critique. Pourtant, et « Conte » ne laisse aucun doute à ce sujet, *Les Mille et une nuits* sont présentes dans le texte, et ce fut un choix volontaire de Rimbaud de les laisser transparaître et reconnaissables en s'accommodant de leur cadre principal dans le poème. Technique qu'il n'utilisa auparavant que pour l'Évangile. C'est dire la place de ce texte dans la pensée rimbaldienne. Peut-être serait-il donc temps, et nous n'avons fait aujourd'hui, nous le répétons, qu'en esquisser les contours, de dépasser la subtilité et de reconnaître l'influence. Celle d'une empreinte orientale qui permettrait de mieux comprendre ce corpus qui est souvent décrit par son herméneutique, écrits dans lesquels Rimbaud s'est laissé guider, parfois, inspirer par Schéhérazade mais l'a également complexifiée, modernisée et spiritualisée. Nous rappelant par là-même, sous le prisme de son regard, car Rimbaud est théoricien direct ou indirect de la littérature, qu'il est dans *Les Mille et une nuits* une réflexion qui dépasse les simples récits enchevêtrés d'une femme qui ne veut pas mourir, celui d'une littérature oralisée amoralisée où tout comme ces héros, seul le lecteur le plus rusé saura comprendre sa richesse en temps et en heure.

18 « Le sultan des Indes témoigna à la sultane Schéhérazade, son épouse, qu'il était très satisfait des prodiges qu'il venait d'entendre de la lampe merveilleuse, et que les contes qu'elle lui faisait chaque nuit lui faisaient beaucoup de plaisir. En effet, ils étaient divertissants et presque toujours assaisonnés d'une bonne morale. Il voyait bien que la sultane les faisait adroitement succéder les uns aux autres, et il n'était pas fâché qu'elle lui donnât occasion, par ce moyen, de tenir en suspens, à son égard, l'exécution du serment qu'il avait fait si solennellement de ne garder une femme qu'une nuit et de la faire mourir le lendemain. Il n'avait presque plus d'autre pensée que de voir s'il ne viendrait point à bout de lui en taire tarir le fond. » (Galland 1949, t.3, p. 165.)

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Callida Junctura

Richard F. Burton's Transtextual 1001 Nights and the Source of Its Poetry

Michael James Lundell

Evidence from Richard F. Burton's private library, held at The Huntington Library, strongly suggests that Burton rewrote several poems and stories from Edward William Lane's English translation of the *Arabian Nights Entertainments* (1838–1840) rather than translating them from an Arabic source. Burton then published this rewritten material as his own translation in his well-known version of the story collection *Alf Layla wa Layla* (1885). Six additional volumes called the *Supplemental Nights* were published from 1886–1888. Sales of these books to a 1000-member subscriber list made Burton and his wife Isabel extremely wealthy for the first time in their life. The story collection has also often been pointed to as evidence of the Victorian explorer's prodigious qualities as a translator and Arabist. This new discovery, however, is important for many reasons. Burton has long been admired as a master of languages, in particular Arabic, and his *Nights* is often generally considered to be one of the most complete translations of the story collection. In addition, Burton spends quite a bit of time in his volumes criticizing Lane for his lack of Arabic language knowledge and inferior skill as a translator. It is also known that Burton made liberal use of John Payne's translation (1882–1884) for most of his prose. It is unclear if most of Burton's *Nights*, therefore, has any Arabic source that he translated from for at least the first ten volumes if not the entire collection. One of the main conclusions to draw from this revelation is that Burton's *Nights* should no longer be studied as or labelled a 'translation' as his work so commonly is. As an alternative, this chapter argues for the incorporation of Gérard Genette's transtextual matrix as a way to clarify and analyze texts like Burton's, specifically, and the set of texts that constitute the *Nights* more generally.

Scholarship on the relationship between the *Nights* of Burton and John Payne has concluded that the two texts share an uncomfortable resemblance – in terms of both their contents and language – to one another. Payne's version was printed first, and he shared sample early drafts with Burton. Burton's first volumes were printed a short time after Payne's (three years) and follow Payne's contents (and prose in many places) to a large extent. Because of these

reasons, Burton has been criticized for plagiarizing Payne. Studies by Paul Nurse and Robert Irwin in particular have documented this controversy in great detail. Burton bibliographer Norman Mosley Penzer also adds that Payne may have later relied on Burton for additional volumes of his own text, writing 'It is impossible to say how much the one copied from the other'.¹ There is a general agreement among scholars that Burton did make extensive use of Payne for all of the ten volumes of his first edition and for the first two volumes of *Supplemental Nights* (1886–1888). Burton's additional footnotes and endnotes on sexual practices, employment of curious archaic language, an added essay on possible geographic causes of sexual persuasion, and the popularity of his version has however served to overshadow the legacy of Payne's contributions to the history of the *Nights*. Mia Gerhardt rightfully points to the persona of Burton as being more important to the reception and continued legacy of his work rather than the work itself: 'Burton's whole life and career somehow forbid us to tax him with downright dishonesty' (85).² Yet she also labels and studies his text as a translation, calling it 'solid and reliable' (89).³ She also suggests that Burton may have not consciously known he was plagiarizing Payne and suggests that he also translated from the Calcutta II Arabic manuscript of the *Nights*. This confused overview of Burton's work is not uncommon. Most all scholarship on Burton's *Nights* is similarly uncertain about what exactly Burton was doing in his translated works, yet this confusion clearly therefore calls for a reinterpretation or redefinition of what exactly a translation is.

One element of Burton's *Nights* that has consistently eluded researchers is the source of its non-Payne related versions of some stories and for almost all of the poetry he included in his first ten volumes. Burton's first ten volumes basically follow the narrative contents of Payne with a few additions. The stories in Burton's *Nights* that are common between Payne and Lane, however, contain poetry that seems to be rewritten from Lane. It has long been assumed that Burton translated this poetry, and the additional non-Payne stories, exclusively from Arabic sources. Biographer Fawn M. Brodie writes that Burton's use of Payne was 'limited entirely to the prose. There were 10,000 lines of poetry in the *Nights*, and everyone agrees that Burton's version of it is wholly his own' (342).⁴ Robert Irwin covers Burton's reliance on Payne but adds that 'this is not to say that Burton was incapable of making an independent translation of

1 Penzer 2004, p. 317.

2 Gerhardt 1963, p. 85.

3 Ibid., p. 89.

4 Brodie 1967, p. 342.

the Arabic, for his translations of the poetry in the stories do not seem to depend on Payne to any significant extent. Moreover, Burton, unlike Payne, did attempt to echo the rhymed prose of *saj'* (30).⁵ Paul Nurse adds that 'there is general agreement that his rendering of the poetry is, whatever its literary worth, entirely his own translation' (188).⁶ No one has ever suggested a source for this poetry and scholars have studied it as a translation from an Arabic text.

Evidence for the contention that Burton did not 'translate' this poetry comes from Burton's personal copy of Lane's *The Thousand and one Nights, Commonly Called in England, The Arabian Nights' Entertainments* (The Huntington Library, Rare Books call number 634496, in three volumes – this particular set of volumes is hereafter abbreviated as *BL* ('Burton's Lane') – *BL1*, *BL2*, *BL3*). Burton's well-known handwriting is particularly extensive in the margins of these volumes and especially surrounding Lane's poetry. A comparison of this marginalia with Burton's published *Nights* (hereafter '*BN*' plus volume number if necessary for clarity) reveals that what he handwrote in *BL* is largely the same as what later appeared in print in *BN*. Burton also made extensive editorial notations and amendments throughout *BL* that conform to what is later published in print. In *BL1*, Burton's handwriting is in many places – in the front and back covers of the book and often throughout the contents as well, especially around Lane's poetry. In *BL2* and *BL3*, however, Burton's handwriting and editorial marks are almost exclusively around Lane's poems. In *BL2*, there are 145 pages of Lane's poetry that contain Burton's rewriting and editing and yet there are less than ten pages apart from the poems that Burton wrote on. In *BL3*, 88 pages with printed poetry contain Burton's extensive, handwritten notes. Most all of the other pages, particularly in *BL2* and *BL3*, are not handwritten on at all. The writing contains the poems that are later published as Burton's in *BN* as well as editorial markings that conform to what Burton later published.

Examples of Burton's rewriting can be found in all three volumes and as early as the frame tale in *BL1*. The brothers Shahriyar and Shah-Zeman are forced to have sex with a genie's captive maiden (she threatens to wake the genie if they fail to comply) and a poem follows warning of the dangers of trusting females. The words 'lurks within' have been crossed out and something unreadable appears above them. What is written around the poem in the book is important, however. In figure 9.1 is a poem from this page written in Burton's handwriting. Burton's poem in *BN1* is printed as 'Rely not on women; / Trust not to their hearts, / Whose joys and whose sorrows / Are hung to their parts!' (*BN1*:13) – the same poem handwritten in figure 9.1 found in *BL1*.

⁵ Irwin 2004, p. 30.

⁶ Nurse 2010, p. 188.

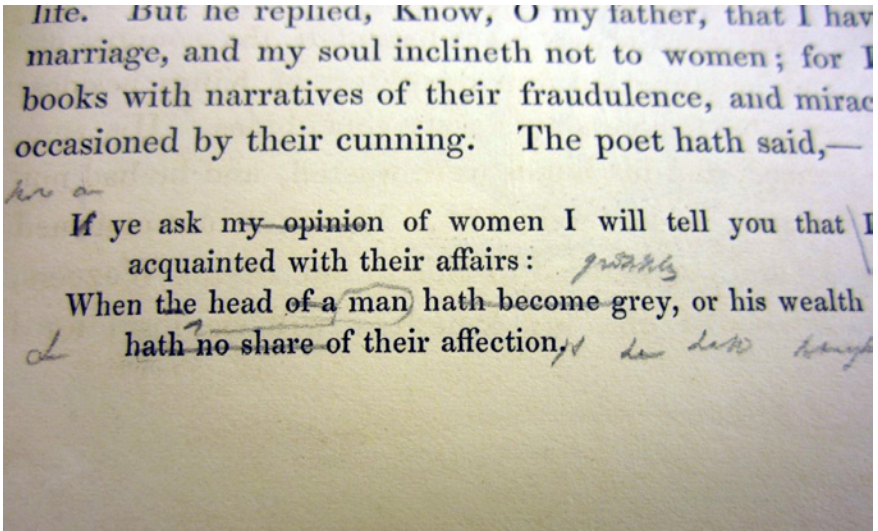


FIGURE 9.2 Burton's Lane 2-79

versed a doctor rare! / When men's head grizzles and his money dwindles, * In their affections he hath naught for share'. Lane's version is very similar: 'If ye ask my opinion of women, I will tell you that I am a physician acquainted with their affairs: / When the head of a man hath become gray, or his wealth is diminished, he hath no share of their affection' (*LN2*:241). Both poems share a similar point of view, mention the doctor and a man's hair growing gray.

In *BL2*-79 (figure 9.2) one can clearly make out Burton's handwriting, rewriting, and editing of the poem. The word 'man' is circled and an editorial mark moving it to precede the word 'head' is made with 'the' and 'of a' crossed out. These marks would conform to Burton's published phrase 'When men's head'. Lane's 'Hath become grey' is crossed out in pencil and the word 'grizzles' (the same word printed in the poem in *BN3* after 'When men's head') is handwritten above the line. 'Hath no share of' is crossed out and an 's' is placed after 'affection' followed by the handwriting 'he hath naught for share'. In Payne the poem reads – 'If ye know of women and question of their case, Lo, I am versed in their fashions and skilled above all else above. / When a man's head grows grizzled or for the nonce his wealth Fails from his hand, then, trust me, he hath no part in their love' (*PN3*:101). Burton seems to have borrowed the word 'grizzle' from Payne – though not much else, handwriting it on top of the line in Lane's *BL* and printed the resulting transfiguration of both in *BN* as his own.

Burton likely did not only rewrite Lane's poetry but seems to have also relied on some of Lane's stories as well. These include the 'The Seventh Voyage of

Es-Sindibad of the Sea' (Lane's Title), which is extensively annotated in Burton's handwriting throughout the margins of *BL* – the only story in the *BL* Es-Sindibad cycle with any significant marginal handwriting (see *BL*3:~121). Burton adds the additional story to his Sindbad cycle, declaring it to be 'A Translation ... according to the version of the Calcutta Edition' (*BN*6:78). However, it follows very closely to Lane's version of the tale and even a cursory examination of both printed versions illuminates their remarkable similarities. In the first few pages alone, a side-by-side comparison shows that both Burton and Lane share an extensive amount of similar language and story structure. This includes the words and phrases 'When I relinquished voyaging, and the affairs of commerce' (*LN*3:421) vs. 'when I left voyaging and commercing' (*BN*6:78); 'What hath happened to me sufficeth me' (*LN*3:421) vs. 'Sufficeth me that hath befallen me' (*BN*6:78); 'Wilt thou do it?' (*LN*3:422) vs. 'wilt thou do it?' (*BN*6:78); and most all of the prose in general in the entire episode:

'And when he saw me, he said, A friendly welcome to thee, O Sindibad! By Allah the Great, we have longed to see thee, and praise be to God who hath shewn us thy face a second time!—Then he took me by the hand, and seated me by his side, welcoming me, and treating me with familiar kindness, and he rejoiced greatly' (*LN*3:423) vs.:

'When he saw me, he said, 'Well come, O Sindbad! By Allah Omnipotent we were longing to see thee, and glory be to God who hath again shown us thy face!' Then taking me by the hand he made me sit by his side, rejoicing' (*BN*6:79).

The narrative contents and other similarities continue throughout both printed versions. Again, this version of the story is not found in Payne and all of Burton's other tales from Sindbad very closely follow Payne.

Another story Burton seems to have rewritten from Lane is 'The Tale of the Husband and the Parrot' (*BN*7:52, *BL*7:89, *LN*7:125) taken from the cycle 'The Tale of the Wazir and the Sage Duban' (*BN*7:45, *PN*7:37, *LN*7:119). This story is heavily annotated in red ink in Burton's handwriting in *BL*7 and does not exist in Payne in his 'Sage Duban' cycle. Payne's version of 'Parrot' is contained in his Volume Five (*PN*5:265) in a collection of stories under the subheading 'The Malice of Women' (*PN*5:260). In *PN* the king's Vizier tells him the story of 'King Sindbad and His Falcon' (*PN*7:41) followed directly by 'The King's Son and the Ogress' (*PN*7:43). Burton inserts Lane's 'Parrot' in the following order: 'King Sindibad and his Falcon' (*BN*7:50), 'The Tale of the Husband and the Parrot' (*BN*7:52) and then 'The Tale of the Prince and the Ogress' (*BN*7:54).

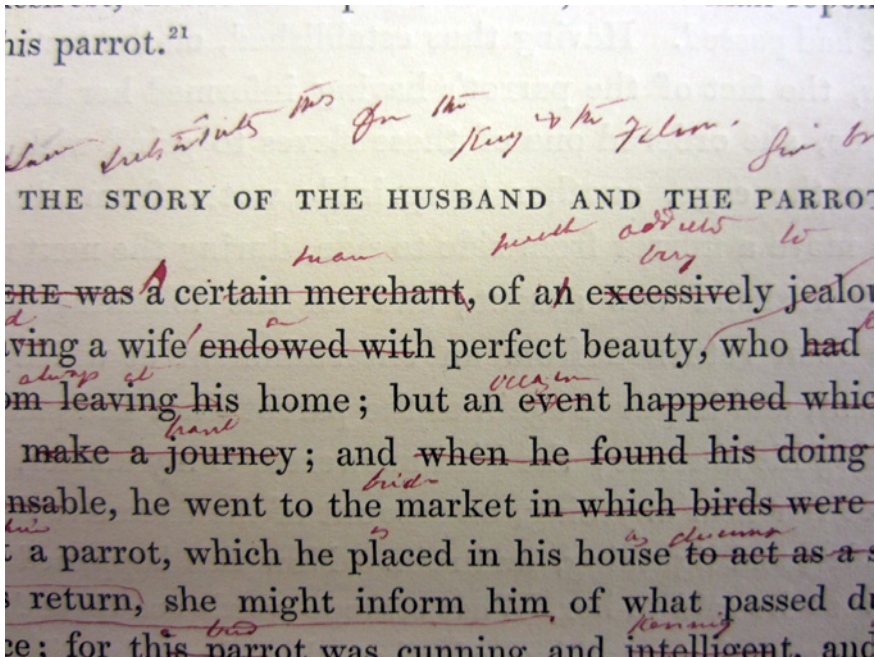


FIGURE 9.3 Burton's Lane 1-4

On page 89 (9.3) of *BL1* you can clearly see Burton's editing of Lane. He crosses out the words 'There was', capitalizes 'A', then crosses out part of the word 'certain' and the entirety of 'merchant' inserting the word 'man' (*BL1*:89) instead. This opening appears in Burton's printed version as 'A certain man and a merchant to boot' (*BN1*:52).

These examples are representative evidence of the extraordinary amount of editing and rewriting Burton has done throughout the margins of his copy of Lane's *Nights*. Any further examination of these volumes at The Huntington Library will clearly reveal that they are largely what is later published in *BN*. Their editorial amendments strongly suggest that Burton was not merely writing a translation of the poetry from another source into his copy of Lane, but rather that he simply rewrote Lane.

The implications of this discovery are numerous. Burton was seen, during his lifetime and still to this day, as a cultural authority of extraordinary capabilities. He has been lauded as a linguistic prodigy who knew twenty-nine languages and an anthropological scholar committed to providing genuine, graphic, and truthful information from regions of the world that many knew

little about. In their obituary of Burton, The Royal Geographical Society of England wrote that the explorer was ‘unsurpassed in his knowledge of Arabic literature and traditions’ (762). Additionally, in their obituary, the *Journal of the American Geographical Society of New York* expressed a sentiment many shared about Burton and his *Nights*: ‘Burton had extraordinary qualifications for the work of the translator. He possessed the very idiom and the mode of thought, as well as the words, of the foreign peoples he had studied.’⁷ The championing of Burton and his *Nights* has had much to do with the idea of his exceptional capacities in foreign languages and as a translator.

Charges against the legitimacy of Burton’s translation, in terms of how much of Payne’s *Nights* Burton liberally borrowed from, were made and well documented even during Burton’s lifetime. For whatever reason, however – perhaps Burton’s extraordinary persona and the popularity of his *Nights* – these accusations have always remained overshadowed by his infamous text. Burton even subtly admits, throughout his *Nights*, of his reliance not only on Payne but on Lane and others as well. In his introduction he writes that ‘I hasten to confess that ample use has been made of the three [Lane, Scott, and Payne] versions above noted, the whole being blended by a *callidajunctura* [‘skillful arrangement’] into a homogeneous mass’ (*BNr*:xii). Indeed, Burton’s version of the *Nights* seems to be more of a rewritten collection with a commentary than a translation. His *Nights*, however, remains one of the most popularly studied versions (as a translation) of the story collection. Even with documented evidence of plagiarism, Burton remains one of the most studied Victorian-era writers whose influence on the reception of the *Nights* forever changed the story collection’s identity.

The revelation that Burton rewrote Lane would have been incredibly appalling to Lane’s nephew Stanley Lane-Poole (1854–1931), a Professor and Orientalist and contemporary of Burton’s. Lane-Poole was especially critical of Burton: writing often about Burton’s unnecessary obscenities, his reliance on Payne, and his over-the-top self-aggrandizement. Lane-Poole also was critical of Burton’s dismissive comments about Edward W. Lane’s *Nights*. Burton and Lane-Poole often publicly debated each other in letters to journals such as the *Athenaeum*. Burton collected and commented on many of these in the end matter of Volume 6 of his *Supplemental Nights* (~428).

An often-quoted, anonymously authored 1886 article in the *Edinburgh Review*, also mentioned in Burton’s appendix, is especially acerbic. In an interview published by Thomas Wright, John Payne stated that the author of this

⁷ *Journal of the American Geographical Society of New York* 1890, p. 622.

article 'was Stanley Poole' and was 'no friend'.⁸ Given the article's unilateral and highly emotional attacks on Burton, and to a lesser extent on Payne, and its exaltation of Lane's *Nights* (something Stanley Lane-Poole was, at the time, reissuing, publishing and editing) it seems reasonable to conclude that it is written by Lane-Poole. It calls Burton's *Nights* 'a jumble of the vulgarest slang of all nations', 'an appalling collection of degrading customs and statistics of vice',⁹ a 'disgrace and a shame to printed literature',¹⁰ and 'an ocean of filth' meant for the 'sewers'.¹¹ Whether Lane-Poole's critiques were meant to be taken as a serious literary evaluation, or if they were of a personally defensive position or whether they were a marketing tool in order to sell his own edited versions of his uncle's books seems secondary to the fact that this author found Burton's text completely reprehensible and was trying to redirect readers away from its popularity. Discovering that Burton rewrote portions of Lane's *Nights* would have been an extraordinarily shocking revelation to Lane-Poole.

Burton also spent a great deal of time writing disparagingly about the lack of Arabic knowledge his translator predecessors had, even though it seems that his own language skills may have not been used much in his own *Nights*. He writes that Lane 'had a small store of Arabic' (*BN*:xi) and 'was profoundly ignorant of Egypt as a whole' (*BSN*6:339), going so far as to 'doubt if he could have understood the simplest expression in baby language' (*BSN*6:339). Burton also disparages Torrens and his translation: 'nor did his familiarity with Arabic, or rather with Egyptian, suffice him for the task' (*BSN*6:328), suggesting that 'the plucky author knew little of Arabic, and least of what is most wanted, the dialect of Egypt and Syria' (*BN*:x-xi).

Charges against Burton's lack of knowledge of Arabic, however, have also been documented. Like Burton's plagiarism of Payne, though, these charges have gone largely unnoticed in any meaningful way. Recent scholarship by Jon R. Godsall states that the explorer, despite claims otherwise by Burton and all of his biographers, 'failed his Arabic examination' given by the British Government and 'lied about the number' of other language exams he did pass.¹² Additionally, responding to accusations by Lane-Poole that Burton did not really know Arabic, Burton wrote 'Let me at once plead guilty to the charge' adding that 'I know none who does know or can thoroughly know' (*BSN*6:329) it because, he elaborates, it is such a complex language with a variety of forms across cultures and countries. Also, according to Wright's biography of John

8 Edinburgh Review 1886, p. 148.

9 Ibid., p. 183.

10 Ibid., p. 183.

11 Ibid., pp. 184-5.

12 Godsall 1993, p. 349.

Payne, Burton wrote a letter to Payne confessing ‘Of course I don’t know Arabic! But who does?’.¹³ In his translation of *The Quatrains of Omar Kheyyam*, Payne also mentions that ‘Capt. Burton’s knowledge of literary Arabic... [was] much inferior to my own’, he had ‘no sufficient acquaintance with *literary* Arabic’ (lix) and that he ‘borrowed whole pages of difficult passages’ from Payne’s *Nights*.¹⁴ The conflict over exactly how much Arabic any of these authors knew will certainly never be resolved. Burton knew enough to live disguised as a doctor in Cairo and as a pilgrim to Mecca and Medina (although he was disguised then as an Indian Afghan). However, it seems that he was not fluent or near fluent in Arabic and he did not really rely on any Arabic text for the majority of the composition of his own version of *The 1001 Nights*. These revelations offer a problematic revisionist history of the author who has long been admired as a linguist and expert in Arabic.

It is clear from studying the composition of Burton’s *Nights*, and the additional revelations of this chapter, that his text definitely is not a ‘translation’ as that process is traditionally understood. Yet the text is consistently labelled and studied as a translation and even featured in *The Translation Studies Reader*, an important text in translation studies. It is also probable to suggest that calling any of *The 1001 Nights* and its variants ‘translations’ is insufficient, given every version’s tenuous histories of forgery and extreme transfiguration. Antoine Galland, for example, the first European ‘translator’ of the *Nights*, notoriously included scores of stories of unknown origin including ‘Ali Baba’ and ‘Aladdin’ into his 12-volume *Les mille et une nuit* (1704–1717). Galland based his *Nights* on a slim fourteenth or fifteenth century three volume Arabic manuscript (known generally as the ‘G-manuscript’) that eventually constituted only about a quarter of what was eventually published. The variations of all of the *Nights* in general, even those of Lane and Payne, however, are also texts with no clear ‘originals’. Lane based his version on an Arabic *Nights* known as the *Būlāq* edition which was published in the early nineteenth century and based itself on a now-lost manuscript of unknown origins. Payne wrote his *Nights* using the nineteenth century Macnaghten edition, also known for its dubious origins within the British East India Company and additional materials not found elsewhere. Muhsin Mahdi, Dwight Reynolds, and Paul Nurse discuss at length the shaky ancestries of the *Nights* in great detail, but the fact remains that no such thing as an ‘authentic’ or a ‘complete’ set exists in any version. The *Nights* is a set of story collections with a variety of virtually untraceable and at times unintelligible interrelationships. This makes their

13 Wright 1919, p. 75.

14 Payne 1898, pp. lix–lxi.

reality an immense constellation of variants – at once particles of legitimacy just as much as they are forgeries. What Burton did then was further borrow, expand, rewrite, insert new stories into, comment upon, and reform the *Nights* as his own. He injected himself into an established textual tradition, claiming authority in a voice – one which is arguably without peer – and resituated the conversation about the *Nights* forever. Nearly every major English translation since Burton has extensively remarked on his presence; many go to great lengths to deliberately situate themselves away from him. Husain Haddawy, who translated the ‘G-manuscript’ as *Arabian Nights* (1990), calls Burton’s translations ‘even more artificial and more tortured’ than most other English versions.¹⁵ Yet contemporary *Nights* versions and scholarship still cannot escape Burton. *The Arabian Nights Encyclopedia*, one of the most detailed resources on the *Nights*, laments this fact. It writes, ‘Sadly enough, no adequate complete English-language rendering ... is presently available.’¹⁶ The *Encyclopedia* criticizes Burton’s version for ‘antiquated diction and a particular obsession with various kinds of sexual practices’ yet confesses ‘Burton’s version has been chosen as the main point of reference for the present encyclopedic survey’.¹⁷ While some of his prose and poetry has been criticized, Burton’s *Nights* has remained as one of the standard versions in the English language and certainly one of the most lauded and studied versions of the *Nights*. The text’s additional notes, Burton’s delight in providing scandalous renditions of a sexually explicit nature, and the very persona of Burton himself, overshadows and surprisingly continues to eclipse any negative reevaluation.

How then to go about understanding or studying such an important, influential text if it is not a translation? This chapter proposes to study Burton’s *Nights*, and perhaps the *Nights* in general, as a different entity than a translation. A ‘palimpsest’ is an old document that has been reused over time; its original writing is typically erased (though sometimes visible) and replaced with newer writing. It is also a fitting title for Gérard Genette’s study *Palimpsests: Literature in the Second Degree* – an expansion of definitions of transtextuality. By employing Genette’s matrix, illuminations of relationships between complex elements at work in the text are made clearer. This clarity is important because literary and cultural theorists wishing to distance themselves from outmoded forms of binary hegemony have often relied on a series of approaches that are, themselves, reliant on obscure or general terminology. Much of this scholarship insists on positions of multiplicity but often fails to

15 Haddawy 1990, p. xxviii.

16 Van Leuwen 2004, p. xxv.

17 Ibid.

illuminate specifics about those strands of complexity. In Postcolonial Victorian Studies in particular, readings by Thomas Metcalf, Mark Crinson, Dane Kennedy, J. Forbes Munro, Juliet Shields, Don Randall, Julie F. Codell, Robert Young, Dianne Sachko MacLeod, Reina Lewis, Michael S. Dodson, David S. Grylls, and Colette Colligan to name but a few have repositioned the focus of the field into this realm of complexity. Their effective and revelatory work on networks of architecture, business, family, art, gender, transnationalism, post-colonialism, and the difficulties of historicity have added immensely to the growing nuances of understanding the Victorian era. Michael S. Dodson's *Orientalism, Empire and National Culture: India 1770–1880*, for example, complicates the relationship between Victorian England and British Orientalism in India. Dodson does this by focussing largely on the vernacular responses to colonialism that Indian traditions developed and the ensuing struggle between authenticity, legitimacy, and the desire for power within the multiple Indian and English groups involved. Dane Kennedy's work, *The Highly Civilized Man: Richard Burton and the Victorian World* (2005), enters into the conversations surrounding complexity by highlighting the variety of complications at work in Burton's life as well.

While these contemporary movements have largely been a response to older models of study, they also generally tend to avoid clarifying the variety of complexities and relations at work in these 'networks', relying instead on being merely suggestive. Kennedy suggests, for example, that Burton was complicated because of his ability to resist categorization. And yet *The Highly Civilized Man*, while being certainly the most multifaceted biography of Burton to date, avoids clarity in the strands of these complexities besides perhaps saying they are composite elements. He suggests that Burton's multidirectional theses about culture, sexuality, and religion, despite being racist, can also be seen as a 'construction of a relativist conception of difference' on the other, due to Burton's complicated writings and variety of cultural sympathies.¹⁸ Kennedy's study of *how* the complex elements of Burton's character interact, however, relies in large part on general definitions of complication such as 'relativism'.

The resistance to clarification in these multifaceted studies is in large part due to the incredible complexity involved in their subjects and in their shifting modes of being understood. How can one clearly visualize the myriad intricate strands involved in the relationships between a colonized subject business owner (for example), his culturally (religiously, ethnically or other) diverse work staff, and the network of people involved in the system of British business and Empire that employs, taxes, and manages the colony? One can rely on

18 Kennedy 2005, p. 180.

positionality to resituate the framework of focus but that approach further obscures the situation under consideration. What, also, to do with a text like the *Nights*? It is an object of study, especially Burton's, constructed in a patchwork of idiosyncratic individuality, but one that also definitively relies on some notion of an 'original' *Nights* framework in order to exist. Sandra Naddaff's definition of the *Nights* as having 'an ability, indeed a willingness, to accommodate ultimately any tale between its ever-flexible borders',¹⁹ highlights the insufficiency of relying on general modes of illustrating complexity. If any story in the world can potentially be a part of the *Nights*, if any internationally related situation is a measure of the experience of postcolonialism, if Burton can be both a racist and a relativist, or if any event during the timeframe of Queen Victoria's reign, anywhere, can be relatable to Victorian Studies – in short if anything can become part of a 'network' of interdependence, what does the result look like? Rather than illuminating complexity, what occurs is a further obscurantist approach that, in its avoidance of binary structuralism, loses itself in a grid of ultimately blurred difficulties.

Richard Burton and his *Nights* are complex objects of study that can be studied multidirectionally and illuminate several differing, often opposite, characteristics. The *Nights* in general was, during Burton's life and earlier, a text that was read across nations in several different formats – it was a popular text that was well known. Burton engaged with its popularity. It was regarded (and still generally is) as a text with an original Arabic source that a variety of people had translated with varying degrees of success. In addition, Burton was a clear representative of Victorian Britain – a member of several ethnographic and anthropological societies that funded his explorations and works, a soldier in the English army, an outspoken proponent of colonialism, an Oxford student and a diplomat, and representative of the English government. Burton's *Nights* was well received and he became very rich from its printing. He received a knighthood, was a Captain in the British military, a fellow of the Royal Geographic Society, and received membership in the Orders of St Michael and St George. At the same time Burton was a complicated outsider figure in Victorian England in many respects. He was the son of an Irish born Anglo-Irish father and grew up for a long period in France and Italy. He was expelled from Oxford, he constantly and contentiously debated with leaders of the societies he was a part of, was deliberately moved to diplomatic posts in largely politically unimportant areas of the world like Fernando Po and Trieste, was removed from his post at Damascus for still unclear yet controversial reasons, and was notably accused of being a subversive – an Englishman who had 'gone

¹⁹ Naddaff 1991, p. 5.

native' and who related and was more empathetic to foreign cultures and religions than to his own. His *Nights*, while popular, has also been condemned ever since – for its overt emphasis on sexuality, its racist and misogynistic qualities and its creative yet bizarre approach to language. Burton and his *Nights* are ideal figures of study, therefore, for illuminating the network of Victorian complexities while doing so from decentred, outsider and transnational positionality. Genette's matrix allows for such a clarification while at the same time illuminating the possibilities for moving beyond binary models common to translation studies approaches.

Genette refers to his notion of the qualities that define a text as being instilled with necessary 'transtextual' relational qualities. You cannot study or even understand any text (or object of study, ultimately) without its relationships to other texts. This existence coalesces into 'any relationship uniting a text B (which I shall call the *hypertext*) to an earlier text A (I shall, of course, call it the *hypotext*), upon which it is grafted in a manner that is not that of commentary'.²⁰ What is one to do with the hypotext of the *Nights*, however, an earlier text that might not have even ever existed in any substantial preexisting form? The elaborated structure of Genette's transtextual vision allows for understanding such problematic complexities while at the same time it does not rely on generalized 'network' spaces where almost any element can be included. Nor does Genette insist on a binary understanding of translation or intertextuality – one where there is a clear source text and target text. Genette's approach is to embrace the complexities but also be able to define their smaller parts. These parts are bodies in motion, as well, that change depending on where and how you assess them. 'One must not view the five types of transtextuality as separate and absolute categories without any reciprocal contact or overlapping. On the contrary, their relationships to one another are numerous and often crucial'.²¹ And yet the concepts also illuminate specifics. One can easily conclude, for example, that Burton's quest to publish the final word on the *Nights* was one intensely defined by the illusion and mystique of a hypotext that, to Burton and many others, must exist. By compiling a patchwork of so many sources, Burton's mission was clearly the creation of a singular hypertext containing as much as possible of the disparate and lost pieces of the hypotext.

Palimpsests defines transtextuality as 'all that sets the text in a relationship, whether obvious or concealed, with other texts'.²² Genette employs five cate-

20 Genette 1997, p. 5.

21 Ibid.

22 Ibid., p. 98.

gories of transtextuality (intertextuality, metatextuality, paratextuality, architextuality, and hypertextuality). He revises the notion of intertextuality (from Kristeva and others) to mean ‘the actual presence of one text within another’²³ instead of any generalized concept of one text within another (abstractly, as an inspiration or directly). Certainly, Burton’s deliberate pastiche of previous *Nights* into one catchall edition has intertextual identity threaded throughout its pages. He not only quotes from his sources, but he rewrites them, reimagining them as integral but insufficiently realized pieces of a greater whole. His intertextual incorporation is therefore laudatory at times and desperate at others, but the threads form Burton’s superior (in his stated opinion) master text. His deliberate inclusion of writing copied and rewritten from Payne and Lane is also clearly more effectively understood as intertextuality rather than translation. Intertextuality also resolves any questions arising from notions of plagiarism either by Burton or Payne or their possible collaboration. From Burton’s perspective his intertextual relationship is one of superior to inferior. It is one where Burton’s *Nights* is the better, more realized version of Lane, Payne or any other English translator, while at the same time clearly highlighting its intertextual debt to those previous editions.

Metatextuality is ‘when a text takes up a relation of “commentary” to another text’.²⁴ It unites a given text to another, of which it speaks without necessarily citing it (without summoning it), in fact sometimes even without naming it.²⁵ There are obvious metatextual strands throughout Burton – his ‘commentary’ continues to be one of dominance over previous failed versions of the *Nights*. Burton also operates metatextually by not only referring to and commenting on the other texts but actually also by literally incorporating them intertextually and having a substantial transhistorical/transtemporal conversation between himself and his interpretation of the previous texts. This interpretation is an important metatextual conversation of course because Burton is attempting to resituate our notions, readings, and understandings of these texts into his own authoritative voice. Add to this voice the character of the Victorian Empire, of which Burton was an official part, and it compellingly suggests a call for a richly detailed postcolonial reading of his *Nights*. The metatextuality of his insistence that England learn to appreciate Islam (particularly via his *Nights*) because the UK ‘is the greatest Mohammedan empire in the world’ (*BNr:xx*), for instance, is an example of his own unique transtextual pairing of international political interests with literature. If only those with more author-

23 Ibid., pp. 1–2.

24 Ibid., p. 99.

25 Ibid., p. 4.

ity than Burton would listen to what Burton's *Nights* had to inform them, England would be a much stronger colonial power.

Architextuality is 'the reader's expectations, and thus their reception of a work'²⁶ – a significant aspect to study in relation in particular to Burton. The history of his authority as an explorer and expert on the Arabic speaking and Muslim world, as well as his controversial nature, writings, and other information about him all combined in a large part to affect the architextuality of his work. The architextuality of Burton's *Nights* was unquestionably much different than Payne's. Payne had some minor success as a writer but lived without the extraordinarily popular background of Burton. Subscribers of Payne expected a 'complete' and academically thorough edition of the stories in the *Nights*. Burton's subscriber list expected a sexually explicit one full of expert overviews (from an actual explorer of the world) of Muslim and Arabic cultures that was even more complete. Architextuality is also bound to 'genre' and 'modes of discourse'.²⁷ These are elements that Burton went to great lengths to construct in his introductions, notes and in the narrative contents as well. His *Nights* was not only a part of the genre of English Orientalism, of the modes of the history of *The 1001 Nights*, but was the final word on the subject in Burton's often stated boastful opinions. He sought 'to show what "The Thousand Nights and a Night" really is' (*BN*:xii) apart from their insufficient hypotexts of the past.

My article, 'Dislocating Scheherazade: *The 1001 Nights*, Paratextuality, and the Illusion of a Static Text', shows at greater length how the paratext, Genette's fourth quality of transtextuality, has also aided – in many ways more than the narrative contents itself – to construct Burton's and Lane's *Nights* in important and lasting ways. Paratexts are any accompanying elements to the text that are a part of it but not part of its narrative contents. These include things like the title, reputation of the author, endnotes and footnotes, introductions and essays, and other related elements. Lane and Burton were engaged in a paratextual redefinition of the *Nights* from its eighteenth century incarnation. They created a *Nights* of authenticity rather than one of fantasy as characterized by Galland's *Nights* and its anonymously pirated English edition. The first paragraph of Lane's *Nights*, for instance, has an explanatory ten-page endnote associated with it, explaining what Islam is. These paratextual amendments were a necessary part of understanding the 'true' nature of the *Nights* (according to its Victorian translators). The work was one steeped not in fantasy and children's literature but in reality, history, and culture. Burton paratextually

26 Ibid., p. 5.

27 Ibid., p. 98.

redefines Lane's paratexts, taking the former Orientalist to task for not fully understanding Islam or Arabic enough to be such a self-proclaimed expert. Burton's footnotes and endnotes are remarkable and often humorous additions to the text. He wonders about whether apes and humans can mate, for example, because of the 'City of Apes' in Sindbad's fifth voyage. Musing on ape-human attractions he proclaims: 'It is certain that the anthropoid ape is lustfully excited by the presence of women and I have related how at Cairo (1856) a huge cynocephalus would have raped a girl had it not been bayoneted' (*BN6*: 54). Given the extensive amount of focus on them by critics and scholars, the paratexts of both Burton and Lane, it can be said, continue to outshine even the narrative contents of their *Nights*. Rather than being much of a translation at all, these texts and their influences are clearly primarily 'presentations' instead.

Lastly, though not there is any clear order to the five elements, there is the *hypertext* – 'any text derived from a previous text either through simple transformation, which I shall simply call from now on *transformation*, or through indirect transformation, which I shall label *imitation*'.²⁸ Burton certainly falls into both categories – transforming the *Nights* into his own and indirectly imitating traditional characteristics that were embedded into the *Nights* since its first European translator Antoine Galland began them. Burton's hypertext deliberately exists only as a relationship with the *Nights*, literally to Lane's and Payne's yet also figuratively with a '*Nights-genre*' (if one could be imagined) in general. Its components, however, and the way in which they were crafted interact and form their own clearly unique identity.

While only these five elements have been only cursorily considered here, this chapter has proposed that they open up a wealth of opportunities for the future development of understanding the presence of a literary text, particularly one hitherto seen as a translation. They also illuminate the inner workings of complex networks in a specifically clearly defined and approachable manner. When the text is entangled with notions of Empire, as both Lane's and Burton's clearly are, a political element to transtextuality is further illuminated. Certainly, elements of Burton's forged work, his insistence upon authority over the colonized, and his royally mandated clout would problematize a post-colonial reading of the late Victorian era – one which saw the end of the Second English Empire in most of its overseas colonies. Genette's hypertextual elements can be employed in multiple ways to clarify networks, to study them from a unidirectional position without insisting on an obscured or generalized viewpoint. And they can be employed into other types of related texts as well.

28 Ibid., p. 7.

Consider the *Edinburgh Review* article written by Lane-Poole, for instance. It was published as an anonymous ‘review’ of past versions of the *Nights* and an overview of the story collection’s textual history. It has also been used in several books about Burton as evidence for just how much Victorian England, in general, disliked Burton’s *Nights*. A quote from the article designating versions of the *Nights* their proper historical placements – ‘Galland for the nursery, Lane for the library, Payne for the study and Burton for the sewers’ – has been often used as evidence of a general widespread dislike of Burton’s *Nights*. This particular citation has been employed over time by Thomas Wright,²⁹ Wendy Doniger,³⁰ Andrew C. Long,³¹ Robert Irwin,³² Daniel Martin Varisco,³³ Dane Kennedy,³⁴ Marina Warner³⁵ and countless others all in order to argue that the general public, whose voice is evidently heard via the *Edinburgh Review*, held a particular disdain toward Burton’s treatment of the *Nights*. The architextuality (its relation to its reception) of the *Edinburgh Review* as authority coupled with the anonymously printed article made it one of the most often used articles showing negative reactions to Burton. It became a ‘reliable’ source for scholars to point to as evidence, even though Lane-Poole clearly had personal reasons behind his excessive criticisms. It is a paratext belonging to the composite form of the constellation that is the *Nights*. A presentation of the story collection disguised as a review of different translations of the *Nights* that sought to resituate expectations about the text away from Burton and back toward Lane. It is also a metatextual ‘commentary’ on the text by a supposed authority on literature (the *Review*), engaged in a hypertextual dependency on the *Nights*-genre. Its relationship with the *Nights*, both in a general sense and specifically with Lane and Burton, means that the article is an illuminating example of transtextuality and its power to elucidate complex forms of – in this particular case – personally and politically motivated rhetoric disguised as a book review.

Despite the claims of this chapter regarding Burton’s rewriting of Lane, the amount of evidence existing in the pages of Burton’s copy of Lane overshadows any possible alternative. Did Burton translate the poetry from an Arabic version of the *Nights* and then rewrite this translation on top of every poem in his copy of Lane? Such a detailed rewriting and inclusion of extensive editorial markings *after* translating from the Arabic, seems extremely improbable.

29 Wright 1906, p. 128.

30 Doniger 2014, p. 401.

31 Long 2014, p. 39.

32 Irwin 2004, p. 36.

33 Varisco 2012, p. 163.

34 Kennedy 2005, p. 227.

35 Warner 2012, p. 187.

Burton's Arabic versions of the *Nights* at the Huntington contain little to no handwriting and their spines are also not as broken as Burton's copy of Lane's *Nights*. The editorial markings, however, that conform to the later printed editions, seem to very strongly suggest a copying of Lane.

Perhaps then Burton did borrow liberally from Payne and Lane, although rewriting their prose and poetry to fit his own *Nights*-vision. Perhaps he even allowed his reputation as Orientalist authority – the man who was allegedly an expert in twenty-nine languages – to carry him through any questions as to the legitimacy of his sources. Yet Burton never clearly claimed in his texts that he was *translating* or *borrowing* from any one source. He cited Lane, Payne, and Torrens as his inspirational models and added so many elements to his version that to call it an illegitimate translation, forgery, or plagiarism and to dismiss it is too simplistic a response for this extraordinary and admittedly highly problematic work. Burton's paratextual additions with his footnotes (which sometimes ran to several pages) about sexuality, his introduction, his 'Terminal Essay' on geographic causes of sexual behaviors, his exaggerated archaic prose, and his delight at everything he was doing can be seen on every page of his text and are, perhaps, *the* reason his *Nights* was popular to begin with and why they remain so often discussed. His *Nights* is, therefore, an important trans-textual composition of hypertextual relationships inextricably bound up with the movements of empire, the history of literature, copyright issues, English and French Orientalism, and even with the coming demise of overseas English colonialism – something Burton points to and warns of often in his text. It is an edition that certainly deserves a more severely critical reevaluation and one that cannot be approached as a 'translation', but also one that, due to its particular influences, deserves a more nuanced study. Burton's is an idiosyncratic text that, whatever its literary worth, and even with its highly problematic history, is a distinct object of study that has had significant influences over time. By employing Genette's structuralist semiotics it becomes more possible to study these systems of complexities in order to more ably define, clarify, and critique these types of significant influences.

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Sacred and Profane Love in the *Arabian Nights*

Nūr al-Dīn ibn Bakkār vs. Nūr al-Dīn ibn Ḥāqān

William Granara

This chapter aims to establish a homology (التماثل) between a pair of stories in the *Arabian Nights* and the classical love poem, or *ġazal* (غزل), which came to prominence in the early eighth century. My goal is to show that the two versions of a strikingly similar story may be read as either conscious reworkings or unconscious reflections of two varieties of the *ġazal*, which have become commonly known in Arabic as the sacred (*al-‘uḍrī*) and the profane (*al-ibāḥī*), and the ways in which the storyteller draws his characters and constructs his plot.

I cite Robert Irwin’s metaphor of the *Arabian Nights* collections as an ‘ocean of stories ... boundless, deep and ceaselessly in motion replete with organisms that meet and intersect in natural but unpredictable ways,’¹ as a guide to justify my homology, since I maintain here that many constituent parts of the art of the *Arabian Nights* storytelling, i.e. its characters, plot, setting, themes, values, and morals, rest upon a strong intertextuality with Arabic literature, prose and poetry, both sacred and profane.

Much scholarly attention to the history and criticism of the *Arabian Nights* has centred upon the linguistic, cultural, literary, and geographical origins of individual tales or clusters and cycles of stories. Here I focus on the poetics of the *ġazal*, whose origins may be traced to the classical *qaṣīda*, or, more precisely, the amatory preface with the crying over abandoned ruins, the lament of a lost love, the pain of separation, and the frustrations with forbidden or unrequited love. When the love song segment broke away from the *qaṣīda* in the years following the Islamic conquests, it enjoyed widespread popularity among the gilded society of the Hijaz, and then onto Iraq and eventually other areas of the Islamic Empire, where the personal lives of the poets and their beloveds became as much an area of attraction as the poems themselves. This Hijazi *ġazal* not only preserved much of the Bedouin tropes of the amatory preface but embraced a freedom to celebrate the physical aspects of love. The fine lines between poetic creativity and narratives of real-world intrigues of poets and lovers crisscrossed, weaving a wider popular culture built on poetry,

¹ Irwin 1994, p. 65.

music, and romance. When the Islamic Empire shifted its power centres to Iraq and embraced its eventual contacts with Greek sciences, the *ğazal* expanded with Neoplatonist ideas about love, which came to compete with its Hijazi forbear. It is the distance the *ğazal* travelled and the ‘fictional or romantic narratives’² it accumulated along the way that constitute the starting point of my comparative chapter. When the caliph of the second story discussed below asks the lover to tell his story first in poetry and then in prose, he exemplifies Irwin’s ‘ceaseless motion’ in the form of transitions, from verse to prose, orality to literacy, from the desert to the city, from lore to knowledge, and from metaphor to literalness.

In reading the stories in the Mahdi/Haddawy collection of the Arabian Nights,³ I was immediately struck by the similarities between two tales: ‘The Story of Nūr al-Dīn ‘Alī ibn Bakkār and the Slave-Girl Šams al-Nahār’ (295–344), and ‘The Story of the Slave-Girl Anīs al-Ġalīs and Nūr al-Dīn ‘Alī ibn Ḥāqān’ (344–383). My first impression was that these were basically the same story with similar characters and plot. Also, both male characters shared the same name (*ism*) ‘Alī and the same nickname (*laqab*) Nūr al-Dīn, and they were only distinguished by their patronymic (*nasab*): Ibn Bakkār vs Ibn Ḥāqān. Moreover, both characters were paired in a love relationship with slave-girls. I wondered about the tales’ relationship and why they appeared back to back in the same collection. A naive question came to my mind: why would Scheherazade tell King Shahryar basically the same story one night after the other? Other questions followed: Were they in fact two different tales that made their way into this particular collection, or merely two different retellings, versions, or ‘doublets’ of the same story? Finally, a more informed question, I’d like to think, was whether these two stories were somehow linked or homologous to the classical Arabic *ğazal*.

I argue that these two stories do in fact interact textually – or at least, thematically – with the classical Arabic love poem. I do not evoke the *ğazal* in all its developmental stages, nor in its full poetic maturity or the range of its many variations and permutations. What interests me here is what Régis Blachère terms the ‘Hijazi manner’ of the love poem, and, secondly, its splitting into two distinctive *modes* or *conceptualizations*: those of what some classical Arabic critics called the urban (*‘udrī*) and desert (*badawī*) poetry. I argue that the two Nūr al-Dīn ‘romances’ are in fact best read, understood, and enjoyed, when viewed as analogous to this bifurcated *ğazal* that bloomed into literary

² Blachère, *Ghazal*: EI.

³ Haddawy 1992, pp. 295–383.

existence in the early Umayyad period, and which is perhaps most clearly illustrated in the critical manuals in the pairing of the two poets, 'Umar Ibn Abī Rabī'a and Ğamil Buṭayna, who have come to epitomize these two variations of the Umayyad love poem.

Both the tenth century Qudāma Ibn Ğa'far (d. c. 940) in his *Naqd al-šīr*⁴ and the eleventh century Ibn Rašīq (d. 1064) in his *Kitāb al-'Umda*⁵ bring their discussion of the *ġazal* into their chapters on the *nasib*. Ibn Rašīq makes a point of distinguishing the '*ġazal*' from other forms of love poetry, such as the '*nasib*' and '*tašbīb*' in saying that the *ġazal* assumes 'the companionship of women, and the crafting of what is appropriate to her nature (*fa huwa 'ilfu l-nisa' wa al-taḥalluq bima yuwafiqhunna*). [Ibn Rašīq:117]

Here we see the emergence of 'the woman as beloved' as the dominant theme in *ġazal* poetics, and once again the pairing of both Nūr al-Dīn characters with the slave girls as equal partners justifies my contention that the *Nights*' loves stories at least in this regard share affinities and themes with the classical love poem. My real intention, once again, is to show that they are conscious or unconscious reworkings of the conventions of the sacred and profane *ġazal*.

The two variations of the *ġazal* are built on the dominant theme of love and the pairing of the lover and the beloved. Both share features of what we would call courtly love and the elevation and celebration of women. Also, both types have in common short metres, a delicate and supple style, direct speech, an absence of heavy and unfamiliar vocabulary. Qudāma Ibn Ğa'far writes: 'the lyrics should be dainty and taste sweet, easy to take and not repulsive in any way; for if they are callous and unwholesome (i.e., hard to digest,) then this would be defective'.

A major difference between the two types of the Umayyad *ġazal*, which is at the heart of my reading of the two Nūr al-Dīn romances, is premised on what may be most readily characterized as *spiritual* or *physical* love. Although medieval and modern critics and literary historians use a variety of terms to distinguish the two schools, I will use '*uḍrī*' and '*ibāḥī*'. The appellation of '*uḍrī*' derives from the Uḍra tribe of the Arabian peninsula which boasted an impressive number of poets who composed this type of *ġazal*. This appellation is also curiously connected etymologically to the word "*aḍra*" meaning 'virgin/blameless', a connection – even if coincidental – that enhances the aesthetics and thematics of the poetry. Its counterpart, which was referred to above as the

4 Qudāma Ibn Ğa'far, pp. 65–6; pp. 117–8.

5 Ibn Rašīq (d. 1064) in his *Kitāb al-'Umda*, II: 116–28.

urban or *hadari*, is also referred to as *'ibāhī'* meaning revealing, licentious, or as I prefer 'uninhibited'.

The *'udrī* poem speaks of unrequited love, of longing for the beloved, the pains of separation; its poet wonders what the beloved is thinking, feeling, and doing in her absence; the poet-lover is a victim of social conventions and constraints, of family or tribal disputes, and jealous and evil-minded detractors and censors; his life is replete with sleepless nights, of bodily ailments, of sickness, madness, and often death.

The *ibāhī* poem, although not necessarily devoid of themes mentioned above, emphasizes lust and carnal fulfilment; it celebrates playful and boastful defiance of social conventions, of nightly intrigues and adventures; encounters with the beloved are marked by direct conversation in which her voice can be heard; the poet brags of his winning the affections of a woman of noble standing, more often than not one connected in marriage or love with a powerful rival or superior. The twentieth century Egyptian Taha Husayn refers to these poet-lovers as *'muḥaqqiqūn'*, suggesting that these poets actually and realistically achieve in life that which they seek (*Ḥadiṭ al-arba'a*: 174–5). This poem ends with a release of joy (*jouissance*) that contrasts with the melancholic, emotionally charged but highly sublimated *'udrī* poem.

1 Summary of 'The Story of Nūr al-Dīn 'Alī ibn Bakkār and the Slave-Girl Šams al-Nahār'

Abū al-Ḥasan Ibn Ṭahir, a prosperous druggist with a vast caliphal clientele, sits in his shop with the nobleman, Nūr al-Dīn 'Alī Ibn Bakkār, when the beautiful Šams al-Nahār, favourite concubine of the caliph, Hārūn al-Rašīd, enters with an entourage of ten young maidens. As the druggist warmly receives them, Nūr al-Dīn falls into a swoon upon setting his eyes on the woman. Noticing, she commands Abū al-Ḥasan to come to her that evening with Nūr al-Dīn. When the two men arrive well disguised, she brings them into a room 'that looked like a chamber in paradise'.

The guests are set to ease, served a lavish feast accompanied by music and polite conversation. Later when Šams al-Nahār arrives, the two lovers communicate their feelings through the singers, and as their story reaches a high emotional note, three eunuch slaves appear to warn Šams al-Nahār that Hārūn is seeking her company that evening. While the two male guests panic, Šams dismisses the warnings, rearranges the furniture, and takes her place out in the garden, in a manner which suggests that she is well experienced in such situations. The two guests are then escorted to a room in an upper story of the

palace from where they witness Hārūn's arrival along with his raucous and inebriated entourage. They then make their escape by slipping quietly into boats and cross the Tigris. They spend the remainder of that first evening at the home of a friend of the druggist, and then the following night at the druggist's home. When Nūr al-Dīn falls into a deep depression, Abū al-Ḥasan brings him back to his home. The following morning the druggist visits his friend only to find him bedridden, severely ill, and surrounded by many friends and neighbors.

Later that day, a handmaiden of Šams al-Nahār visits Abū al-Ḥasan in his shop to inform him of her mistress's own grave condition while the caliph Hārūn keeps vigil over her. The druggist and the handmaiden, acting in the familiar roles of go-betweens, remain in contact over the lovers' condition, until the maid brings Nūr al-Dīn a letter from his beloved Šams al-Nahār. What began as exchanges through song is now transcribed in secret letters. Abū al-Ḥasan grows fearful of the potential risks of being a go-between for the caliph's concubine and her lover, and suggesting to Nūr al-Dīn that his behaviour may draw unwanted attention, he urges him to get out of bed and restart his life.

At this point a jeweller enters, to whom Abū al-Ḥasan reveals the secret of the affair. Later, when he pays a call on the druggist and fails to find him at his shop, he assumes the narration of the tale as well as the role of go-between.

In an almost repeat performance, the two lovers meet again and immediately fall into a swoon.⁶ When they awake, they drink wine, feast, and make music. Then ten men rush in on them. At first thinking they are palace guards or secret police, they soon discover that they are merely robbers. Later, the jeweller is taken to a house across the river, encounters the robbers who welcome him, and provide the lovers with a hiding place.

The jeweller and Nūr al-Dīn must now flee. In his deteriorating state, the grief-stricken lover extracts a promise from the jeweller to fetch his mother to wash his corpse. Deprived of his beloved and regressed into an infantile state, Nūr al-Dīn dies. Meanwhile, Hārūn dismisses as false any accusation of the love between Šams al-Nahār and the deceased, while his beloved concubine herself withers away from her own grief. Nūr al-Dīn's body is brought back to Baghdad and is mourned in a grand funeral procession. The jeweller ends the tale stating that he never ceases to visit his tomb, an act that is tantamount to a memorialization and canonization of the deceased poet-lover.

⁶ The curious shift from the druggist to the jeweller as go-between at this juncture in the story may very well suggest a combining of two different versions of the story.

The pairing of spiritual love with the deterioration of the physical body is the central theme of the tale. The lovers never consummate their love, thereby never committing an act of betrayal, while the go-betweens act in good faith. Hārūn for his part, contrary to the stern and vindictive tyrant a man in such a position would be, remains a loyal, sympathetic, and non-judgmental lover to his favourite concubine. There are no villains or evils in this innocent (blameless) tale of highly tragic proportions.

2 Summary of ‘The Story of the Slave-Girl Anīs al-Ġalīs and Nūr al-Dīn ‘Alī Ibn Ḥāqān’

There once was a king of Basra who had two viziers, the much beloved and popular Faḍl al-Dīn Ibn Ḥāqān, and the evil and despised Mu‘īn Ibn Sāwī. One day the king gave Faḍl al-Dīn 10,000 dinars to go out and purchase the perfect slave girl (*ġāriya*). He succeeded in finding her, but the broker advised him to keep her at home for a full year until she was ‘ready’ to be presented to the king.

Faḍl al-Dīn has a handsome son and cautions the slave girl not to let him see her.

One day while Faḍl al-Dīn’s wife is away at the *ḥammām*, the son, Nūr al-Dīn, and the slave girl, Anīs al-Ġalīs, spot one another, fall in love at first sight, and he deflowers her, three times! When the wife finds out, she tells Faḍl al-Dīn who fears for his life and property, especially if his rival Mu‘īn Ibn Sāwī uses this information to plot against him.

The wife concocts a scheme to have Faḍl al-Dīn repudiate his son but spare his life. The plot succeeds, and Nūr al-Dīn and Anīs al-Ġalīs live the next year in marital bliss.

When his father falls ill and dies, Nūr al-Dīn leads a dissipated life squandering his inheritance on nightly entertainment and lavish gifts, heedless of his chief steward’s good counsel. When he is finally informed that his wealth is exhausted, his friends abandon him in droves, spurning him when he appeals to them for help. He sells what remains of his possessions, the last of which is his slave girl, Anīs al-Ġalīs. She is put up for auction and Mu‘īn matches the highest bid of 4,000 dinars. A battle ensues, and the merchants at the bazaar protect Nūr al-Dīn from the Mamluk troops loyal to Mu‘īn.⁷

Mu‘īn reports to the king of Faḍl al-Dīn’s actions, confirming the now-deceased vizier’s fears. The king orders Nūr al-Dīn’s house be razed to the

⁷ The evocation of the Mamluks may suggest that Faḍl and Nūr al-Dīn represent the native/Ibn Balad vs foreign elements that came to rule Egypt, thus increasing the good vs evil binary.

ground and the lovers brought to him. A chamberlain who had once been a loyal servant to Faḍl al-Dīn reaches Nūr al-Dīn in time to warn him and save his life. The king sends a search party and a bounty is put on Nūr al-Dīn's head.

When the lovers take refuge in a garden that happens to belong to the caliph, Hārūn al-Raṣīd, they are discovered and come close to being killed by the caliph's gardener, Ibrahim. In a familiar twist of plot, Ibrahim is not only persuaded to allow them to remain but stands at their service. They concoct a scheme to get him drunk and Nūr al-Dīn pretends to fall asleep and awakens to an inebriated Ibrahim. When the lovers request that all the lanterns and candles in the garden be lit, Hārūn is alarmed and accuses his vizier, Ğa'far, of hiding something from him. Ğa'far devises an alibi that Ibrahim is celebrating his son's circumcision. Hārūn decides to join the party, accompanied by his vizier Ğa'far and Masrūr, the caliph's executioner, all disguised as merchants (a la *Porter and the Three Ladies*). When they arrive, the caliph climbs a tree to observe and is angered by what he sees.

In the meantime, Anīs asks the gardener for a lute and prepares to sing. Hārūn informs Ğa'far that if she sings well he will forgive her, undoubtedly a leitmotif that resonates with the frame story of Scheherazade/Shahryar pairing. Hārūn, overwhelmed with the performance, decides to join them.

On his way down from the tree to join the lovers, the caliph encounters a fisherman and exchanges his clothing with him, becoming a willing participant in a continuing game of hidden identities. The caliph, now disguised as fisherman, enters the garden and offers his fish to the intoxicated gardener and the pair of gate-crashing lovers.

In true *ʿuḥaylī* fashion, the lovers insist that the fish be fried, and the caliph/fisherman complies. Nūr al-Dīn then regales him with thirty dinars, the last of his money, and the caliph/fisherman begs for Anīs to sing one more time. When she finishes, the caliph/fisherman asks for an explanation of her last verse. Nūr al-Dīn offers to tell their story, proposing either prose or poetry. The caliph/fisherman replies: 'O my lord, prose is words, but verse is strung pearls'.

When Nūr al-Dīn completes his verses, the caliph/fisherman asks him to retell the story in detail, to which the lover begins from beginning to end. The fisherman, by now with curiosity satiated and happily regaled with a good tale, reveals himself as the caliph Hārūn and composes a letter to the king of Basra commanding that he abdicate his throne in favour of Nūr al-Dīn. When the lovers return to Basra, the king does in fact abdicate, but the evil Mu'īn resurfaces to challenge both royal authority and any quick and easy ending to the story. He has Nūr al-Dīn captured and imprisoned, but only in the nick of time does the real Ğa'far arrive with his troops to battle the forces of evil and restore

Nūr al-Dīn to the throne. Muʿīn is killed and they all return to Baghdad where the lovers live happily ever after as boon companions to the caliph Hārūn.

Three aspects of this second story mark a difference from the first story and warrant comparison with the differences between the *ʿudrī* and *ibāhī* modes of the Hijazi *ǧazal*:

First, the act of love is consummated at the beginning of the story. The proverbial twinkle in the eye is immediately followed by the act of copulation, three times no less, and this forms the point of departure for the rest of the tale. What must be remembered however, is that this Nūr al-Dīn, like his *ʿudrī* brother, does not violate any direct interdiction or social taboo. It is Anīs al-Ġalīs who was warned not to be seen, and in seducing her, Nūr al-Dīn neither disobeys a direct order nor trespasses on the property of the king since Anīs has not yet been officially presented to him. In contrast, Šams al-Nahār of the first story was publicly known as Hārūn al-Rašīd's favourite concubine, and certainly known to Nūr al-Dīn, and by right, she remained his legal consort.

Secondly, the coterie of secondary characters in this latter story is more numerous, and actively involved in the twists and turns of the plot. A duality of *good vs evil* is structured around the pairing of the two viziers and the subsequent rivalry between Nūr al-Dīn and Muʿīn. The many disguises and shifts in characters' roles lend a carnivalesque quality to the story that, in addition to the happy ending, give the story its comic, playful tones. The fact that the roguish Nūr al-Dīn gets the girl and lives happily ever after is a contradiction of a generally accepted notion that, as Peter Heath remarked, 'if the protagonists fail to act honorably, their adventures end negatively'.⁸

And thirdly, the role of Anīs al-Ġalīs, not only as an acquiescing seducee, but also a willing lover and equal partner in the adventures of escape, is noteworthy. From the moment of seduction, she is present in all the episodes of the story. Her character is drawn more in the ilk of ʿUmar's *ʿAbda* than of Ġamīl's *Buṭayna*, and thus instrumental in elevating the female role in this romantic tale.

I call attention here to a point in the second story where the caliph/fisherman chooses at first to be told Nūr al-Dīn's story in verse, after which he makes another request to Nūr al-Dīn that he retell the story:

The caliph said: My lord Nūr al-Dīn, tell me the story in detail, and Nūr al-Dīn told him the story from beginning to end.⁹

⁸ Heath 1987, p. 202.

⁹ Haddawy 1992, p. 377.

This choice of poetry as the first performance or preferred 'mode of narration' reflects the traditional view in Arab culture that: *what is said best is said in verse*. Artistry and traditional tastes aside, the fact that the caliph requests a second retelling, this time in prose, suggests that he, as audience, was not completely satisfied, that he was still hungry for the detail, curious for all the minute descriptions of places, persons, and twists of plots that embellish the story. His natural curiosity to seek all the possibilities that permeate the subtext of the verses suggests to us some of the dynamics at work between the *ğazal* poetry and the romances of the *Arabian Nights* that were spawned from it.

In 1963 the Egyptian literary historian Şawqī Ḍayf published the second part of his history of classical Arabic poetry (*al-ʿAşr al-islāmī*) in which he attempts to reconstruct the world of the *ğazal* poets of the Hijaz.¹⁰ In what is now generally accepted as the standard text-book narrative of Umayyad literature, Ḍayf provides some of the literary and sociological broad strokes for the poetry and poetics of the period. He paints Mecca and Medina as boom towns following the successes of the wars of conquest, and the emergence of a gilded aristocracy – or *nouveau-riche* – that sought out entertainment and other affects of a privileged society. He includes the influx of 'foreigners', such as Persians, Byzantines, and Ethiopians, who brought with them their own cultural traditions. He also discusses the expanded role of music, musical instruments and singers in both high and popular culture. He points out that this new music produced shorter compositions, lighter metres, the coining of new expressions and meanings, and a conscious attempt to shed the new poetry of much of its Bedouin ethos, all to create new modes of artistic and cultural expression. Additionally, Şawqī Ḍayf mentions the increasing role and influence of women and women's participation in the articulation of this new culture, and he observes that it was the urban centre, the locus of change and modernity, which provided the natural landscape for the *ğazal*.

Above all, Ḍayf astutely reminds us that there was a profusion of storytelling (or narrative or fiction), i.e., *qaşaş ğazīr* (قَصَصٌ غَزِيرٌ) that sprouted from the names of lovers cited in the poetry. The details of the love stricken became the stuff of everyday concerns, making their way into the collective consciousness and popular culture. The anecdotes (*ħabar/aħbar*) of lovers, diversified and expanded upon by the storytellers and poetry reciters (*al-ruwāt*) much of which was recorded and preserved in Abū al-Faraġ al-Işfahānī's tenth century

¹⁰ Ḍayf 1963, pp. 347–69.

Kitāb al-Aġānī, were as much of interest to the new urban audience as were the poems themselves.¹¹

One wonders, then, if the caliph/fisherman was also seeking the anecdote that accompanied the poem when he asked for a retelling in prose. Would the following verses of al-Buḥturī,

My lover reproached me – and the lover abounds in reproaches
Because of a tale that the words of a liar carried to her.

عَتَبْتَ خُلَّتِي وَذَوَالِ حَبِّ جَمِّ الْمُعَاتِبِ
مِنْ حَدِيثِ نَمِي إِلَيْهِ هَابَهُ قَوْلُ كَاذِبِ

have satisfied the curiosity of the caliph/fisherman, or the audiences of the *gazal* poets of the eighth century Hejaz, or the fifteenth century Cairene masses, or even us the modern readers of *Arabian Nights*? Did questions abound, demanding more time and new space in every new recounting of the story, such as: what is the tale that was spread, who was the liar, and what was his role in the story, and why, and perhaps how did he convey it to the beloved?

I return to where I began: in reading in juxtaposition the two stories of ‘Nūr al-Dīn ‘Alī Ibn Bakkār and the Slave-Girl Šams al-Nahār’ and ‘The Slave-Girl Anīs al-Ġalīs and Nūr al-Dīn ‘Alī Ibn Ḥāqān’. I read them in light of Irwin’s characterisation of the *Arabian Nights* as a massive artistic and cultural synthesizer of the many literary, historical, religious, and cultural repositories of classical Arabo-Islamic civilization: or a ‘boundless ocean of stories’. From the pre-Islamic *qaṣīda*’s amatory preface to the break-away of the *gazal* from Hijaz to Iraq, and beyond in the first centuries of Islamic culture, and wedged between the artistry of ‘Umar Ibn Abī Rabī‘a and Ġamīl Buṭayna, these two stories reflect artistic composition and the many contradictions and incongruities that lie therein, at times exacerbating them, at times harmonizing them; crisscrossing the boundaries of orality and literacy, profane and sacred tradition and modernity, comedy and tragedy, romanticism and realism, and poetry and prose.

11 I refer the reader as well to Zakī Mubārak whose 1931 thesis (in French) was republished in Arabic in 1975: *al-Naṭr al-fannī fī al-qarn al-rābi‘* (Beirut: Dār al-Ġīl). In his fourth chapter on *Kitāb al-Aġānī* (pp. 288–302) he discusses the narrative extensions that grew out of the popularity of *gazal* poetry and poets: ‘aḥaḍa al-ruwāt bi al-talfiq wa al-iḥtilāq’.

My reading of two Nūr al-Dīn love stories against the dichotomy of the 'Hijazi manner vs the Bedouin manner' of the *ğazal* poetry, especially its binary of sacred and profane, goes beyond the difference of the spiritual and the physical. Each story draws unequivocally from the language, lyricism, emotions, and aesthetics of its poetic counterpart.

The function of the story, in the narrative expansions of place, time, character, and plot, is not only to entertain, elicit feeling, and satisfy curiosity, but also, as Zakī Mubārak has argued, to explain the poem (*wuđī'a tafsīrān li-š'rihi*).¹² When Mubārak reminded us that Abū al-Farağ al-Işfahānī's *Kitāb al-Ağānī*, from which we obtain the earliest substantial collection of poets, poetry, and the narratives that accompany them, was compiled from decades of reading and editing previous collections, and that these stories were concocted, performed, and elaborated upon at the many social private and public gatherings of wine, women, and song that provided entertainment for the powerful and the masses, we see both the vertical (chronological) and horizontal (spatial) lines along which these oceans of stories swam. Following the Hijazi poets, transmitters, and audiences of the eighth century, as well as the medieval Arab literary critics and historians in subsequent centuries, we should also understand that the meanings and significances of the one were best conveyed and appreciated only when paired to the other. In other words, it wasn't only the two sub-genres of love poetry that were assumed into the narratives of the *Nights*, but all that separated them in the way of social, religious, artistic, and emotional tensions that gave the poem both its generic and emotional force.

I thus offer a reading of these two love stories in the context of the relationship of the poetry and the profusion of narrative (*al-qaşaş al-ğazīr*) that emanated from it. If we subscribe to Zakī Mubārak and Şawqī Dayf's assessments that the anecdote (*ğabar*) of the beloved, whether grounded in historical reality or romantic speculation, was as much a matter of interest to the audience as the poem, then the gradual transition from verse to prose in the storytelling process is a key element in our understanding of how the *Arabian Nights* Nūr al-Dīn stories interact textually with the poetics of the Umayyad *ğazal* in both its *uđrī* and *ibāhī* incarnations.

The intersections of poetry and prose at certain junctures of Arabic literary history is what I see as being imagined, articulated, and reworked in both Nūr al-Dīn stories. To draw on Todorov's ideas on the 'Origins of Genre', if love is the 'kernel' of the poem's speech act, then love in its narrative expansions is 'enriched' in prose through a series of rhetorical amplifications, such as (1)

¹² Mubārak 1975, p. 297.

narrativization, (2) gradation, (3) thematic proliferation, and (4) verbal representations that span the literal and the figurative.¹³

Both sacred (‘*uḍrī*, *badawī*) love and profane (*ibāḥī*, *ḥaḍarī*) love – setting aside arguments as to which came first – in their differences and complementarity, form the basis of Arabic romance which determines the dominant mode of expression in the *Nūr al-Dīn* tales.

So, by way of conclusion, I pose the following question: did Scheherazade have to tell the King Shahryar basically the same story one night after the other? Well, actually she did. She needed both tales to complete the story. If the new, post *nasīb* independent *ǧazal* came in two varieties, the *ibāḥī* and the *‘uḍrī*, then *Nūr al-Dīn Ibn Bakkār*’s tale of pure but tragic love, culminating in the lover’s death, is complemented by *Nūr al-Dīn Ibn Ḥāqān*’s bawdy comic love which sees his surviving and living happily ever after. I like to think that the performer, composer, or author of these two *Nūr al-Dīn* tales, or at least the compiler who decided to include them into a single collection back to back, had a profound understanding of literary history and cultural aesthetics. These stories in the *Nights* tells us much more than the emotional and physical suffering or the amorous escapades of lovers. They convey a profound knowledge and understanding of history and art, generic births, generic blurring, and textual intercourse that keep the machinery of storytelling well oiled.

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¹³ Todorov 1976, p. 168.

Hārūn Al-Rašīd, the Arabian Nights, and Politics on the Arabic Stage, 1850s–1920s

Adam Mestyan

Tawfīq al-Ḥakīm, the great twentieth-century Egyptian writer (1898–1987), tells an anecdote in a semi-fictional autobiographical note. He worked as an attorney in a countryside town sometime in the 1930s. One day he received an old friend, a certain ‘Umar Efendi, who was an actor, in his office. They started to joke about the play *Hārūn al-Rašīd*, that the troupe of the actor often staged, when suddenly his boss entered the room. The boss only heard that al-Ḥakīm says to ‘Umar Efendi: ‘Your Excellence, the minister’, meaning Ġa‘far, the legendary vizier of Hārūn al-Rašīd. But the boss thought that ‘Umar Efendi is actually the new minister of justice from Cairo and became so humble that he allowed a two-week holiday to his subordinate al-Ḥakīm whom he thought to be a friend of ‘the minister’.¹

This anecdote not only tells the way countryside judiciary (perhaps in all times and places) perceives administrative hierarchy but also provides a glimpse into the popularity of the play or character *Hārūn al-Rašīd*. This chapter tells the nineteenth-century story of how the world of *The Arabian Nights* appeared as an embodied symbol on the early Arabic stage and became particularly known in khedivial Egypt. In this chapter I compare four musical plays in Arabic whose central themes are derived from Hārūn al-Rašīd stories in *The Arabian Nights*. These are Mārūn al-Naqqāš’s *Abū al-Ḥasan al-Muġaffal aw Hārūn al-Rašīd* (1849), ‘Abū al-Ḥasan the Fool or Hārūn al-Rašīd’, Maḥmūd Wāšif’s *Ḥalīfa al-Ṣayyād ma’ Qūt al-Qulūb wa-Hārūn al-Rašīd* (1886), ‘The Fisherman Ḥalīfa with Qūt al-Qulūb and Hārūn al-Rašīd’, and two plays from Abū Ḥalīl al-Qabbānī: *Hārūn al-Rašīd ma’ Uns al-Ġalīs* (1884); ‘[The Story of] Hārūn al-Rašīd with Uns al-Ġalīs’; and *Hārūn al-Rašīd ma’ al-Amīr Ġānim Ibn Ayyūb wa-Qūt al-Qulūb* (1890?); ‘[The Story of] Hārūn al-Rašīd with the Nobleman Ġānim Ibn Ayyūb and Qūt al-Qulūb’. These are not the only nineteenth-century Arabic plays with motifs or characters from the *Nights*, however they share connections in terms of how they talk about power.

¹ Al-Ḥakīm 1953, pp. 46–7.

I argue that these plays are not simply entertaining pieces or literary experiments; they also reflect key political ideas as they were performed in front of Ottoman Arab audiences in the late nineteenth century. Though the works seem to claim the authenticity of old lore, I show that, in fact, they reflect their contemporary political context through a new historical imagination. In my interpretation, the first play, *Abū al-Ḥasan the Fool*, possesses petition-like features and actually resulted in a real petition to the Ottoman sultan; the second, *The Fisherman Ḥalīfa*, is a disguised tale about the relationship between the khedive of British-occupied Egypt and his revolting subjects; and in the last two comedies we can see the power of rulers presented through the vernacular and popular imagination. Together these works are part of a larger corpus of Arabic plays about kings, emirs, and caliphs. Rachid Bencheneb and Wiebke Walther have already identified this group of four plays as part of the nineteenth-century Arabic revival of the *Nights* topics.² In this chapter, I build upon their research, but examine the texts from the perspective of the political context and message, drawing on new archival material, highlighting new sources such as tales, in comparison with those manuscript versions used by theatre troupes in fin-de-siècle Egypt found today in the National Centre for Theatre, Music, and Popular Arts (*al-Markaz al-Qawmī li-l-Masrah wa-l-Mūsīqā wa-l-Funūn al-Ša'bīya*; hereafter, MQ) in Cairo and their performance history.³

Using the example of the four plays in question, Bencheneb has argued that modern Arabic theatre was not a product of purely European inspiration.⁴ Similarly, Mohamed Al-Khozai has also claimed that the pioneers of Arabic drama used motifs 'inherited from local folklore and history as well as from classical French drama.'⁵ Bencheneb and Al-Khozai have understood the *Nights* as representing 'local folklore'. Walther, however, remarks that the *Nights*' lore only gained appreciation in nineteenth-century Arab intellectual circles thanks to Europeans' enthusiasm for the tales.⁶ European influence, it should be noted, is not necessarily incompatible with arguments about the tales' 'authenticity'. Indeed, I shall show that regardless of the prehistory of the lore of the *Nights*, the character Hārūn al-Rašīd *became* part of the learned popular Arabic urban circles in Egypt by the end of the nineteenth century, possibly fuelled by European fascination. My larger point, however, is that such

2 Bencheneb 1974; Walther 2004.

3 I thank the Security Bureau of the Egyptian Ministry of Culture, and Dr. Assem Nagaty, director of the Centre at the time of the research, for the permission to access (without the possibility of taking notes).

4 Bencheneb 1974, pp. 133–4.

5 Al-Khozai 1984, p. 229.

6 Walther 2004, p. 54.

debates are misplaced, as neither the playwrights nor the audiences were directly concerned with 'Europe' per se or with their 'local folklore'. They were concerned, rather, with their own life-world – the late Ottoman system of power, reform, and centralization. Even in al-Ḥakīm's anecdote there is an element about justice. While Europe's influence is unquestionable, the plays reflect a specifically Ottoman Arab horizon of ideas, motifs, and songs, which was, itself, an interconnected, complex blend of French and Italian fashions, intellectual Arab revivalism, and popular practices. This is the intellectual and material universe in which the plays were produced and staged in Arabic.

I argue that both the Abbasid caliphate and the figure of Hārūn al-Rašīd (766–809 CE) served as metaphors for just governance in late Ottoman Arab cities. There was a learned Arabic instrumentalization of Orientalist tropes and, possibly, popular tales concerning this figure. Although examples of openly subversive plays can be dated only from 1908 (the Young Turk revolution in the Ottoman Empire) and beyond, I would suggest that there were subtler, and not necessarily subversive, forms of political communication staged in the pre-1908 period. One such form was the representation of Hārūn al-Rašīd and royal justice on the Arabic stage.

Literary scholars and theatre historians Muḥammad Yūsuf Nağm, Jacob Landau, Rachid Bencheneb, Muṣṭafā Badawī, Aḥmad Samīr Baybars, Mohamed Al-Khozai, Matti Moosa, Philip Sadgrove, and more recently Muṣṭafā Muḥammad Ḥusayn Šihāb in Lebanon and Sayyid 'Alī Ismā'īl in Egypt have not contextualized the four plays in question within the politics of the time of their composition. Only Al-Khozai has underlined that 'the most distinguished element of *The Nights* represented here is the idea of kings and kingship'⁷ and recently Šihāb has identified the 'Ottoman age' as the tales' main reference.⁸

Indeed, all Arabic plays and performances in which a historical or imaginary Muslim ruler or caliph appeared on stage were constrained by the Ottoman system of power. The sultans Abdūlmecid (1839–1861), Abdūlaziz (1861–1876), and Abdūlhamid II (1876–1909) and their respective administrations emphasized their public role as caliphs. Even the semi-independent governor of Egypt (khedive) was the sultan's representative. Therefore, the figure of Hārūn al-Rašīd on stage – an Abbasid ruler who was generally considered to be an 'Arab' caliph – came dangerously close to denying the Ottoman claim to the caliphate. For this reason, he was usually called 'king' in the plays and not caliph, with one notable exception. Because all four of the plays I discuss here were performed in front of the khedives of Egypt, and three certainly in front

⁷ Al-Khozai 1984, p. 61.

⁸ Šihāb 2009, pp. 539–54 (about al-Qabbānī's *Uns al-Ġalis*).

of other Ottoman provincial governors, the performers had to be very careful in their characterization. In what follows, I explore how these constraints influenced the employment of motifs from *The Thousand and One Nights* in the plays, and why, indeed, some of the motifs were employed at all.

1 Abū al-Ḥasan, the Fool or Hārūn al-Rašīd

1.1 *The Playwright and the Play*

Mārūn Naqqāš (1817–1855) is the only widely known Arab playwright in literary histories of the nineteenth century. This Maronite merchant and poet wrote the first performed modern Arabic musical, *al-Baḥīl* (The Miser), staged at the end of the 1840s in Ottoman Beirut. The play *Abū al-Ḥasan the Fool* was his second musical play, presumably written in 1849. This was also the play with which his nephew, Salīm Naqqāš (1850–1884), started his acting (and soon journalistic) career in Egypt in 1876. It remained in the repertoire of Arab theater troupes and was performed hundreds of times until World War One.⁹

The play centres around Abū al-Ḥasan, a foolish older drunkard in Baghdad who has spent his inherited money on friends and now wants to marry (for the second time) Daʿd, the beautiful sister of a certain ʿUṭmān. Abū al-Ḥasan often mentions that if he were the caliph, he would set the world straight. He has reason for such wishful thinking, for Daʿd loves not him but Saʿīd, his brother. Meanwhile, ʿUṭmān, Daʿd's brother, loves Salmā, the daughter of Abū al-Ḥasan. This love 'quadrangle' is spied upon by two dervishes, Dādā Muṣṭafā and Dādā Maḥmūd, who are the disguised caliph Hārūn al-Rašīd and his vizier Ġaʿfar. The caliph in disguise decides to play a trick on Abū al-Ḥasan, drugging him and his greedy servant, ʿUrqūb, and bringing them both to the caliph's palace, where they wake up and find themselves to be caliph and vizier, respectively. Abū al-Ḥasan as 'Caliph Naṣr al-Dīn' and his vizier ʿUrqūb reign for a single day, but both prove themselves to be as petty in their elevated positions as they are in their original circumstances. Ultimately, they sell their offices (the caliphate!) to the disguised dervishes for money. Meanwhile, as Abū al-Ḥasan enjoys the pleasures of the palace, the lovers marry. After their one day in power, Abū al-Ḥasan and ʿUrqūb are drugged and delivered back home. Abū al-Ḥasan foolishly believes the experience was the result of black magic and explains as much to his mother. He still wants to marry Daʿd (who has just been married)

9 It was first published in 1869 in his collected works by his brother (Naqqāš (ed), 1869); and at least three times separately in a small booklet format in Beirut, Alexandria, and Cairo in the 1890s and 1900s.

but at this point Hārūn al-Rašīd appears and reveals his true identity, explaining the trick and generously granting money to Abū al-Ḥasan.¹⁰

Why did Naqqāš choose this story? There is scholarly consensus that the play is based on the tale of *al-Nā'im wa-l-Yaqzān* (usually translated as 'The Sleeper Awakened').¹¹ At Naqqāš's time, the story in Arabic *in print* was only in the Breslau edition, and Walther concludes that Naqqāš must have used this edition¹² (Bencheneb anachronistically refers to the 1889 Beirut edition). However, Galland's compilation in French also contains this story and Naqqāš was fluent in French.¹³ Furthermore, the work of Naqqāš is not the first musical play on the topic of Abū al-Ḥasan inspired by the *Nights*; in 1811, for example, Carl Weber produced a *Singspiel* with the title *Abu Hassan*, though the subject is a bit different.¹⁴ Naqqāš visited Italy in the mid-1840s where he saw performances (we do not know which ones). There is no real clue why Naqqāš chose this story. As we shall see below, Hārūn al-Rašīd stories were possibly popular in vernacular Arabic in 1870s–1880s Egypt, but there is no proof of such popularity in 1840s Ottoman Beirut. Is it possible that, when Naqqāš was looking for the subject of his second play, he turned to this particular Arabic theme *because* it was also accepted in Europe? If so, he was creative in how he reused the theme: the lesson of the original story concerns the moral character of Abū al-Ḥasan, whereas Naqqāš's play is about love and the nature of Ottoman power (see below). Through this play, Naqqāš was actually offering a public commentary on reform as a moral idea and Ottoman modernity. The character of 'Hārūn al-Rašīd' –a figure expected to be symbolic in various learned imaginations –provided cover for such discussion.

With regards to the play's aesthetic quality, Badawī remarks that *Abū al-Ḥasan the Fool* is 'the most accomplished' of Naqqāš's three plays,¹⁵ and I would add that among all Arabic plays in the nineteenth century this is the most sophisticated one. It is written in rhymed prose mixed with poetry and songs. There are also complex instructions for the actors. The characters develop and change (especially Abū al-Ḥasan and 'Urqūb), social problems are raised (marriage and brothers' relation), and psychological questions are also about identity and reality (even after returning home, Abū al-Ḥasan has flashbacks and continues to think he is the caliph at times). There is a joke about changing gender (at one point, Abū al-Ḥasan wants to escape from the palace

10 Nağm (ed.), 1961.

11 Nağm (ed.), 1961, p. 23. Al-Khozai 1984, p. 47.

12 Walther 2004, p. 54.

13 Marzolph/van Leeuwen 2004, pp. 392–3.

14 Brown [2016].

15 Badawī 1988, p. 47.

disguised as a female slave). One could even argue that there are elements of self-reflexivity in the play's portrayal of two brothers competing for the same woman (Mārūn had another theatre-loving brother, Niqūlā). Granted, some dialogues are clearly unnecessary (Moosa uses the term 'long-winded')¹⁶ and certain jokes are repeated. Still, considering that it is only the fourth known modern Arabic play, *Abū al-Ḥasan the Fool* reflects talent and sophistication.¹⁷

1.2 *A Short Performance History*

The performance history of this play provides a window into the changing context of power and reform in the Ottoman Arab provinces. One of the first possible performances took place on 12 January 1850 in the house of the Naqqāš family in Beirut. The Scottish adventurer and politician David Urquhart (1805–1877), who happened to be present and wrote about the event, noted that two judges and the mufti of Beirut were also in the audience. Only men were present; even the play's female roles were played by young boys in female clothes. In the break there was a short farce about a cuckolded husband. Urquhart describes the performance with a mixture of cultural superiority and some sympathy: 'the acting was awkward, the singing abominable; but the piece was managed with considerable art'.¹⁸ The play was restaged in December 1876 when Naqqāš's nephew, Salīm, brought it to Alexandria. Its first performance in khedivial Egypt was quite well-reported.¹⁹

Abū al-Ḥasan the Fool remained a centerpiece of the Arabic theatre repertoire until the 1920s. This is why MQ in Cairo preserves both a printed and a manuscript version of the play, both belonging to the third troupe (established in 1905) of the great Egyptian singer-actor Salāma Ḥiğāzī (1855?–1917).²⁰ The manuscript was copied, very possibly after a printed version, in 1907.²¹ The printed copy of MQ was published in 1909²² – it is a second edition – and was used by one of the actors during WWI, even after the death of Ḥiğāzī, and passed the Political Censorship's Theatre Commission (a British imposed institution during WWI) in 1917.²³ This means that the play was on the Arabic stage from 1850 until the 1920s.

16 Moosa 1997, p. 29.

17 The first known play in Arabic in the nineteenth-century is by Abraham Daninos, the second is Mārūn Naqqāš's *al-Baḥīl*, and the third is a lost work by Mārūn's brother, Niqūlā.

18 Urquhart 1860, pp. 179–80.

19 Nağm 1967, pp. 98–9.

20 Fāḍil 1932, p. 42.

21 Manuscript containing the name of Muḥammad Ibrāhīm, but indicating that it was the personal copy of Salāma Ḥiğāzī, dated 31 December 1907, n. 48, MQ.

22 Naqqāš 1909; n. 49 in MQ.

23 Cf. the censorial stamps on n. 49, MQ.

The comparison of the manuscript and the print in MQ provides an example of how Arabic theatre troupes staged written texts and also a trans-Ottoman connection: how a play written in 1840s Beirut would be staged in 1900s Cairo. There are many parts crossed out both in the manuscript and in the print in these 'Egyptian versions', with the obvious intention of making the play shorter. For the most part such cuts are consistent. That is, in both cases, these parts are deleted; or are simply not copied in the manuscript. Based on these omissions, one can say that almost a third of the original text was not staged (provided that my inference is right and the crossed out parts were deleted in order not to be performed). One example is in Part Three, where the first five scenes are crossed out completely. In the print copy, all footnotes and stage orders are crossed out as well. The songs are clearly separated from the prose text in both cases; and in the print there is a separate *Table of Songs*. Thus the performance in 1900s Cairo must have been significantly shorter than the original premier in Beirut (provided that the play's first printed text in 1869 mirrors faithfully the libretto of the 1850 performances).²⁴

1.3 *The Play as Petition in Late Ottoman Politics*

I read this play as a reference to the politics of the Ottoman Tanzimat in Beirut.²⁵ Although the plot takes place in Abbasid Baghdad, there are anachronistic references to the Ottoman context (for instance, Act One, Scene 19 when Abū al-Ḥasan explains that his aunt could marry one of the *ʿuṭmāniyyīn*,²⁶ or Act One, Scene 1 where the characters praise 'the Exalted State/Dynasty',²⁷ the usual title of the central Ottoman government). There is one controversial line of poetry when the word *sulṭān* is rhymed with *šayṭān* (*wa-llāh yaṭil la-nā ʿamraku ittaqī al-sulṭān / wayk yā šayṭān*).²⁸ There are subtle remarks that suggest the gentle mocking of religious traditions (for instance, *lā rahbāniya fī-l-islām*).

Naqqāš had included a section praising Sultan Abdülmecid in his first play, *al-Baḥīl*, but we find more references to the sultan and power in *Abū al-Ḥasan*. The whole play, I suggest, can be understood as a petition to the imperial authorities as it was performed, first, in front of the local dignitaries. In fact, in the last scene the Vizier Ğaʿfar distributes money and we know from Urquhart

24 I was not allowed to take notes in the MQ and thus a sustained analysis is impossible. My request for a photograph or a copy was also denied.

25 At the moment, I am preparing a longer study about Naqqāš and the *Tanzimat* in which I hope to give a full explanation of this matter.

26 Nağm (ed.), 1961, p. 103.

27 Nağm (ed.), 1961, p. 109.

28 Nağm (ed.), 1961, p. 180.

that the actor actually threw money into the audience in 1850, thus literally performing, through imitation, the sultan's expected generosity.

Indeed, the play resulted in a real petition to the sultan. Some seven months after the January 1850 performance, the Beirut city council wrote a petition that referred to the play in its request for money from the city's budget for the erection of a theatre building and for an image of the *tuğra* of the sultan to be placed above the entrance. They argued in Ottoman Turkish that Naqqāš 'composed useful theatre stories about all of the morals and manners in the clear and eloquent Arabic language. Among these, in the last [*hiğrī*] year there was one lovely piece about Hārūn al-Rašīd, of the Abbasid kings. He taught these [plays] to some clever Arabs and he presented them in a correct manner in a special space. Since the ideas in the composed works made everyone to appreciate his Justice-Abundant Royal Highness, Full of Modern Virtues and Morals, Revered and Beloved Majesty, and since to gain refined manners and education is obligatory based on useful advice and warnings and since among the people it is very much appreciated, the following is requested'.²⁹ The petition was successful and the theatre was built, but after Naqqāš's death it was purchased and transformed into a church around 1856. The play thus served as an occasion for the Beirut Tanzimat bourgeoisie to acquire an officially approved municipal theatre, thus joining Izmir, Alexandria, and Istanbul, whose theatres served a new urban elite culture.

What should we make of the caliph's portrayal in Naqqāš's play? Is it possible to read Hārūn al-Rašīd as a symbol or allegory of the reformist Sultan Abdülmeçid, who also loved Italian theatre and opera? This seems doubtful at first, as the cheerful ruler deliberately misleads Abū al-Ḥasan only in order to be amused. However, by the end of the play Hārūn al-Rašīd clearly turns into the generous and just sovereign who helps lovers, forbids wrong, and distributes money. The references to the Exalted State match exactly with how the Ottoman Empire wanted to represent itself.³⁰ Hārūn al-Rašīd is called a 'sultan' and 'commander of the faithful' (although not explicitly caliph). All these mean that the idea of an Arab ruler ('king' as the Beirut councilmen cautiously put it) was communicated through an Ottoman screening and reflected expectations from a just sovereign.

29 Letter dated 12 Şawwāl 1266 (21 August 1850), I.MVL 195/5976, Ottoman Archives of the Turkish Prime Ministry.

30 Deringil 1998.

2 Hārūn al-Rašīd Under Occupation

2.1 *The Playwright and the Play*

The second Arabic play *The [Story of the] Fisherman Ḥalīfa with Qūt al-Qulūb and Hārūn al-Rašīd* was written by Maḥmūd Wāšif (dates of birth and death are unknown), an almost completely forgotten Egyptian playwright and literary figure. His plays are briefly mentioned by Naǧm, Landau, Ismā'īl,³¹ and his Hārūn al-Rašīd play is mentioned by Bencheneb and Walther.³² He wrote at least three other plays: *Maḥāsīn al-Šudaf* ('The Merits of Coincidence'),³³ *Aǧā'ib al-Aqdār* ('The Miracles of Destiny'), and, according to Landau, *al-Murū'a wa-l-Wafā' ma' al-Ḥalīyayn al-Wafīyayn* ('Chivalry and Loyalty between Two Trustworthy Free Men').³⁴ Presumably he is identical with that Maḥmūd Wāšif who edited and published a *Dīwān* of the Abbasid poet Abū Nuwās (popularly associated with Hārūn al-Rašīd) in 1898³⁵ and the Maḥmūd Wāšif who edited the journal *al-Barīd* in 1895 in Cairo. If my identification is correct, Maḥmūd Wāšif was a learned Egyptian man of letters, active during the first two decades of the British occupation.

The plot of *The Fisherman Ḥalīfa* is as follows: Hārūn al-Rašīd falls in love with the beautiful slave girl, Qūt al-Qulūb. His jealous wife Queen Zubayda drugs her and sells the unconscious girl in a big box in the market. Hārūn al-Rašīd goes to hunt and fish (in disguise) and befriends the fisherman Ḥalīfa. Their scenes are full of jokes playing on the humour that in the presence of Hārūn, the Commander of the Faithful, someone else is called a caliph (albeit throughout the play Hārūn in fact is called *malik* [king] by both his courtiers and the writer in his instructions). When Hārūn returns to his palace he learns that Qūt al-Qulūb is dead. Ḥalīfa, the fisherman arrives to claim his money from the courtiers because they ate his fish. Again, there is a humorous scene (and a cruel one: the courtiers humiliate the fisherman) but finally Ḥalīfa leaves without much compensation. He goes to the market, buys the big box, and at home he finds the hungry Qūt al-Qulūb inside. She writes a letter to the king, which is delivered by Ḥalīfa, and Hārūn al-Rašīd happily discovers that his favourite slave-girl is alive and, in the end, he forgives everyone.³⁶

31 Ismā'īl 2010.

32 Walther 2004.

33 Wāšif 1321 [1903].

34 Landau 1958, p. 258.

35 Wāšif (ed), 1898.

36 [Wāšif] [1886?].

I suspect that Maḥmūd Wāṣif wrote the play around 1886³⁷ (like the previous case, the whereabouts of the original manuscript are unknown). It was printed at least three times between 1886 and 1910,³⁸ and performed even in the 1920s. The presumed earliest print does not provide the name of the author; and Ismā'īl highlights that in a later publication Wāṣif lamented that it had been printed without his permission.³⁹ In fact, the presumed late 1880s print's title page singles out Hārūn al-Raṣīd, but there is a second, similarly anonymous play next to it (*al-Baḥīl wa-l-Ṣayṭān*; 'The Miser and the Devil') in the same print as well.

We can ask again why or rather how Wāṣif chose, in the context of British-occupied Cairo of the mid-1880s, to write a play about such a story? Nağm suggests that the play is based on the tale told between nights 836 and 850; Bencheneb and Walther follow his lead.⁴⁰ Ulrich Marzolph and Richard van Leeuwen state that the original tale 'Ḥalīfa, the Fisherman' 'was part of the corpus of popular stories before the appearance of the European translations of the *Nights*.'⁴¹ There is no clue whether Wāṣif's source was, in fact, a printed or manuscript version of the *Nights* (I suspect the source to be a printed version from the 1880s), or we may assume that this popular story survived into the late nineteenth century. Nağm points out that the author differs from 'the original' (that is, the Catholic Press in Beirut edition that Nağm used as the printed version of the *Nights*) in several details.⁴² Bencheneb, however, underlines that the original tale is one of those rare moments in the *Nights* lore in which Hārūn al-Raṣīd is criticized. But, he adds, Wāṣif is cautious in his play 'not to harm the traditional image of the Abbasid caliphate', nor to challenge Khedive Tevfik.⁴³ Here, it may be useful to add a short performance history and then to contextualize Wāṣif's play among Arabic popular tales available in print at the time.

2.2 Short Performance History

In the theatre season of 1885/1886 there were three Arab theatre troupes in Egypt – these were led by Abū Ḥalīl al-Qabbānī (see below), Yūsuf Ḥayyāt, and

37 Bencheneb and Walther are certainly wrong in dating the composition of the play to 1900; Walther 2004, p. 55.

38 In addition to the anonymous, undated perhaps earliest print that I date as late 1886 ([Wāṣif], [1886?]), there is the copy of 1318 (1900) in Cambridge University Library, and the same (dated 1318) in the MQ; and another one in Israel (undated, Matba'at Turk). Cf. also Landau 1958, p. 258.

39 Ismā'īl 2010.

40 Bencheneb 1974, p. 152.

41 Marzolph/van Leeuwen 2004, pp. 252–54.

42 Nağm 1967, pp. 376–7.

43 Bencheneb 1974, pp. 156–7.

Sulaymān Qardāḥī (Soliman Cardahi as he wrote his name in French), respectively. The troupes competed with each other for financial support from the government (at least when performing in the Khedivial Opera House) and for audiences. Wāṣif's play (without indicating his name) was staged by Qardāḥī's troupe in 1886, with the singer-actor, Salāma Ḥiḡāzī in the main role, much to Khedive Tevfik's delight. In the same season Qardāḥī's troupe also staged Wāṣif's *Maḥāsin al-Ṣudaf*, again without mentioning his name. The performance of Wāṣif's two plays in 1886 gives the impression that Wāṣif worked for Qardāḥī and produced 'Egyptian' plays, or at least more Egyptian ones than the European dramas translated into learned (read: formal) Arabic by Syrian Christians, which were the core of Qardāḥī's repertoire. This collaboration can be read as both a political (patriotic) act and as a business collaboration.

Qardāḥī's troupe and others staged *The Fisherman Ḥalīfa* several times, for instance for charity performances in the late 1880s. Qardāḥī's troupe performed it at least three times before Khedive Tevfik and the court in the Khedivial Opera House, where the audience included Ghazi Ahmet Muhtar Pasha, the Ottoman Imperial Representative in Egypt during the British occupation. As late as 1929, an amateur troupe asked for permission to stage this play in the Upper-Egyptian city of Aswan and the censor gave permission.⁴⁴ The plays thus staged were possibly important symbolic occasions of affirming Egypt's Ottoman ties in the 1880s-1890s and its imagined 'sovereignty' in the 1920s under formal and informal British rule.⁴⁵

2.3 *Tales during Occupation and the Staging of the Nights in the 1880s*

Arabic tales about kings and Hārūn al-Rašīd were available in print in late 1870s and 1880s Cairo. It is hard, however, to draw any conclusion about what these prints actually reflect. Some of the tales seem to be part of the revived *nawādir* genre (sing. *nādira* – entertaining story in learned Arabic).⁴⁶ Other tales in vernacular Arabic were mostly collected by European Orientalists who had both an interest in studying the vernacular and an anthropological fascination. Soon, however, the tales also became part of the educational package of occupation armies in Arab territories. Here let us focus only on the production in khedivial Egypt.

Wilhelm Spitta (1853–1883), director of the Khedivial Library, in his vernacular grammar (1880) recorded eleven vernacular tales in *transliteration*. The first was told by the bookseller Muḥammad Sukkar and the rest by a certain

44 Request and censor's letters attached to printed copy, n. 2306, MQ.

45 See more details in Mestyan 2017.

46 Pellat, 'Nādira,' El2.

merchant Ḥāğğ Muḥammad in Cairo.⁴⁷ Among these latter tales, there is a very cruel one about Hārūn al-Rašīd, as we shall see. Spitta published separately twelve other vernacular tales in *transliteration* again: supposedly his illiterate cook Ḥasan told the first eleven tales (the twelfth by the more learned sheikh Muḥammad ‘Asaliya). Two of these are about kings.⁴⁸ Next, the French Arabist Hyppolite Dulac (?) published *in the Arabic script* four vernacular Cairo tales (one is about a king)⁴⁹ and four Aswan tales, all of which are about the popular hero al-Šāṭir Muḥammad.⁵⁰ Finally, Arthur O. Green (1847–1924), again after working on a practical grammar,⁵¹ published twenty-five vernacular tales *in the Arabic script* as part of the British occupation army’s education. In fact, he took Spitta’s and Dulac’s publications and added a Sinbad tale from *the Nights* ‘for comparison’. Green was helped by the presumably Ottoman Syrian translator Šākīr al-Ḥūrī,⁵² possibly to transcribe the Latin-character transliterated texts back into Arabic. No wonder there are *šāmī* (Syrian Arabic) expressions in the texts.

Out of these, the most interesting for our purposes is the short Hārūn al-Rašīd tale told by the merchant Ḥāğğ Muḥammad to Wilhelm Spitta in khedivial Cairo, sometime at the end of the 1870s. In the story, the king (*malik*) Hārūn al-Rašīd orders his companion Abū Nuwās one day to bring a poor peasant to his palace and then cruelly mocks the man who does not know the elegant food, not even the meat, served in the palace.⁵³ Here, Hārūn al-Rašīd is not portrayed as the symbol of royal majesty or justice; rather, he is a rude and cruel ruler who takes pleasure in the misery and ignorance of his poor subjects. There is something inherently sad in the portrayal of the peasant’s ignorance abetting his own humiliation.

Since it may be seen as tricky to contextualize Maḥmūd Wāšif’s play among some possibly ‘doctored’ vernacular tales told to Europeans, we must look also at the *local* production of printed entertaining stories (often for economic gain). The mentioned *nawādir* was a re-invented popular genre in nineteenth-century Arabic and in (Ottoman) Turkish printing. For instance, the seventeenth-century scholar al-Qalyūbī’s *nawādir* were printed numerous times after 1857 in Egypt; presumably following the 1856 Calcutta edition by W.N. Lees and Mawlawī Kabīr al-Dīn. The collection, likely formed after the death of

47 Spitta 1880, p. xii.

48 Spitta 1883.

49 Dulac 1889.

50 Dulac 1885.

51 For Green, see Zack 2016, pp. 1–26.

52 Green 1886, p. 6.

53 Spitta 1880, pp. 469–72; Green 1886, pp. 39–42.

al-Qalyūbī, contains numerous stories about kings and caliphs; there is one story about Hārūn al-Rašīd.⁵⁴ There is also a collection of stories printed in Beirut, perhaps copying the Qalyūbī-*nawādir*.⁵⁵

There must have been another mixed genre of entertaining stories for intellectuals in the 1860s, detectable in numerous works (mostly manuscripts and lithographs) of *‘ulamā’* and minor learned men in khedivial Egypt. The learned *nawādir* published by the printing press of the journal *al-Ġawā’ib* in Istanbul was also a sign of joining this intellectual production.⁵⁶ Muḥammad ‘Abd al-Fattāḥ, the first Muslim Egyptian playwright (birth and death dates are unknown, but he was still alive in 1893), published a book in Egypt as early as 1869 with a number of *nawādir*.⁵⁷ This work remained popular and he wrote other entertaining books.⁵⁸ A story about ‘The Porter and What Strange Things Happened to Him and What Occurred to Hārūn al-Rašīd when He Met Him’ was also printed at the end of the 1860s.⁵⁹ These printed texts were almost certainly prepared with commercial gain in mind.

An interesting product is the Egyptian Muḥammad Efendi Sa’d’s collection of entertaining stories, which he had written for a request of a friend and finished around 1878 (but it was printed only in 1890). He searched many medieval *adab* books and created a type of manual of entertaining behaviour for drinking sessions with kings. The model of the ideal court is clearly the imagined court culture of Hārūn al-Rašīd, although not always in a respectable sense. A short anecdote for instance tells that ‘the king’ al-Rašīd received a new slave-girl who knew the Koran by heart. The king was happy and said to her: ‘which *sūra* do you perform?’ and sat down. When she heard this, she took off her trousers and said: ‘Indeed, we have given you a clear conquest’ (*innā fataḥnā lak fataḥan mubīnan*) – a blasphemous allusion to the first *āya* of *Sūrat al-Faḥ* (48:1), and here alluding to sexual intercourse.⁶⁰

The term *nawādir* was also applied to other kinds of vernacular stories and jokes that provided cheap entertaining literature. For instance, a certain Muḥammad Efendi ‘Abd al-Fattāḥ (likely identical to the above-mentioned Muḥammad ‘Abd al-Fattāḥ) collected short jokes, songs, and entertaining stories in an undated book (perhaps from the 1890s).⁶¹ Yet the main character of

54 For instance, al-Qalyūbī 1274 (1857), p. 4.

55 Batlūnī 1882.

56 [?], 1885.

57 Al-Miṣrī 1869, pp. 36–45.

58 Sadgrove 1988, pp. 166–7.

59 [?], [1860s].

60 Sa’d 1890, p. 97.

61 ‘Abd al-Fattāḥ (189?).

these vernacular stories is not a king but a hashish-addict who has all kinds of problems and funny (often painfully satirical) situations. The critique of the political system and social structure occurs mainly through such stories in the vernacular and popular imagination. Such a sub-field of symbolic speech does not diminish the importance of stories about kings and Hārūn al-Rašīd specifically in learned circles, which might have been, or have become, boosted by the European attention. Some versions were certainly part of the upper echelon of the popular lore (the cultural capital of the more learned strata like booksellers, sheikhs, and minor merchants) by the 1880s and 1890s.⁶²

I suggest that it is against the context of these publications and the 1885–1886 theatrical competition that we have to understand Wāšif's decision to take the fisherman's story from the *Nights*. Hārūn al-Rašīd stories were part of the learned popular entertainment, and were also held in high regard by European Orientalists. There was also the British occupation army in khedivial Egypt. It is now with the political situation in mind that we have to interpret *The Fisherman Ḥalīfa*.

As in Naqqāš's play, there are hints that the plot of Wāšif occurring in ninth-century Baghdad was possibly an allegory for late-nineteenth century Cairo. The liveliest character is Ḥalīfa, who uses Egyptian colloquial expressions and is the butt of the humour on stage. The other characters speak and sing in learned Arabic. In the beginning of the play the servants sing an ode in which they ask their lord to 'take care of the honour/dignity of Egypt'. This is certainly strange for a play set in Baghdad. Nağm observes that the writer 'mixed the atmosphere of the 1001 Nights with his Egyptian *ša'bīya*'.⁶³ At the end, Hārūn al-Rašīd orders his vizier Ğa'far to 'ornament the city of Baghdad, gather groups among the servants, set free the prisoners, and pardon the sinners'.⁶⁴ Given that this play was often performed in occupied Egypt, it is hard to miss here the allusion of these words to the 'Urābist revolutionaries in prison or in exile. The character of the benevolent Arab caliph could be interpreted as a symbol for the khedive Tefvik. At the very least the author of the play inserted some allusions that permitted this interpretation. This Hārūn al-Rašīd play could be performed as a politically convenient Islamic and Egyptian allegory of just kingship in front of anti-British elite and non-elite local audiences.

62 As far as I know, there has been no serious research on these curious and complex Arabic tales and entertaining stories, either in print or in manuscript, from the late nineteenth century.

63 Nağm 1967, p. 376.

64 [Wāšif] [1886?], p. 44.

3 Hārūn al-Rašīd and the Slave-girls

3.1 *The Playwright and the Plays*

Let us shift now to the next two Hārūn al-Rašīd plays, *Uns al-Ġalīs* and *The Nobleman Ġānim Ibn Ayyūb and Qūt al-Qulūb*, both of which are attributed to Abū Ḥalīl al-Qabbānī (183?–1903). The central characters in both cases are slave-girls. The last part of the *Nights* tale of ‘The Nobleman Ġānim’ is supposed to be identical to the last part of the original ‘The Fisherman Ḥalīfa.’⁶⁵ Thus, Wāṣif’s play from the mid-1880s is subtly connected to the plays attributed to al-Qabbānī.

Al-Qabbānī was born in Damascus, started staging plays sometime in the late 1860s, and arrived in Egypt after the British occupation in 1884. Supposedly, he did not know European languages – only Arabic and perhaps Turkish and Persian. He was an impresario and musician, thus it is little surprise that the plays are, to quote Badawī, ‘an excuse for singing.’⁶⁶ This was also the view of Nağm, who judged that these two musicals are without any dramatic effect.⁶⁷ Despite the literary critics’ judgment, al-Qabbānī has been well remembered in twentieth-century Syria; there has even been a television soap opera based on his imagined life.

The story of the slave-girl *Uns al-Ġalīs* was first interpreted by Nağm, next, critiqued by Šihāb, and more recently by Ismā‘īl.⁶⁸ There are two versions of this play today in circulation: a reprint by Nağm, based on an undated printed edition,⁶⁹ and another reprint, based on again an undated (but different) edition, by Ismā‘īl.⁷⁰ I did not find a copy in MQ. It is therefore possible that only al-Qabbānī’s troupes performed this play and that he brought the manuscripts or print copies used by his troupe back to Damascus when he left Egypt (after his theatre burned down in 1900).

The plot is simple: the governor of Basra, Ibn Sulaymān, asks his vizier, al-Faḍl to buy a new slave girl. He buys the slave girl *Uns al-Ġalīs*, but al-Faḍl’s son ‘Alī falls in love with her. The jealous al-Mu‘īn, the other vizier, reveals this to Ibn Sulaymān, who orders that al-Faḍl, his son, and *Uns* all be imprisoned. ‘Alī and *Uns* flee and finally arrive at a garden, which turns out to be that of Hārūn al-Rašīd. When he hears their troubles, the caliph orders his vizier Ġa‘far to give a letter to ‘Alī for Ibn Sulaymān. But the governor jails them with their

65 Marzolph/van Leeuwen 2004, p. 193, p. 253.

66 Badawī 1988, p. 62.

67 Nağm 1967, pp. 371–4.

68 Ismā‘īl 2008, pp. 23–36.

69 Nağm (ed.), 1963.

70 Ismā‘īl 2008.

father and prepares for their imminent execution, hastened by al-Muʿīn, who in fact forged a fake letter from Ġaʿfar. At the last moment, the vizier arrives and brings everyone to Baghdad where the caliph judges them. Hārūn al-Rašīd gives the governorship to al-Faḍl and imprisons Ibn Sulaymān and al-Muʿīn. In Nağm's reprint, the play ends with the praise of the khedive Abbas Hilmi II, while in Ismāʿīl's reprint the play closes with two poems (or songs) about the moral deviance of modern youth (*fatā al-ʿaṣr*).⁷¹

[*The Story of*] *Hārūn al-Rašīd with the Nobleman Ġānim Ibn Ayyūb and Qūt al-Qulūb* is a later play, whose first known performance was in 1890. It entails a brief story about Ġānim, a Syrian merchant (not an 'emir', a prince or a commander, as the title may suggest) in Baghdad who happens to be in the city cemetery when the servants of the caliphal court bring a large box in which there is the slave girl Qūt al-Qulūb to be buried alive. The wife of Hārūn al-Rašīd wants the girl to be killed. Ġānim rescues the girl, falls in love, and publicly confesses his love, but when he learns that she is the slave girl of the caliph he immediately offers his help and renounces his declaration. Qūt al-Qulūb, in turn, is enflamed by such chivalry and admits her love for Ġānim. Meanwhile Hārūn al-Rašīd learns from an old woman that Qūt al-Qulūb has died. At her fake grave other slaves tell him what actually happened, including Ġānim's profession of love. In his anger, the caliph, thinking that Ġānim violated his right to his slave girl, orders the old woman to be killed, Ġānim to be killed, his house in Syria to be destroyed, and Qūt al-Qulūb to be imprisoned. Ġānim flees and falls unconscious but is found by the head merchant Ṣāliḥ. Meanwhile, Qūt explains their love to the caliph, who pardons her and her lover, and allows Qūt to search for Ġānim. Ġānim's mother and sister by coincidence arrive at Ṣāliḥ's house and reunite with Ġānim, who is soon discovered by Qūt. Finally, Hārūn al-Rašīd arrives and immediately organizes a wedding – ultimately receiving Ġānim's sister, instead, as his slave girl. All praise the caliph (Abdülhamid II – the real Ottoman caliph in the text) and, in the version, which was printed by Nağm, also Abbas Hilmi II, the khedive of Egypt at the time.⁷²

3.2 *The Learned Hand: Sheikh al-Aḥḍab and al-Qabbānī*

As to the source of the plot of *Uns al-Ġalīs*, Nağm and others have suggested that it is from the *Nights* story known as 'The Tale of the Two Viziers In Which Uns al-Ġalīs Is Mentioned' (nights 45–51).⁷³ Nağm thought that al-Qabbānī followed the story more or less faithfully, yet Al-Khozai and Badawī note that 'the

71 Ismāʿīl 2008, pp. 305 [49]–312[56].

72 Nağm (ed.), 1963, pp. 3–33.

73 Cited works of Nağm, Ismāʿīl, and al-ʿAwānī 2010, p. 162.

story of the play varies from the *Arabian Nights* version in some important details.⁷⁴ This variation is especially important in portraying ‘Alī, the son of al-Faḍl, as a sympathetic character, when, in ‘the original’, he is portrayed as a morally condemnable suitor. In addition, Al-Khozai interprets the source as ‘the local tradition’.⁷⁵ It is perhaps timely to underline once again that there is no evidence that any stories in the printed versions of the *Nights* belonged to popular lore in the late nineteenth century. However, as shown above, there was both a learned awareness of its significance in Europe and contemporary widespread circulation of royal stories and jokes, including both respectable as well as quite irreverent Hārūn al-Rašīd stories. In addition to these, one must add the learned repertoire of Muslim intellectuals at the time which can be considered as ‘local tradition’ in a particular sense.

Uns al-Ġalīs provides a good example about this repertoire. In his analysis, Ismā‘īl points out that not only did al-Qabbānī compose poems for the play but he also incorporated well known medieval poems from al-Iṣfahānī, al-Ḥaḡīb al-Muṣḥafī al-Andalusī, Muḥammad Ibn Ḥāzīm al-Bāhili, and Abū al-‘Alā’ al-Ma‘arrī.⁷⁶ The author, supposedly al-Qabbānī, as Šihāb remarks, used old poetry in his other plays as well.⁷⁷ It is noteworthy that al-Qabbānī did this rather than using the poetry from the *Nights*, and Ismā‘īl argues that only in *Uns al-Ġalīs* does he use two verses *verbatim* from the *Nights*.

Similarly, according to Nağm, *The Nobleman Ġānim Ibn Ayyūb and Qūt al-Qulūb* is based on the tale of Night 52;⁷⁸ Ismā‘īl remarks that it is the tale ‘The Merchant Ayyūb and his Son Ġānim and his Daughter Fitna’ which is from Night 52 to Night 60. (It is not clear which edition they used.) The tale is found in all early printed editions and also in the so-called ‘Egyptian manuscripts’.⁷⁹

Ismā‘īl calls attention to the fact that in the *Qūt al-Qulūb* play al-Qabbānī did not use poetry from the *Nights* at all. Instead, he took some lines from a number of medieval Arab poets such as Qays Ibn Dārīḥ, Ibn al-Rūmī, Ṭarfa Ibn al-‘Abd, and even the contemporary poetess ‘Ā’iṣa ‘Iṣmat/Ayşe Ismet (today known as ‘Ā’iṣa Taymūriyya, 1840–1902).⁸⁰ Šihāb adds that al-Qabbānī also used poems from the medieval poet al-Tuġrā’ī.⁸¹ If correct, this list means that the author could not have composed this play before 1885 because this was the

74 Al-Khozai 1984, p. 93; Badawī 1988, p. 61.

75 Al-Khozai 1984, p. 91.

76 Ismā‘īl 2008, p. 29.

77 Šihāb 2009, p. 551.

78 Nağm 1967, p. 371. This is repeated by later authors as well, such as al-‘Awānī 2010, p. 164.

79 Marzolph/van Leeuwen 2004, pp. 192–3.

80 Ismā‘īl 2008, pp. 91–2.

81 Šihāb 2009, p. 551 (n. 2).

first year that ʿĀʾiṣa ʿIṣmat's *Dīwān* was published.⁸² The names suggest that the author focused on high elite poetry, including contemporary poetry (often called 'neo-classical'), which indicates a very learned individual. According to Ismāʿīl, the author also excised the 'improper' words from the original tale in order to conform to 'the Arabic and Islamic spirit' (in this way, this particular theatre historian suggests that the original tale was neither Arabic nor Islamic).⁸³

I can offer two explanations for the use of the sophisticated medieval Arabic poetry in the musical plays: the first is that al-Qabbānī was a musician and for him poetry was important only to produce songs. That is, we should not ascribe to him a conscious attempt at 'revivalism' or an effort to connect to the intellectual heritage of the past, but rather a technical and practical need for well-rhyming, well-written lines for musical purposes.

The second explanation is, as Nağm pointed out, that some Qabbānī-plays were not actually his work but instead that of the learned and prolific Muslim intellectual Sheikh Ibrāhīm al-Aḥḍab (1826–1891) in Beirut.⁸⁴ While *Uns al-Ġalīs* and *The Nobleman Ġānim Ibn Ayyūb* are not among the plays of al-Aḥḍab previously attributed to al-Qabbānī, it is possible that at least the learned sheikh's technique inspired the musician. For al-Aḥḍab did use al-Iṣfahānī and many other medieval authors as inspiration for his plays from the late 1860s and, indeed, he was an incredibly gifted scholar who also produced various works in linguistics and poetry. While there is no clear evidence at this point, al-Qabbānī in his two Hārūn al-Rašīd plays may have followed his method. Be that as it may, while the core of these two rather entertaining plays is almost certainly the printed editions of the *Nights*, the textual evidence shows the engagement with the learned Islamicate tradition.

3.3 *The Absent Ruler?*

With regard to the portrayal of Hārūn al-Rašīd, there is an obvious intention to gain the favour of the Ottoman ruling class in Egypt. The involvement of the poetry of ʿĀʾiṣa ʿIṣmat, the daughter of Taymūr Pasha, also suggests such a disposition. Al-Khozai argues that in *Uns al-Ġalīs* Hārūn al-Rašīd represents the good ruler as opposed to the governor Ibn Sulaymān, the embodiment of the unjust oppressor.⁸⁵ In this play this ideal ruler is rather distant, in fact he is not participating in the events, and only at the end does he distribute justice. Šihāb

82 ʿIṣmat 1303 (1885); unless al-Qabbānī had private access to her poetry before.

83 Ismāʿīl 2008, p. 93.

84 Nağm 1985, pp. 20–25.

85 Al-Khozai 1984, pp. 97–8.

suggests that in some scenes the caliph behaves as 'a countryside notable'.⁸⁶ Since *Uns al-Ġalīs* was first staged in 1884 in Egypt, it is possible that the target was primarily Khedive Tevfik and therefore that the play may have contributed to re-legitimizing this Ottoman governor (who remained in power only with British help). In the later, as yet undated printed edition, the hymn at the end to Abbas Hilmi II suggests that at the time of printing he was in power. But before jumping to conclusions about the image of the good and just ruler based on this hymn, it is worth noting two points: first, reading aloud praise or a praising poem to the ruler on stage in official theatres was an almost codified element of performances at the time; and second, as some theatrical manuscripts and prints used by the troupes show, the printed praises were often deleted or substituted when performed.⁸⁷ Thus the image of Hārūn al-Rašīd as an allegory of the British-occupied Egyptian ruler must be handled with care in *Uns al-Ġalīs*.

This is also the case with *The Nobleman Ġānim Ibn Ayyūb and Qūt al-Qulūb*. It is first documented as performed by al-Qabbānī's troupe in a countryside tour in the mid-Upper Egyptian city of Mīnya in 1890.⁸⁸ The play remained in the repertoire of al-Qabbānī and an Alexandrian amateur theatre troupe also performed it under the title *Šidq al-Naġāt* (The Truth of Rescue) in 1894.⁸⁹ According to Ismā'īl, al-Qabbānī's troupe performed this play more than twenty times in 1890s Egypt.⁹⁰ In today's Syria, the play was performed in the 1970s to commemorate the birth of the Arabic Syrian theatre.⁹¹ Baybars starts the textual analysis of nineteenth-century Arabic plays with this work in his literary survey.⁹² While the play's plot is inferior to others, it was certainly well-established in official cultural memory in late-twentieth-century Syria.

Unlike in *Uns al-Ġalīs*, Hārūn al-Rašīd is an active participant in *The Nobleman Ġānim Ibn Ayyūb and Qūt al-Qulūb*. He is cruel, summarily ordering executions and punishments. He is portrayed less as a benevolent ruler than as a powerful monarch who demands his right to his slaves and reacts with terrible rage to mistakes. Was this a metaphor for Abdülhamid II? As mentioned earlier, at the end of one printed version of the play, the caliph is praised with the name of Abdülhamid. However, since this particular play was likely not

86 Šihāb 2009, p. 548.

87 In the MQ there are many printed plays in which the praise is crossed out, indicating possibly that it was not performed.

88 Naġm (ed.), 1963, p. 408.

89 Naġm 1967, p. 183.

90 Ismā'īl 2008, p. 90.

91 Karachouli 1992, pp. 94–5.

92 Baybars 1985, p. 255.

performed in front of either the Ottoman or Ottoman Egyptian elite, its printed form may reflect a slightly more unmediated imagination about absolute power than the plays of Naqqāš or Wāṣif. All in all, while al-Qabbānī's plays are the most commercial and simple ones in terms of their plot and aesthetic value, they are, paradoxically, also the most sophisticated in terms of inter-textual references. In this sense, they embody a sort of middle ground between an intellectual *adab*-tradition and the need to cater to new mass-audiences in British-occupied Egypt using musical entertainment.⁹³

4 Conclusion: Politics and Personification

These plays and their performances in fin-de-siècle Egypt explain why Tawfiq al-Ḥakīm could (at least in imaginary terms) convincingly use the world of Hārūn al-Rašīd for a literary trick in 1930s Egypt. By that time, the Hārūn al-Rašīd plays were 'classical' part of entertainment culture. In this essay, I have focused on four plays that take their main subject from *The Arabian Nights* as they were known in printed French and Arabic editions in the nineteenth century. There are other plays in Arabic during this period that also bring into play similar topics from the learned editions of the *Nights*. I have argued that while the choice of motifs in these instances was legitimized by the European fascination with, and construction of, the *Nights*, the plays' horizon of ideas reflects in particular late Ottoman (and British) imperial politics. In addition, I have contextualized the texts within other genres such as the re-printed (or re-invented) textual traditions of *nawādir* and vernacular tales; and I have called attention to the importance of music. In addition to entertainment, I have argued that these plays—perhaps conforming to the expectations of Ottoman Arab elites—portrayed the Abbasid ruler as an allegory for the Ottoman sultan or the Egyptian khedive.

The Hārūn al-Rašīd plays and many others prompt us to take the word *nahḍa* seriously: regardless of what we think about the continuities and ruptures of the genres and ideas in Arabic, in theatre there was a physical 'revival': the stage provided a space in which things past were performed as live, embodied actions. 'Acting' in nineteenth-century Arabic was called 'personification' (*tašhīṣ*) or 'representation' (*tamtīl*) or simply *tiyātrū*, after the Greek/Italian/Turkish. Personification meant real bodies in real time and in real voices imitating imagined or existing past kings, slave-girls, emirs, or ordinary people on stage. Regardless of the literary value of the texts, the performances reached

93 Fahmy 2011.

presumably larger audiences than any printed products, considering the low rate of literacy at this time. Thus, they are indicative of a non-scriptural, physical, lived mode of intellectual and emotional expression of, and engagement with, old-new political ideas.

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Alfred Faraĝ's *Arabian Nights*

Ongoing Experimentation in Arabic Theatre

Daniela Potenza

During his career as a playwright, Alfred Faraĝ (1929–2005)¹ wrote six plays and a novel taking inspiration from the *Arabian Nights*.² This lifelong relationship is complex, varies with time, and reveals that Faraĝ was deeply aware of the multiple possibilities the *Arabian Nights* can offer if dramatized. In addition, he wrote several extremely effective plays expressing his own political opinions with consequences that led him to detention and a prolonged exile. He is one of Egypt's leading playwrights, known for his political engagement through theatre and a continuous aesthetic experimentation.

This chapter considers the relationship between the plays and the *Nights* as a transformation where a text A, called 'hypotext', is transformed into a text B, the 'hypertext'.³ The hypotext is the *Arabian Nights* in their whole or in the form of a specific tale, and the hypertext are four different plays: *Ḥallāq Baġdād* (The Barber of Baghdad, 1963), *Buqbuq al-Kaslān* (Lazy Buqbuq, 1965), *Ālī Ġanāḥ al-Tabrīzī wa tābi'uhu Quffa* ('Ālī Ġanāḥ al-Tabrīzī and his servant Quffa, 1968, translated as *The Caravan*⁴), and *Rasā'il Qāḍī Iṣbīliyya* (The Letters of the Judge of Seville, 1975).

In particular, this chapter will deal with two aspects of the transformation. One is a use of the *Nights* as a revival of the Arabic heritage and especially of some traditional theatrical shows. The other is the dramatization, that is the formal passage from the narrative to the dramatic mode.⁵ In the conclusion, we will sum up similarities and differences in the treatment of the hypotext and highlight some peculiarities of the *Nights*. Before the comparison, short plots of the tales and of the plays are provided together with some comments.

1 The name of the playwright can be transliterated in different ways. However, I chose the transliteration Alfred Faraĝ because his first name is the same as the English 'Alfred'.

2 The plays number seven altogether if we consider the colloquial version he wrote to be one of those plays.

3 For my approach and an account of the different relationships existing between texts, see Genette 1982.

4 El-Enany 1995.

5 See Genette 1982, pp. 395–415.

But first, we will briefly explore the context of production of Farağ's plays within their literary background.

Over the past century and a half, the *Arabian Nights* have been a preeminent source for the Arabic theatre.⁶ One of the first plays of the Arabic theatre, *Abū al-Ḥasan al-muǧaffal aw Hārūn al-Rašīd* (Abū al-Ḥasan the Fool or Hārūn al-Rašīd, 1849–1850) by Mārūn al-Naqqāš was an adaptation of a tale from the *Arabian Nights*. In that time, the *Nights* offered a wide range of familiar characters, themes, and motifs capable of interesting and pleasing the public with an art, the theatre, that had just been acquired in the Arabic countries.

The use of the *Nights* in Arabic drama took on a special place during the 1960s, when Arabic drama was engaged in an active search for its identity.⁷ In the early 1960s, the novelist and dramatist Yūsuf Idrīs called for a return to indigenous dramatic forms, to be found in particular shows such as the *sāmīr*, the *Ḥayāl al-ẓill*, the *'Arāūz (Karagoz)*,⁸ and the storyteller. Idrīs presented those forms as symbols of the *tamasruh* (theatricality) validating the existence of an indigenous Arabic theatre. In the meantime, he recognised the value of these forms for approaching the theories of the political theatre through the breaking of the fourth wall.⁹

Generally, the efforts towards the creation of an identity for the Arabic theatre converged in the *masraḥ al-turāt* (the heritage theatre), a category including plays either relying on indigenous dramatic forms or making use of the content of traditional and folk literature in order to convey a contemporary message.¹⁰ Farağ's plays inspired by the *Arabian Nights* are part of the *masraḥ al-turāt*. Nevertheless, being aware that theatre was not indigenous to the Arabic countries, Farağ believed that any inspiration derived from 'heritage' had to be aimed at discovering a national and original formula for the art of theatre, albeit a national Arabic formula for contemporary ideas. References to heritage (*al-turāt*) were meant to bring the theatre closer to the audience's taste. So, he had to balance the national spirit on one side with the progressive aim on the other, at both the cultural as well as artistic levels.¹¹

6 For a detailed study, see al-Hasan 1984.

7 Al-Rāī 1975, p. 177.

8 The *sāmīr* is a popular show with a storyteller, the *Ḥayāl al-ẓill* is a form of the shadow theatre and the *Arāǧūz*, (*Arāǧōz* in the Egyptian dialect) is a hand puppet derived from the Turkish *Karagöz*.

9 Idrīs 1974, pp. 467–95 and Ruocco 2000, pp. 100–101.

10 Al-Rāī 1980, pp. 93–4.

11 Al-Hasan 1984, p. 378.

Ḥallāq Baġdād is the first of Faraġ's plays inspired by the *Arabian Nights* and it is also the play that established the author's fame.¹² Faraġ was especially attached to it as he wrote it while he was incarcerated, along with other members of the intelligentsia, from March 1959 to February 1963, during one of the occasional campaigns against the so-called 'communists'. Despite the hard times and difficult conditions, Faraġ began to write the play using cigarette paper, and staged it many times in prison with the collaboration of his fellow prisoners.¹³

Ḥallāq Baġdād consists of two parts: 'Yūsuf and Yāsmīna' and 'Zīnat al-Nisā'. Each of these two parts stands on its own as a one-act play. However, they are linked by common elements, namely the principal character (the barber of Baghdad) and the scene of the action, i.e., 'The place: an imaginary Baghdad. The time: the fifth or sixth century of the Hijra or as you like'.¹⁴ In the post-script to the play, the author explained that the plot of *Ḥallāq Baġdād* came from two tales, the *Tale of the Barber of Baghdad*¹⁵ from the *Arabian Nights* and a tale from al-Ġāhiz's *Kitāb al-maḥāsin wa l-aḍḍāq*. We will focus on the first play starting from its hypotext.

During a party, a young lame man refuses to stay in the same room as the 'sinister barber'. Before leaving the place, he explains the reason of his attitude towards the barber through a tale. The young lame was the only son of the chief merchant of Baghdad. When his father died, he inherited all his possessions. One day, while out walking, a beautiful young woman appeared at her window. At that moment he fell in love with her. When he soon discovered that the girl was the daughter of the Qadi, he realized a marriage would be impossible. He fell ill, and when an old maid learned of his problem, she arranged a meeting for them at the young woman's house at a time when the Qadi would have been away for the Friday prayer. When the day arrived, the old woman suggested that the lover be given a shave before the meeting. Unfortunately, the barber who was brought in by a slave was an inquisitive prattler, and as a result was unable to complete his task on time. When the young man finally got rid of the barber, he hurried to the Qadi's house and, as the door was open, he entered. No sooner did he meet the girl than the Qadi returned. Hearing the cry of a servant girl and a male slave being beaten by the Qadi, the barber, who happened to be outside the house since he had followed the young man,

12 El-Enany 2000, p. 176.

13 Amin 2008, p. 9.

14 The place of the second play is exactly the same, while the time is 'a week, a month or as you like after the barber's first adventure' Faraġ 1963, p. 9, p. 95.

15 Nights no. 28–30. All the references to the number of the nights follow the numeration as it appears in *Alf Layla wa Layla*. 2008. Beirut: Dār Šādir, from the Būlāq edition.

thought that the Qadi was beating the two lovers. Therefore, he cried for help. Many people rushed forward and shouted in loud voices, provoking the Qadi to come out. The Qadi listened to the story of the barber, and then let him enter to search for the young man. In the meantime, not finding a way to escape, the young man hid himself in a large chest. By chance, the barber went directly to the chest and ordered it carried out into the street. The young man escaped from the chest, breaking his leg after a long run, followed by the barber. He finally arrived at his friend's shop and begged him to let him stay until his leg healed. After some time, he gathered all his money and left Baghdad, swearing that he would never again set foot in the same town as the barber.

As in the *Arabian Nights* tale, in the first play, Yūsuf, son of the chief merchant of Mosul, has fallen in love with the daughter of the Qadi, whom he had met perchance in the Baghdad marketplace. Although he had been informed that the girl was promised to the old wealthy vizier, he follows her to her house. The girl, Yāsmīna, noticed him and sent her chambermaid, Šafiqa, to ask his intentions. Yūsuf admits his love to the chambermaid, and from then on Šafiqa becomes the go-between for the two lovers. Now, at the time when the play commences, the lovers despair of any hope to marry, and so vow to be united in death.

Yūsuf has prepared a bottle of poison and is awaiting Yāsmīna so that they may drink the poison together. Šafiqa arrives and tells him that Yāsmīna will be coming as soon as her father leaves for the Friday prayer. Yūsuf wants to keep his plans secret and Šafiqa assumes that they are going to marry. In fact, after a while, a porter, previously called by Šafiqa, shouts in the street looking for the owner of a wedding dress. Yūsuf grows worried that this porter may know the story and spread it all over Baghdad. When the porter, Abū l-Fuḍūl, enters, Yūsuf detects his curiosity and decides to lock him in a chest.

In the meantime, just before departing to fetch Yāsmīna, Šafiqa suggests that Yūsuf be shaved, a customary practice before marriage. Abū l-Fuḍūl, from inside the chest, reveals he is a barber but has been prevented by the Qadi from practicing his profession. Coincidentally, he happens to have his equipment with him. He offers to shave Yūsuf and Yūsuf agrees. The curious barber notices a bottle close to the bed. While Yūsuf is out of the room, he pours the contents of the bottle into a vial of his own and refills the bottle with a mixture of water and lotion. Then, while shaving, the barber talks and speculates about the strange situation he is in. Once finished, he reenters the chest, but this time he has broken the lock. Yūsuf dresses and Yāsmīna and Šafiqa arrive. The two lovers go to the bed and drink from the bottle. Soon after, the Caliph, the Vizier, the Qadi, and the executioner enter. When they discover the two lovers, Yūsuf tells them that they have both drunk poison and soon will be dead. The barber,

who has now come out from the chest knowing that the couple drank from his lotion instead, asks the Caliph to let them marry if they recover. The Caliph agrees. When the barber reveals that they have not taken any poison, the Caliph pronounces his approval for the marriage. Yūsuf and Yāsmīna are happy, while the Qadi complains about the busybody barber and the Caliph acknowledges the good deed.

In the second play, Abū l-Fuḍūl has now been deprived of his porter's licence. Reduced to beggary, he vows never again to meddle in other people's affairs. However, he cannot keep his promise, as that goes against his nature. So, when he knocks at the door of the beautiful widow, Zīnat al-Nisā', to ask for alms, he cannot stop himself from defending her from the threats of two high officials. As in the first play, the Caliph arrives at the end and solves the situation.

In a general comparison of the comedy to the tale by al-Ġāḥiẓ, the story of the two couples seem similar, except that only in the play summarized above are Yūsuf and Yāsmīna accorded a happy end, obtained through the intervention of the barber. In the play, the barber assumes a positive role, in contrast to the barber of the tale, who completely ruins the young man affecting him on physical, sentimental, and economic levels. We can also observe that the intertextual net is wider than the sources acknowledged by the author. The influence of Shakespeare is also evident. The two lovers who decide to unite in a death produced by poison is a clear reminder of *Romeo and Juliet*. Besides, a similar tale to the one of al-Ġāḥiẓ also exists in the *Arabian Nights*.¹⁶

In spite of the *Arabian Nights*' inspiration, the play may be understood as having a contemporary message. As a matter of fact, Faraġ expressed in an interview his happiness about the reception of *Ḥallāq Bajdād* inside the prison, 'as the audience in prison understood the subtext much better, for it compared them to Abū l-Fuḍūl. They too had meddled in the affairs of the Egyptian government on behalf of the Iraqi communists and were punished for it'.¹⁷ For them, it must have been clear that Abū l-Fuḍūl was representing them as people looking for democracy, while the Caliph, who is new to the tale, may be a representation of their president Gamal Abd al-Nasser (Ġamāl 'Abd Al-Nāṣīr). As Rasheed El-Enany has argued, the comparison between the Caliph and Nasser is evident especially during the final scene of the play, when the Caliph appears genuinely surprised by the repressive nature of his regime.

16 See night no. 581.

17 Amin 2008, p. 10.

There, Farağ 'thinly disguised his *cri de cœur* for democracy, addressed to Nasser'.¹⁸

Interestingly, the narrative mode maintains an important presence in the play. In fact, a peculiarity of the dramatic genre is that it represents rather than narrates events.¹⁹ Consequently, in the dramatization of a tale, the narrated facts are normally converted into enactment.²⁰ Indeed, the storytelling is an essential part of the play as far as its recurrent presence and its thematic implications are concerned. In the initial part of the play (pp. 13–31), Yūsuf and Šafiqa recall the love-story between the two young lovers, while very little action goes on. Then, obviously, the inquisitive barber is a narrative character, and Yūsuf is a skilled storyteller, as well:

Yūsuf (perfectly imitating him [the barber]): You will go out from here directly to the market. And...? Your friends will ask you where you were. I was carrying a bridal dress ... and who's the bride? Ah! They are in trouble! What is going on? And who's the groom? What does he look like? What's the address of his house?²¹

This formal link between the play and the *Arabian Nights*' tale takes a particular shape and significance if considered in some detail. First, the play starts with Yūsuf introducing himself in these terms:

Yūsuf: I am Yūsuf of Mosul, son of Mosul's chief of merchants. I have a story so prodigious that, were it only written with a needle on the inner corner of an eye, it would yet be a warning to those who are wise.²²

Yūsuf is not only a skillful storyteller. The quoted sentence is recurrent in the *Arabian Nights* and reminds the audience of the traditional reciter, the *rāwī*. Therefore, Yūsuf's special manner of telling is certainly a way to bring the

18 El-Enany 2000, pp. 175–81.

19 Debs 1993, p. 210. We have to notice that, while epic theatre is a dramatic genre which narrates rather than represents events, the prevalent narrative mode in this play cannot be relied upon to treach the aims and techniques of the epic theatre, as it is meant to remind the spectator that the play is a representation of reality and not reality itself.

20 See Genette 1982, pp. 395–415.

21 Farağ 1963, pp. 42–3.

22 Ibid., p. 13. The translation of the sentence is my adaptation of 'your story is so prodigious that, were it only written with a needle on the inner corner of an eye, it would yet be a matter of reflection to the circumspect' in Mardrus and Mathers 2013, p. 11. For the meaning of the sentence, see Colla 2013, pp. 101–10.

theatre closer to the audience's taste. At the same time, it relates the theatre to the theatrical Arabic heritage.²³

Shortly after *Hallāq Bajdād*, Faraġ wrote *Buqbuq al-Kaslān*, in which a tale from the *Arabian Nights* is adapted into a one-act play, mostly constituted by a monologue. The adapted tale is one of the stories of the barber's brothers, told by the barber in order to demonstrate his good behaviour.²⁴

The fifth brother of the barber spent his inheritance on glassware to sell and make money from its commerce. He immediately started to imagine how his life would be once he got wealthy. His imagination brought him into a day-dream. Completely absorbed in it, he started to move and act until the moment when, dreaming of kicking his wife the princess, he accidentally kicked his glass, breaking it all. He started to cry and a woman, upon seeing his grief, ordered her servant to give him a purse full of gold.²⁵

The protagonist of the one-act play is Buqbuq,²⁶ a lazy man who is walking through the streets of Baghdad carrying three glass carafes. He complains about his fatigue and fantasizes about taking a nap as if he was in a splendid castle. So, he reclines on a bench and starts daydreaming, mimicking all he encounters in his visions. In his fantasy, he becomes wealthy by selling his carafes, gaining enough wealth to marry the daughter of an illustrious vizier. On his wedding night he strikes her when she offers him a cold drink. While he re-enacts the beating, the lazy Buqbuq smashes his three carafes. People in the houses around Buqbuq 'castle' are annoyed by the noise he is making. When he awakes from his dream and complains about his loss, they form into a chorus and ask him what happened. Then, a wealthy resident shouts out to slaughter Buqbuq with the fragments of his carafes.

The final line goes as follows:

All together (approaching the audience): Gentlemen, you saw for yourselves this picture shaped by the great popular composer of *A Thousand*

23 Besides, as al-Hasan has pointed out 'this device introduces the hero and gives the audience an idea of the dramatic action which is about to take place, and which is supposed to be a secret between Yūsuf and Yāsmīna. This secret contains an element of suspense, as the audience realises that the hero has prepared a poison with which he intends to commit suicide with his beloved'. Al-Hasan 1984, p. 394.

24 The tale of the fifth brother, nights no. 31–2.

25 This is the part of the tale Faraġ chooses to adapt for his play. The tale then continues with the protagonist going through bad fortune. After many adventures, he turned up poor, banned from Baghdad and with his ears cut. At the end of the story, his brother the barber took care of him.

26 Name taken from the protagonist of the tale of the third brother of the barber (night no. 30).

and One Nights one thousand years ago. Its meaning is that daydreaming destroys people like it shatters carafes. A lazy man compensates his failure with vanity and lack of cleverness while life, prosperity, and happiness are the sons of work, not of dreams. Thank you.²⁷

Farağ selected only a part of the original tale, namely the part that serves his didactic purpose. He took the first segment of the plot, with the lazy man destroying the glass during his daydream, then he introduced an innovation: instead of the rich woman compensating his misfortune, a rich man wants him to be chased away. Finally, a chorus appears and expresses a moral statement, marking the bad behaviour of the *kaslān* (lazy man). The moral of the play is clear. Through Farağ's rewriting, the tale from the *Nights* has become a one-act didactic play to be performed in a socialist context, where work is praised over reverie. This subject, extrapolated from the tale, becomes particularly significant in the literary context of the play since reverie was a present topic in the Egyptian theatre during the 1950s and 1960s.²⁸ The *rêveur* has often been related to Nasser and his utopian ideology. According to cases, he could be represented either as a positive character, or as a negative one, like Buqbuq.

In *Buqbuq al-Kaslān*, the narrative mode is dominant. Transposing a narration from a tale into another narration in a play does not demand many adaptations. Besides, no innovation occurs in the actantial model either. At the same time, the narration in the play takes on a different significance from that in the *Arabian Nights'* tale. As Dina Amin (Dīnā Amīn) has pointed out:

Buqbuq is the first truly modern metadramatic character in Farağ's drama; whereas his fantasies and daydreams are narrated to the readers and listeners in the original story of *A Thousand and One Nights*, in Farağ's one-man show those ambitions are dramatized and re-enacted in a voyeuristic manner to the reader/spectator of Farağ's play more so than to the reader/listener of *The Nights*.²⁹

The metadrama in this play aims at involving the audience in the dramatic illusion in order to deliver Farağ's didactic mission to an affected and better

27 Farağ 1965, p. 216.

28 For instance, together with illusion and utopia, reverie is the subject of Farağ's *ʿAlī Ġanāh al-Tabrīzī wa tābī'uhu Quffā*, as well. Another former example is *Ġumhūrīyyat Faraḡāt* (Faraḡāt's Republic, 1957, Yūsuf Idrīs), the dramatic adaptation of the homonymous short story.

29 Amin 2008, p. 72.

responsive audience. The message from the chorus at the end of the drama is a proof that he intended for a direct implication of the audience.

The integration of the tale into the play leads us to consider another aspect characterizing Faraĝ's rewritings of the *Nights*: the choice of the dramatic language. Quoting a large part of the tale – though the quotations are neither marked nor signalled – Faraĝ intertwined it with some new parts reproducing the language of the hypotext. Then, the language of the play in its whole is the same as the language of the *Nights*: it is not Classical Arabic, yet neither is it colloquial. Faraĝ himself explained that, for his dramatic language, he took inspiration from the *Nights*.³⁰ This particular variety of the Arabic language used in the *Nights* has been defined as 'Middle Arabic', which is an intermediate, multiform variety, characterized by the interference of the two poles (Classical and colloquial) on the linguistic continuum and also by some other specific features.³¹ Middle Arabic was used especially during the later Middle Age as a versatile and familiar means of expression suitable for a literature without great intellectual aims, but nonetheless of an artistic bent.³² Faraĝ's use of the *Nights'* language for his plays is significant for at least two reasons. In fact, Middle Arabic has been defined as a language able to bring to the dialogues a certain ease that is hard to achieve through the Classical Arabic.³³ This feature becomes particularly useful to the theatre. Moreover, Middle Arabic is not as regionally limited as the colloquial would be, and could therefore serve the pan-Arabic aims of Faraĝ's theatre.

In contrast to *Buqbuq al-Kaslān*, *ʿAlī Ğanāḥ al-Tabrīzī wa tābī'uhu Quffa* is established on a hypotext of at least three different tales from the *Nights*. Using Faraĝ's words, 'If the link between the two stories of *Ḥallāq Baġdād* and their origins in the heritage [*al-turath*] is clear, the link between *ʿAlī Ğanāḥ al-Tabrīzī wa tābī'uhu Quffa* and its origins in the heritage could be more mysterious'.³⁴ In fact, as the author declared in a postscript to the play, in the collection, these tales are unrelated to each other.³⁵

The first tale is the tale of the imaginary table (night no. 32). The sixth brother of the barber was a poor beggar. One day he entered a splendid mansion. Upon learning that the unexpected guest was a hungry beggar, the wealthy owner insisted the beggar shared his dinner. He invited him to wash his hands

30 See Faraĝ 1994, p. 60.

31 See Lentin 2004, p. 434.

32 Guillaume 2007, p. 570.

33 Ibid.

34 Faraĝ 1994, p. 399.

35 Faraĝ 1968, p. 361. Some other tales might have inspired Faraĝ for this play, namely: the tale of 'Alī the Egyptian, nights no. 425–43.

before the meal, but there was no water, while the host was making the motions of performing the act of washing his hands. The story continues and the host called his attendants to bring in the food. Numerous servants entered also making the motions of carrying dishes laden with food and placing them on the table. Thinking his host must be fond of jokes, the poor man joined the play. Then he surprised the host by striking his neck. When the host asked the beggar the reason for this action, the latter answered that it was due to the effect of the wine which prompted his loss of his manners. The host seemed to enjoy the extent of his guest's humour. In the end, real food was brought in and a long companionship grew between the two men. After twenty years, the host died, and his property was confiscated by the Caliph. Then misadventures began.³⁶

The second tale FaraĀ drew from is the *Tale of the Sack* (Nights no. 294–5). One day, as 'Alī was sitting in his shop, a stranger appeared and began to bargain for certain goods. Suddenly he reached for a small sack and walked away with it as if it was his own. 'Alī stopped him and tried to retrieve it, but to no avail. They were thereupon advised to head to the judge to resolve the matter. When asked who the owner of the sack was, the stranger immediately declared it as his, claiming that he had lost it the day before and now found in 'Alī's shop. The judge instructed the stranger to list the contents of the bag. The stranger mentioned objects, animals, riches, palaces, garments, people, and many more items. The judge then posed to 'Alī the same question. Astonished by the stranger's response, 'Alī then listed similar items but on a larger scale than his counterpart before him. When the stranger heard 'Alī's testimony he cried out, adding more objects to his list. 'Alī was much enraged by his opponent and he too added more items. Finally, the judge checked the contents of the bag and extracted a little orange peel and some olive stones. 'Alī at this moment relinquished his claim over the bag, insisting that it must belong to his opponent.

The third tale (nights no 989–1001) relates the story of Ma'rūf, a poor and honest cobbler who escapes from his cruel wife in Cairo thanks to a genie who brings him to a far away country. There he meets 'Alī, an old neighbour from Cairo, who decides to help him. Following 'Alī's advice, Ma'rūf donates the money 'Alī has given to him to the poor and pretends to be a rich merchant awaiting for his caravan. According to 'Alī's plans, suddenly gifts and loans pour

36 The beggar fled the city for his life and while roaming in the desert, he was seized by a band of Bedouins and imprisoned. Every day he was tortured and was asked to pay ransom for his life. One day, the chieftain's wife, after repeated attempts to lure him, finally triumphed in his seduction. While sitting on the beggar's knee, the chieftain entered the tent and, with his knife, castrated him, and cut off both his lips. He was then carried to a barren hillside and left there to perish.

down on him from merchants greedy for his fortunes and generosity. But the cobbler keeps distributing the money to the poor. As expected, with time, the creditors' patience begins to grow thin. 'Alī alerts Ma'rūf, but the latter replies seriously that all debts would be settled once the caravan arrives. Fearful of Ma'rūf's reaction, 'Alī advises his fellow merchants to approach the king and let him deal with the matter. The greedy king, after hearing the merchants' story, decides to befriend Ma'rūf. Upon his vizier's warning, he tests Ma'rūf's knowledge on the value of a gem. Ma'rūf passes the test by throwing away the gem disdainfully, crushing it under his foot and claiming it was hardly worth the price of a thousand dinars, which was the exact value the king had paid for it. Convinced of the visitor's wealth, the king offers him his daughter's hand in marriage and free access to his coffers. Ma'rūf nearly empties the king's coffers, spending enormous amounts on the marriage and donating to the poor, all the while the caravan is yet to arrive. Again, the vizier convinces the king to test Ma'rūf on his real identity through the princess. When questioned by the princess, Ma'rūf confesses his whole story to her. Instead of reporting it to the father, she decides to spare his life. They agree on a plan. The best thing for Ma'rūf to do would be to flee the city and send her news of his location. The following day, the princess tells her father that a letter has arrived informing Ma'rūf that the caravan has been delayed after an attack by a band of Bedouins. Consequently, Ma'rūf departs to meet the arrival of the caravan. While the cobbler is journeying in the desert, he accidentally finds a treasure chest and a genie who provides him with even more richness. He eventually returns to the city with the caravan, and following other such adventures, Ma'rūf rules as king and lives happily ever after until his death.

As for the play, 'Alī Ğanāḥ al-Tabrīzī is a prince who, through extravagant living and generous hospitality, has lost his entire inheritance. Within hours of losing his palace, Quffa, a poor cobbler, passes by begging for food. The prince welcomes the stranger and orders his servant, Şawāb, to lay out a lavish banquet for their lunch. The servant, now convinced of his master's madness due to his loss of fortune, complies with the request. Since there is no food anywhere in the house, and all the cooking utensils and serving dishes have been sold, the servant pretends to serve the meal. Although Quffa senses his host's madness, he enjoys the game of pretense. He even improvises intoxication resulting from the imaginary fine wine he drank, and then he strikes the prince, making the prince angry. With the imaginary meal, an imaginary whip is brought to 'Alī and Quffa actually suffers from its lashes on his back. When the new proprietor arrives, al-Tabrīzī decides to depart on a journey to a distant land. Quffa, having developed a special liking for this strange prince, accepts the invitation to accompany him.

They arrive in a city in the Far East where they are struck by its extremely poor population. 'Alī, seeing this as an indication of great wealth held by an affluent minority, pretends to be a wealthy tourist awaiting, with his servant, the arrival of his caravan of wealth. When 'Alī discovers Quffa's secret purse containing his life's savings, he seizes the money and gives it to the poor. This unusual act prompts the city's wealthy merchants to lend 'Alī money in the hope of doubling their reward when his caravan arrives. 'Alī accepts their offers and continues to distribute the money to the poor. News of 'Alī's generosity soon reaches the king, himself, duped into believing 'Alī's presumed claims to abounding wealth. 'Alī succeeds in the tests of his knowledge of valuable gems, whereupon the king offers 'Alī his daughter's hand in marriage and the keys to his coffers, all this against his vizier's objection who wants the princess himself.

The interlude of the play is constituted by the tale of the sack in a slightly changed version. Suspicion of 'Alī's actual reality arises when the caravan fails to arrive, and the massive loans are left unpaid. The vizier persuades the king to make the princess inquire about her husband's real situation. But 'Alī, instead of answering her questions, tells some funny unrelated stories. Quffa's patience eventually runs short when he finds he has not benefitted from the money seized by 'Alī. So, for a significant reward of thirty *dirhams*, Quffa confesses their true story to the king and 'Alī is sentenced to death. However, moved by pity and his special love for 'Alī, Quffa rectifies the situation by disguising himself as a messenger from 'Alī's caravan and arrives to inform his master of its long-awaited arrival. In this confusion of happiness and apologies from the debtors, 'Alī, Quffa, and the princess all escape from the city.

According to Farağ, these three unrelated tales share a same main feature: the illusion. By choosing these particular tales, using some parts and inventing some others, Farağ created his play around the theme of the illusion. In this regard, the tale of the imaginary table at the beginning of the play serves as a direct introduction to the main subject. Rather than being a mere pause, the episode of the sack affirms the importance of illusion. Besides, it raises a central question in the play concerning the contents of the sack. Instead of the original 'little orange peel and some olive pits', there is a piece of bread and an olive that, according to 'Alī's philosophy, are nothing less than 'the beginning and the end of the world'.³⁷ 'The Tale of Ma'rūf the Cobbler' is the source of most of the narrative material, but a major change occurs when no caravan appears and there is no happy ending to the play.

37 Farağ 1968, p. 309.

This significant change is the most evident mark in the play, connecting this imaginary story to contemporary reality. The non-existent caravan is clearly an encoded representation of Nasser selling dreams that ended up in pervasive disillusion following the 1967 defeat in the war with Israel.³⁸ The bi-polarizing 'Alī/Quffa is a familiar theatrical coupling of master/servant and can be read as a classical theatrical strategy. Indeed, like many other master/servant couplings in theatre, this binary is useful to characterize multiple subjects of a play. In this case, the coupling also calls our attention to other political master/servant based plays, such as *al-Farāfir* (*The Flipflaps*, 1964, Yūsuf Idrīs) and *Mr Puntila and his Man Matti* (Bertolt Brecht, 1940).

Repetitions in Faraĝ's play are more recurrent than in the tales. This innovation could be merely a dramatic device. For instance, during the king's test of the strangers's credibility, 'Alī smashes three stones instead of one, and when his wife the princess interrogates him about his status, he recalls three different tales. Despite its dramatic value, Faraĝ admitted that he took the 'secret of repetition' from the *Arabian Nights*.³⁹ Thus, it may be seen as a stylistic dilating of a specific feature of the *Nights* identified and appropriated by Faraĝ for theatrical purposes.⁴⁰

The narrative mode is very present in this play as well, especially since 'Alī is keen on storytelling. This is another borrowing from traditional Arabic entertainment literature. In fact, Faraĝ often expressed the similarity between 'Alī and his father in his capacity for imitating the mannerisms of speech, movement, gestures, and behaviour.⁴¹

As for other appropriations of heritage (*al-turath*), a number of references to the fantastic imaginary and historical world of the *Arabian Nights* and its embedded tales takes place in the play. Some of them concern places, namely the Qāf mountains,⁴² the castle of *Šaddād Ibn 'Ād*, the palace of Khosrow, Anuširuwān, the city of Aswan, and the Khorasan. Other details deal with magic and superstitions, like the genie, the flying carpet, the roc (an enormous legendary bird), the *dā'ir al-falak* ('rotating circles' of which, according to an ancient astronomic theory, the universe was composed), and the riaca (medicinal concoctions). Famous people from the (Persian/) Arabic heritage such as 'Umar al-Ḥayyām, Avicenna, and Aristotle are mentioned. Other names are

38 Badawī 1987, p. 181.

39 Faraĝ 1994, p. 60.

40 Genette 1982, pp. 372–8.

41 El-Enany 2000, p. 173.

42 In Islamic cosmology and, even before, in the Persian one, the *ġabal Qāf* is the name of a mountain range surrounding the earth considered inaccessible to humans.

derived from characters of the *Arabian Nights*: Sindbād the sailor, Quffa, Şawāb and Kāfūr, and so forth.

Although many of the previous elements may be included in an 'appropriation of heritage' for contemporary political purposes, some of them seem more likely to be adapted into a sort of a game Farağ plays with the attentive reader. The recognition of particular links between the *Nights* and the play would certainly provoke pleasure. For instance, 'Alī's former servant's name is Şawāb and the name by which 'Alī calls Quffa is Kāfūr; Şawāb and Kāfūr are protagonists of two other tales.⁴³ Moreover, Quffa is the name of another brother of the barber of Baghdad.⁴⁴

Rasā'il qāḍī Işbīliyya represents yet another kind of rewriting of the *Nights*. The play is built upon three letters embedded in a frame story also made up of two other letters. The prince of Seville writes to an elderly judge asking him to tell him about some of the cases he solved, so that they can serve as examples for future judges. The judge communicates his acceptance by letter. Then, he composes three letters, each one anticipated by the previous. The frame story requesting examples and the embedded narratives clearly recalls the *Arabian Nights*. The stories unfold through the written representation of the actions, just after a brief introduction by the judge, who even provides titles for them.

In spite of the enactment of the tales, the narrative mode is still present as the characters often relate stories to each other. These narrations intertwine with the development of the events. In their narrations, the characters use mimicry, rhymes, repetitions, jokes, questions, and all the typical repertory of a good storyteller. One character from the Mediterranean storytelling tradition appears in the scene. In fact, in the letter, 'The Market', an elderly and honest seller Nūr al-Dīn, protagonist of the tale, falls ill, but the doctors cannot heal him. His maid then tries to comfort him with some funny stories. One of them concerns the popular Mediterranean character Ğuḥā.⁴⁵

The maid: A *dīnār* fell from Ğuḥā inside the house. He went out and started to rummage through the garbage in the alley. His wife asked him, 'What are you looking for?' The *dīnār* he replied. But it fell here inside the

43 The tales of the First and of the Second Eunuchs, night no. 38.

44 The relationship between the play and the *Arabian Nights* is in fact complex. Studying it in all its aspects and implications is not the purpose of this essay. However, we will mention that Farağ obtains most of his comic situations and the humor for his plays through a re-employment and accentuation of motifs from the *Nights*.

45 For an account on Ğuḥā and its different features in different context in the Mediterranean region, see Corrao 1991.

house, so why are you looking in the street? Because the house is dark, idiot, while the street is bright.⁴⁶

The man laughs and the maid continues to tell two other funny stories. This insertion conforms to the politics of the *tamasruḥ*, whereby a traditional character from the theatrical heritage is inserted into the play. Besides, this insertion is well studied. It perfectly fits into the logic of the play and contributes to the comic effect. Moreover, it is a further link to the embedded style of the *Nights*.

Each picture in the play encodes a precise reference to the reality. The first letter 'The Land' deals with questions of ownership, 'The Vultures' stimulates a debate about the speculations allowed by the law, and 'The Market' raises questions about the ethics of economics. While these stories could possibly exist in the *Arabian Nights*, their political intent is nonetheless evident. If not, then some clues are provided by Faraḡ in the paratext of the play.

The foreword to the play, 'A Trip to *A Thousand and One Nights*', establishes a connection between the play and the *Arabian Nights*. Faraḡ explains precisely that the *Arabian Nights* are universal, that they are also beloved by readers and writers, and that they have inspired many works of art, from literature, cinema, music, theatre, and television. Tales from the *Arabian Nights* fascinate everyone, regardless of age, geographical origins, or time. The tales have an extraordinary side and a realistic one, with realities that are similar to our own, even in our modern era. This, according to the writer, is the secret of the *Arabian Nights*. And this is the secret that pushed him to write *Ḥallāq Baḡdād*, the first play he composed in the format of the *Thousand and One Nights* tales. Despite the connection between the play and the *Arabian Nights*, Faraḡ cautioned the reader to approach the play in a different spirit than if he was reading one of the *Arabian Nights*' tales; he reminded the reader that he (the writer) was contemporary to the reader, and they they shared a similar life.⁴⁷

In other theoretical reflections, Faraḡ identified three stages of his use of the *Nights*, where the last one was attained by *Rasā'il qāḍi Iṣbiliyya*. He acknowledged a direct and clear inspiration to the *Nights* in *Ḥallāq Baḡdād*, a less clear one in *Alī Ḡanāḥ al-Tabrīzī wa tābi'uhu Quffa* and a rather particular one in *Rasā'il qāḍi Iṣbiliyya*. He explained that:

[...] the three tales, or the three letters, do not have their origin in the *Arabian Nights*, but they are composed of narrative elements that I have

46 Faraḡ 1975, p. 92

47 Faraḡ 1975, p. 6.

employed in new tales, in the same style, as if they were forgotten tales from the *Arabian Nights*, or if they were nights that got lost from the Egyptian version of the *Arabian Nights*.⁴⁸

1 Conclusion

Despite the fact that the four plays under discussion are different in theme, form, and textual interactions with the *Arabian Nights* as their hypotext, several common threads are found in all of them. Besides the use of Middle Arabic, FaraĀ managed to transfer to his plays the particular status of the *Nights* as a 'middle literature', neither popular nor erudite.⁴⁹ This happy mixture becomes a hallmark and a constant of FaraĀ's rewritings of the *Nights*. Also, unlike their hypotext, all of FaraĀ's plays include a political charge, as through his plays FaraĀ was aiming to convey his own thoughts, either with an informing or a didactic purpose, by way of commenting on contemporary social or political reality. In this sense, the *Arabian Nights* serve to encode a message directed to the audience by lending themselves to a specific symbolic interpretation. Selections, omissions, and additions occur on a thematic level for targeted purposes.

In the context of the revival of the Arabic heritage, or, the Arabic *Nahda*, the *Arabian Nights* supplied a wealth of material to suit FaraĀ's purposes. The *Arabian Nights'* tales are obviously a significant part of the Arabic heritage. So by establishing his plays on this basis, FaraĀ provided familiar and attractive material to a wider public. Particularly, in a reappropriation of their form and style, they converged to create an original Arabic theatre. In this sense, the *Nights'* tales are often reused in their narrative mode inside the play. Additionally, the imitation and amplification succeeded in creating new theatrical devices that enhanced the quality of the play. In these cases, these re-worked narrative modes assumed specific functions in conveying to his audiences' contemporary political messages and stimulating their authentic emotions.

Finally, if we acknowledge FaraĀ's creativity in his processes of transformation, we must admit that the *Nights* is an especially rich reserve that allowed him constant and creative experimentation. And that is certainly a reason why FaraĀ chose it as a preferred hypotext for his plays. In his excursions into the

48 FaraĀ 1994, p. 62. We have to point out that at least a part of the tale in the first letter is actually an unmarked quotation from the *Arabian Nights*, *The Tale of the Second Calendar*, nights no. 13–14.

49 Chraïbi 2016, pp. 62–4.

Arabian Nights, not only did Faraĝ wittingly include in his plays some of their specific tales, characters, and motifs, but he also reproduced many of their features that made the reader or audience feel personally involved in the cosmos of the *Arabian Nights*. This identification was possible because the *Arabian Nights*, at least in its most famous and familiar tales, was part of 'the reader's encyclopedia'.⁵⁰ Another reason for this identification may lie in the specific nature of the *Nights*. That is, thanks to its unique structural complexity, it can be readily and easily recognized even when just a small part of it is evoked, be it a particular passage, motif, character, setting, language or plotline.⁵¹ This uniqueness of the *Nights* is exactly what Faraĝ took advantage of in *Rasā'il qāḍī Iṣbīlīyya*, so much so that he succeeded in producing his own new *Nights*, delivering them as if they were pre-existing tales that had been rewritten in a theatrical form.

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⁵⁰ Eco 1985, pp. 95–106.

⁵¹ I am applying what Eco calls *sgangherabilità*, literally meaning the 'dismantleability' attributed to *The Bible*, *Hamlet*, and *The Divina Commedia* as works of art that can be dismantled and infinitely quoted thanks either to their structural complexity and the number of their characters, or the imperfect fusion of their sources. See Jachia 2006, p. 61.

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The Reception of *One Thousand and One Nights* in Polish Contemporary Literature

Magdalena Kubarek

1 Introduction

It is a well-known fact that *Kitāb alf layla wa-layla* (*One Thousand and One Nights*) has played an integral part in creating the image of the East and the Arab and Islamic world in the West. This article discusses the degree of influence that the *One Thousand and One Nights* has registered on Polish prose, poetry, and drama – a literature known for its stories, interpretations, and fables.

The first selection of *One Thousand and One Nights* was translated into Polish in 1764. It was based on the French translation undertaken by Antoine Galland and published under the title *Awantury arabskie* (Arabian Affairs).¹ This selection was then followed by other translations, which were published either as a whole or as individual stories. On the other hand, the Orientalism² prevalent in European literature since the nineteenth century has influenced the creative and artistic inspiration received from those stories. Furthermore, the Orientalism prevalent in European literature since the nineteenth century has influenced the creative and artistic receptions of *One Thousand and One Nights*. For a long time it created a kind of lens through which the Polish intellectuals saw the East. Many Polish writers either travelled to the Middle East or the Ottoman Empire or dedicated themselves to studying *One Thousand and One Nights* in French, treating it as a source of inspiration. Due to their popularity, some of the most important characters of *One Thousand and One Nights* (among them Scheherazade, Shahryar, Aladdin and his magic lamp, Sindbad the Sailor and others) have even entered into the common parlance.

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- 1 The Polish word used in the title is derived from a French word *aventure* and was at that time a name of a light genre of literature aimed at amusing the reader.
 - 2 The word 'orientalism' is not used here in the sense given by Edward Said (a permanent element of the colonial point of view of the European countries, biased against Arab and Islamic nations) but rather according to the meaning in which it has been used by Polish researchers to describe the imitation or portrayal of some elements of Eastern civilizations by Western writers and artists.

Nevertheless, more than a hundred years passed after the above-mentioned translation before a complete and direct translation of *One Thousand and One Nights* was published in 1973. While this work of a group of Arabists³ allowed amateurs in Arabic literature to broaden their knowledge of this diverse and rich collection of stories, it didn't manage to change the popular perception of the East and the ubiquitous perception of Eastern culture in Poland.

2 Studies and Research

Even though there is a substantial number of scientists researching the phenomenon called 'Orientalism' and its influence on the Polish art and literature of the nineteenth and early twentieth century, we are noticeably short of studies and articles on the presence of Eastern culture in Polish literature during the last twenty-five years, i.e. after the fall of communism.

A Polish Arabist, Marek M. Dziekan, in a study titled *Wątki arabskie w literaturze polskiej XX wieku* (*Arabic Themes in Twentieth Century Polish Literature*) analyzes the perception (in broad sense of the word) of the East in Polish literature. In the introduction he states that: 'It seems that I won't be far from the truth if I tell that it was *One Thousand and One Nights* that influenced the most the reception of Arabic culture in Poland and in Europe from 18th century onwards'.⁴

Despite that, we find but few comprehensive studies on the perception of *One Thousand and One Nights* among Polish authors. The most important of them may be a paper written by Jadwiga Rudnicka, a researcher of Polish literature, titled *One Thousand and One Nights in the work of Polish writers* published alongside other articles in a volume 'Wschód w literaturze polskiej' (The East in Polish literature) in 1970⁵ and then again in a journal 'Pamiętnik literacki' (Literary diary) in 1984.⁶

In her study Jadwiga Rudnicka carries out a comprehensive analysis of the Polish reception of *One Thousand and One Nights* in the nineteenth and the first half of the twentieth century. Rudnicka begins her search of themes, characters, and references in Polish literature with a novel *Manuscrit trouvé à Saragosse* (The Manuscript Found in Saragossa) written originally in French by Jan

3 Lewicki 1973.

4 Dziekan 2014, pp. 17–34.

5 Rudnicka 1970, pp. 5–31.

6 Rudnicka 1998, pp. 165–185.

Potocki (1781–1815).⁷ In a personal letter to one of his friends Potocki recognized the influence of the ‘Eastern stories’, which he would read as a child, on the plot and structure of the novel. Moreover, the writer frequently travelled to the Middle East and North Africa and lived for a long time in Paris, which was at that time considered to be a safe haven for Polish expatriates. In the 1960s Louisa Vax called *The Manuscript Found in Saragossa* one of the world’s most important fantasy novels.⁸

Rudnicka then goes on to describe the influence of *Arabian Nights* on a great Polish romantic poet, Adam Mickiewicz (1798–1855), whose inclinations towards both the East and Orientalism are well known. Afterwards he discusses the work of two famous Polish literary figures: Bolesław Leśmian (1877–1937) and Kornel Makuszyński (1884–1953). The article ends with an analysis of the writings and poems of another two revered authors: Julian Tuwim (1894–1953) and Antoni Słonimski (1895–1976).

Bolesław Leśmian is a symbol of the Polish Orientalism of the latter part of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century.⁹ In 1913 he published two collections of short stories, *Klechdy sezamowe* (Sesame Tales) and *Przygody Sindbada Żeglarza* (Adventures of Sindbad the Sailor). Although meant primarily as children’s books, they found eager readers in all age groups and contributed largely to forming the popular image of the Arab world, the Arabic way of life, and of Arab men and women. In his works we see both an emulation of the Arabic writing style as well as modifications to the original text, for instance regarding new characters: uncle Tarabuk and Hindbad. The definitive proof of Leśmian’s influence over generations of Polish readers is the fact that Tarabuk is up to this day believed to be an original character from *One Thousand and One Nights*.

Kornel Makuszyński, the second of the Polish writers mentioned above, made a slightly different reference to *One Thousand and One Nights* in his collection of short stories titled *Awantury arabskie* (Arabian Affairs). The author portrays Muslims as devious and deceitful and often even filthy and foolish people. As far as women are concerned, Makuszyński describes most of them as old, hideous, stupid, and treacherous, which is an altogether distorted image of Scheherazade as portrayed in the original text.

Nonetheless, now that more than a hundred years have passed since the publication of *Arabian Affairs* and the *Adventures of Sindbad the Sailor* it is

7 For more details about the novel and the connection between its form and the form of *One Thousand and One Nights*, see: Van Leeuwen 2005, pp. 51–66 and Van Leeuwen 2012, pp. 133–49.

8 Vax 163, p. 116.

9 For more about the poet see: Stone 1976.

now apparent that Scheherazade has been transformed into a symbol of smart and powerful womanhood in Polish literature, and as such appears time and again in the works of Polish writers in one way or another.

3 Poetry

The change in the perception of Scheherazade can be seen clearly in the poem *Wyznanie Kalifa, czyli o mocy baśni* (Caliph's Confession, or the Power of a Tale) by the artist and songwriter Jacek Kaczmarski (1957–2004). The poem is based on the story of Shahryar and Scheherazade, who stole the king's heart with the magic of her words. The author points out the sexual aspect of their relationship, saying:

Since my eyes filled with tears of loathing
met your gaze's languid bow
finding promise of challenge and grace
I care not for my treasures and I scorn my throne.

Since you took my bored member
in the nimble octopus of your lithe fingers
I hold the sceptre while yours is the crown
In its hoop I shall burn, I shan't be burnt down

For though you consume me
I feast on you.¹⁰

In this poem Scheherazade is an equal partner to the king Shahriyar who is called 'caliph' by the poet. The author describes in a poetic, delicate, and beautiful way the relation between sexual attraction and the temptation of power. This approach to the portrayal of Scheherazade is of utmost importance, as it had not appeared in the works of Polish writers in the past. The sexual aspect of Scheherazade also features prominently in a poem *Szeherazada* (Scheherazade) by Jolanta Maria Dzienis. When describing the character, the author combines various terms that Western readers stereotypically attribute to Middle Eastern women, of whom Scheherazade is a symbol: the harem, Arabic dance, large eyes. At the end of the poem Dzienis alludes to the idea of Scheherazade's liberation:

¹⁰ Kaczmarski 2002, p. 367.

Large-eyed Scheherazade
 dives into the pulsing song
 and then remembers me no more...

Scheherazade confined to the harem
 dances sensually for the amir

but even when at day she dreams
 she feels that freedom time is near...¹¹

In a poem with the same title written by Andrzej Zychla, Scheherazade is pictured as a woman advanced in years. The poet addresses king Shahriyar who has left his family with no intention of going back. Zychla presents his take on the popular opinion, saying to Shahriyar that Scheherazade's stories annoyed and bored the king.

in a castle skillfully woven
 from over a thousand illusions
 Scheherazade combs her gray hair
 pursing her chapped lips for a kiss
 holding to her bosom
 your two children
 and telling them a story of a king
 who's left home over a hundred years ago it feels
 remember
 they would always annoy you
 those
 neither stories
 nor accounts
 of hers
 those tales of one thousand and one nights of hers
 the nights spent with you.¹²

In spite of the critical and contradicting views, Scheherazade has become a symbol of a woman who, after putting her life in danger, rescues herself with the power of tales which enable her to enthrall her listeners. Even though her stories may be unreal and fictional, she is a character of great importance,

¹¹ Dzienis 2015.

¹² Zychla 2011.

which can be seen clearly in a new translation of *One Thousand and One Nights* that has been published lately entitled *Tysiąc i jedna noc z Scheherazadą* (One Thousand and One Nights with Scheherazade).¹³ The text (apart from poetic fragments, which were translated directly from Arabic) is based on a German translation by an Arabist, Claudia Ott. It hardly comes as a surprise that the Polish publisher decided to insert Scheherazade's name into the title, as the general public in Poland considers her the most important character of Oriental literature.

4 Prose

Scheherazade is a character that has not only registered a great influence on Polish poetry, but also on prose. This is evident in the novel *Matka Makryna* (Mother Makryna)¹⁴ by Jacek Dehnel (born in 1980), who forms part of the new generation of Polish writers. It recounts the true story of a Polish woman of Jewish roots who lived in the nineteenth century (e.g. during the period of Poland's partition). She introduced herself as a nun from a Polish monastery in Minsk (currently Belarus) who, along with other nuns, was persecuted by Russians and then forced into exile. She got to France and managed to convince people, such as Polish aristocrats and Pope Gregory XVI, that she was telling the truth. The Polish critics say that this novel is a story of a poor girl who used her imagination to create a false identity for herself to keep her alive in a harsh world. In this way she may be called the Scheherazade of the nineteenth century.

When it comes to narrative techniques, there are a number of recent novels which use the literary device typical of the *One Thousand and One Nights* – 'a story within a story'. In 2014 *Solfatara*,¹⁵ a historical novel by Maciej Hen (born in 1955) was published. It is based on a real-life popular uprising which took place in Naples, Italy, in the middle of the seventeenth century and was led by a fisherman named Masaniello. The novel is divided into ten chapters which represent ten days of the rebellion (7–16 July 1647). The uprising depicted in the book was much bloodier and more brutal than the rest of the revolts against the economic tyranny of the Spanish who ruled over the kingdom of Naples at that time.

¹³ Kalinowski, Stiller 2013.

¹⁴ Dehnel 2014.

¹⁵ Hen 2015.

In the midst of those violent events the author recounts the a story of Fortunat Petrelli, the owner of the newspaper 'Wiadomości Neapolitańskie' (Naples Post) who every night logs what he sees on the streets and squares of Naples and what he hears from his friends and acquaintances. However, his reportage is but a framing device for the retrospective account of the life of Fortunat Perelli and people in his surroundings before the uprising. *Solfatara* should therefore be categorized as an adventure novel in the original sense of the word. It was undoubtedly written under the influence of Jan Potocki's work, using various literary devices typical of Potocki's prose, such as dividing the text into chapters corresponding to days.

It is noteworthy that *One Thousand and One Nights* has been an inspiration for Polish prose writers both in the past and present, although the clearest examples of its influence are historical novels set outside Poland, e.g. in Spain and Italy.

5 Drama

Western playwrights have long used *One Thousand and One Nights* as a source of themes for their work. William Shakespeare was one of the first to take inspiration from the *Arabian Nights*, as can be seen in his *Othello*. Following his example, large numbers of Western playwrights have borrowed themes and characters from the *Arabian Nights*. Nonetheless, there are but few cases of references to *One Thousand and One Nights* in Polish dramaturgy. The aforementioned researcher, Rudnicka, analyzes a comedic play by Aleksander Fredro (1793–1876), one of the most important Polish writers of the nineteenth century. A character based on a caliph from a *One Thousand and One Nights* tale entitled *The Sleeper and the Waker* makes an appearance in this play. However, the king's being called a 'sultan' and not a 'caliph' as in the original story is conclusive proof of the influence of Ottoman Turkish culture upon Polish literature at that time.¹⁶ There is also a comedic play written in 1850, titled *Noc*

¹⁶ There are more examples of the influence of Turkish culture on creating the image of a Middle Eastern man in Poland, probably due to the close relations between Poland and the Ottoman Empire. We also note the lack of differentiation between the Arabs and the Turks, as happened in 1789's translation of the story of Sindbad the Sailor *Turczyn wojażujący* (The Voyaging Turk) by the Polish writer Franciszek Bohomolec. The same phenomenon is apparent in Latin American literature, as most of the Arab immigrants that came to Latin America arrived during the time of the Ottoman Empire and the nomenclature still makes no distinction between Arab and a Turk.

tysiączna druga (The Thousandth and Second Night) by the great Polish romantic poet Cyprian Kamil Norwid.¹⁷

Modern Polish playwrights rarely seek inspiration for their work from *One Thousand and One Nights* and when they do, their references are mostly indirect. In 1996 the play *Szeherazada po polsku czyli disco-polo live!* (Scheherazade à la polonaise, or disco-polo live!)¹⁸ by Krzysztof Jaworski (born in 1966) received one of the four awards in the national comedic play competition organized by the Tarnów Municipal Office with the help of the editors of 'Dialog' (*Dialogue*), a monthly magazine devoted to modern drama. The play, subtitled *Tragedia narodowa w trzech częściach z epilogiem* (National tragedy in three parts with an epilogue), describes the lives of members of the poorer social strata in Poland during the period of transformation, e.g. the 1990s. The characters, who represent the socioeconomic changes in Poland after the fall of communism, are: Żaneta, a middle-aged hairdresser; Ryszard, her unemployed husband; and Czesiek, a friend of Ryszard's, also unemployed. Instead of looking for a job, the two friends spend their days at home, drinking cheap wine and coming up with schemes to get rich quickly and change their lives. Finally, they decide to form a band that would play disco-polo, a type of Polish popular music, at wedding receptions.

In the second act of the play the characters brainstorm in order to find a name for the band. They want it to be catchy and modern, which for them means 'in English'. During the discussion, they show complete ignorance and lack of any knowledge about foreign cultures and languages whatsoever. They struggle to remember as many as two words in English, such as *full light* (beer brand) or *power*. No sooner than at the end of the play does the spectator find out that the name of the band is Scheherazade and that the name derives from a cheap wine (sold in bottles featuring half-naked female figures) popular among the poor.

Apart from Scheherazade's name appearing in the title of the play and the band's name, there is no other link to *One Thousand and One Nights*. It seems that Scheherazade's name is only used as a symbol of the culture of consumption prevalent in today's Polish society. This superficial culture, culture of the disco-polo music, has replaced the high culture and transformed Scheherazade into the sign of its decline.

¹⁷ The importance of this work will be discussed further in the next part of this study.

¹⁸ Jaworski 1997, pp. 5–23.

6 The Thousandth and Second Night

Another important question involves the use of the phrase ‘the thousandth and second night’. This metaphor appears in various Western pieces of literature, regardless of their genre.¹⁹ It was first used in one of poems by Ryszard Berwiński in 1844 which might have been a source of inspiration for Cyprian Kamil Norwid in a play mentioned earlier in the text. The topic of the play is the love between a man and a woman. One of the characters says: ‘What a night [...]. It is a night [...] of One Thousand and One Nights – it is the thousandth and second night that the author forgot to add to his work.’²⁰

The phrase appears next in Julian Tuwim’s poem *Ex Oriente*, written a hundred years after Norwid:

A starry night dusting Baghdad with golden sand – is not what I sing
about [...]
– A blooming, brilliant garden of peoples is what I, a poet of Warsaw –
sing about.
The Scheherazades have turned pale. The second and thousandth night.²¹

There is no doubt that the poet casts a critical eye upon the world of wonders and fantasies represented by Scheherazade.

In the changed political realities of the twenty-first century this phrase was also used by a young Polish poet of Cracovian literary circles, Eryk Ostrowski. He employs it in a new context, entitling his art project related to the Iraqi war *Bagdad Tysiąc Druga Noc* (Baghdad The Thousandth and Second Night).²² According to the author: ‘Love, a pure sentiment, will become a gravestone for boys and girls, men and women murdered in Iraq.’²³ The project included reading a book of love poems that took place on 19 June, 2009 in Cracow. It was accompanied by songs of a famous Iraqi singer, Kāẓim Al-Sāhir, fragments of Iraqi documentaries and reading of poems by other Iraqi writers. Ostrowski was also planning to publish the book of poetry and a recording of the reading. However, as he said: ‘The collection will not be released, as Polish publishers don’t think it’s the right time for this topic.’²⁴

19 More on the use of this phrase in European literature see: Stead 2011.

20 Norwid 1971, p. 107.

21 Tuwim 1956, p. 335.

22 Ostrowski 2010.

23 Ibid.

24 Ibid.

7 Conclusions

In conclusion, we refer back to the word of Marek M. Dziekan: 'Since the Middle Ages, when the first references to Arab tales appeared, Ali Baba and the forty thieves time after time showed us their treasures. And up to this day we keep adding to what they've amassed in the cave, if not a pearl, then at least a stone'.²⁵

Even though the inspirations, allusions, and references to Arabic culture are less common in contemporary Polish literature, they still appear from time to time. The characters and motifs from *One Thousand and One Nights* have become a part of both the world's and the Polish national literary heritage and a source of inspiration for generations of new writers, each of them creating its new image, adapting to their times. As Rudnicka says in her study: 'Those stories have permeated our literature thanks to a French translation by Galland. Then it took more than two hundred years, or approximately ten generations, for some notions and metaphors to be adapted and implanted. Some of them are now used independently from their original connotations/meaning'.²⁶

It is worth remarking by way of conclusion that contemporary writers are not familiar with all the stories of the *One Thousand and One Nights*. Instead of reading it (as did their predecessors in the past) and taking inspirations directly from it, they would rather refer to Polish and international works of art that were influenced by *One Thousand and One Nights*. In conclusion, we can say that the creative reception of Arabic literature in Poland is ever-present and connected with currently dominant literary movements, cultural trends, and political events that contribute to shaping the image of the East among western writers.

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²⁵ Dziekan 2014, p. 34.

²⁶ Rudnicka 1998, p. 185.

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Italian *Nights*

Three Twentieth-Century Examples of Reception (Vittorini, Pasolini, Calvino)

Marina Paino

As a result of Antoine Galland's fortunate yet unfaithful eighteenth-century translation, *A Thousand and One Nights* strongly influenced Western literature. However, the Arabian collection caused much less of a stir in Italian literature, which was naturally less inclined to receiving the splendour that Tzvetan Todorov associated with Scheherazade's tale.¹ Nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century Italian literature showed scant interest in the far-off world of *A Thousand and One Nights*, probably due to the country's unsuccessful colonial past. At the beginning of the twentieth century, Italian literature allowed itself to be seduced by the fashion for exoticism, but actually in the 1930s and 1940s, the real literary far-off world for Italy was that of great American literature, one that was realistic and not fabulous, a literature belonging to a real geographical place and not to a mere literary one.

The first real traces of *A Thousand and One Nights* enter the Italian cultural scene through the influence of the authors of the 'Nouvelle Revue Française' acknowledged by the Italian magazine *Solaria* in the early 1930s. It is by second-hand means then, that *A Thousand and One Nights* crosses the threshold into Italy, thanks to the cult of authors such as Proust and Gide, as the result of French cultural mediation. Compared to the myth represented by American literature, the narrative myth of *A Thousand and One Nights* is one freed from a precise collocation in the present; it affirms itself as a myth of a fabulous other world cut off from reality, which is the essence itself of the enchantment of storytelling, the enchantment of the literary tale.

The far-off world of *A Thousand and One Nights* also represents the 'other' dimension of literature, the idea of storytelling itself, not only due to the endless repertoire of tales present in the collection, but also because the narrative space is created as the tale is told (by the narrator Scheherazade) and likewise as the tale is enjoyed (through the presence of her audience Shahryar). *A Thousand and One Nights*, therefore, is itself a literary myth, and by referring to *A Thousand and One Nights* literature alludes to itself. The most important

¹ Todorov 1970 and 1978.

examples of reuse of *A Thousand and One Nights* present in twentieth-century Italian literature can be traced to this strongly self-referential component, whose references to the Arabian collection insert precise links to a literature that speaks for itself. In order to give an idea of the different types of reception of *A Thousand and One Nights* in Italian culture during the last century, three examples of prominent writers will be considered: Vittorini, Pasolini, and Calvino. All three are known outside Italy thanks to the numerous translations of their works into other languages. Besides the need to refer to authors well-known outside national boundaries, in order to provide a representative cross-section of this Italian side of the modern, western re-writing of *A Thousand and One Nights*, the choice of these three is also linked to the fact that they all denied in different ways a relationship to Scheherazade's tales, yet in each one a precise typology of reusing the Arabian collection can be found.

Vittorini, who collaborated on the magazine *Solaria* at a time when the cultural influence of the *Nouvelle Revue Française* was strong in Italy, is one of the pioneers in introducing imagery from *A Thousand and One Nights* into twentieth-century Italian literature. A writer both courageously and proudly *engagé*, as well as the main populariser of American literature in Italy,² Vittorini places the mirror-like myth of a fabulous East borrowed from *A Thousand and One Nights*, read during his childhood, alongside his own personal and libertarian myth of America. He fills his writings with this personal myth of *A Thousand and One Nights* read as a seven-year-old child straight after *Robinson Crusoe*, and both readings were the building blocks in his literary education and imagery or, as he says, 'experiences that leave a mark, to be told'. If Robinson becomes a symbol for him of man who 'acts, fights for existence', then the Eastern collection represents in some way that which comes before the need for this fight, which he will never have to face. The enchanted East described on the pages of *A Thousand and One Nights* links *aborigine* to the innocent world of childhood. Whilst this may be a fairy tale world, together this world is deemed truer than the real one, simply because it is connected to the only time we experience an authentic knowledge of the world.

Vittorini therefore, tells of himself as a reader of *A Thousand and One Nights*. The figure of the writer who gains credit as reader of the *Nights* is, furthermore, the other aspect of the myth of the Arabian collection as a symbol itself of the narrative; it is the face of the audience – Shahryar – who, through the enchantment of the tales, succeeds in saving himself from coercion and bloody revenge; he is able to save himself from evil and wrong-doing. When all is said and done, it is through this redemptive yet utopian theme that *A Thousand and*

² Vittorini 1942.

One Nights appears, for example in *Conversazione in Sicilia*, Elio Vittorini's most famous novel, loved by Hemingway, who in fact wrote the preface to the American edition.³ The book, written and set in fascist Italy in the second half of the 1930s, tells the story of its protagonist Silvestro's return to Sicily, having moved to the north of Italy after leaving the island fifteen years earlier. Silvestro returns to Sicily to visit his mother; therefore, his is a journey to the land of his mother that is also his birthplace, the land of his childhood. But it is also a land that is 'wronged' by suffering and never-ending, desperate poverty, a land that stands still. In fact, Silvestro finds it to be unchanged, identical to that which he had left fifteen years earlier, but also identical to that of his childhood. And it is into this aspect linked to childhood, which runs through the novel and rivals the dimension of a poor and afflicted Sicily, that references to *A Thousand and One Nights* are inserted. As for the Sicily of childhood, we read in the novel:

Avevo letto le *Mille e una notte* e tanti libri là, [...] a sette e otto e nove anni, e la Sicilia era anche questo là, *Mille e una notte* [...]. Vi lessi le *Mille e una notte* e altro, in una casa ch'era piena di sofà e ragazze d'un qualche amico di mio padre, e ne ricordo la nudità della donna, come di sultane e odalische, concreta, certa, cuore e ragione del mondo. [...] A setteanniu-no non conosceimali del mondo.

[I had read *A Thousand and One Nights* and many books there, [...] when I was seven, eight and nine years old, and Sicily was also this, *A Thousand and One Nights* [...]. I read *A Thousand and One Nights* and other things, in a house full of sofas and young women belonging to some friend of my father's, and I remember the women's nudity, like sultans and odalisques, real, sure, the heart and reason of the world. [...] You don't know the evils of the world when you're seven years old.⁴]

And a few pages later on:

Mi chiesi perché, dopotutto, il mondo non fosse sempre, come a sette anni, *Mille e una notte*. [...] Uno, a sette anni, ha miracoli in tutte le cose [...]. La morte c'è, ma non toglie nulla alla certezza; non reca mai offesa, allora, al mondo *Mille e una notte* dell'uomo.

³ Hemingway 1949, pp. 7–9.

⁴ Vittorini, *Conversazione in Sicilia*, 1974, pp. 660–61. Translation mine.

[I asked myself why, after all, the world could not always be the same as it is at seven years old, *A Thousand and One Nights*. [...] When you're seven, you see miracles in everything [...]. Death exists but it doesn't detract from certainty; it does not do any wrong to the world of *A Thousand and One Nights*.⁵]

His reading of *A Thousand and One Nights* was then to be immersed in a world removed from the world, which is the childhood world of certainties without evil, of maternal certainties (a few pages later Silvestro describes his mother with the 'face of an odalisque'), and also the world of spontaneous sexual perception linked again to childhood. Along with these insights, further references to *A Thousand and One Nights* return in Vittorini's previous novel, *Il garofano rosso*, in which the main character has an intense erotic and at the same time filial relationship with the prostitute Zobeida. Vittorini took this name, which in the *Nights* is that of caliph Hārūn al-Rašīd's wife, from André Gide's *Nourritures terrestres* whose fourth book includes the character of the beautiful Zobeida. There are many references to the stories in *A Thousand and One Nights* in Vittorini's early novel, such as to Sinbad and Aladdin. Among them is the tale of Abū Ḥassan, who is made to believe he is caliph Hārūn al-Rašīd for a day, Zobeida's husband to be precise, with an illusion similar to that of Vittorini's character, the lover subdued by the prostitute Zobeida.⁶ This female character in the novel narrates her story in turn to the main character, a story clearly shrouded in the atmosphere of the tales of *A Thousand and One Nights*,⁷ and to underline the woman's ideally being of recognisably Eastern origin, even before meeting her, the main character imagines her as a kind of odalisque 'distesa sempre nuda su un sofà [...] con alberi di fichi attorno, e la testa bionda in un piccolo turbante' ('lying naked on the sofa [...] surrounded by fig trees, her blonde hair wrapped up in a turban').⁸ And in this novel, as in *Conversazione in Sicilia*, we also witness the return of the reference to the garden (with a fig tree) in which the main character had listened for the first time to Scheherazade's stories as a child:

Rividiil fico. Qualcosa di stranamente orientale era stato, l'albero di fichi, nella mia infanzia. Una Persia, un'Arabia [...] E un fico c'era anche nel

5 Vittorini, *Conversazione in Sicilia*, 1974, p. 663. Translation mine.

6 Vittorini, *Il garofano rosso*, 1974, pp. 350–52. Translation mine.

7 Ibid., pp. 390–91.

8 Ibid., p. 249.

giardinetto della casa dove mi avevano raccontato di Aladino e del suo Genio e della Lanterna magica.

[I saw the fig tree again. The fig tree was something strangely eastern in my childhood. It was Persia, Arabia [...]. And there had also been a fig tree in the small garden where they had told me the tale of Aladdin and his Genie and the Magic Lamp.]⁹

For Vittorini the reader, just as for his characters who take turns in becoming the readers (or if needs be, listeners) of the tales of the Arabian collection, *A Thousand and One Nights* is therefore the symbol of a fabulous dimension that is mixed with and superimposed on the real one, a utopian antidote to the evils of the latter, as the last reference to the Arabian collection present in Vittorini's war novel, *Uomini e no*, set in the years of civil war between partisans and fascists, shows. This is also shown in the overlapping created in some of Vittorini's essay writing between the American world, that of the American literature he loved, made up of crude realism, and the unreal world of *A Thousand and One Nights* and a fabulous East. Saroyan's America, for example, is for him:

come una reincarnazione moderna dell'Asia di Harun-al-Rascid, San Francisco suona come Bagdad, e persino la qualificazione di un uomo del suo mestiere, nel suo essere barbiere, droghiere, giornalista o cantastorie prende l'intensità evocativa che è caratteristica dell'antico mondo orientale, *Mille e una notte*.

[The modern reincarnation of Harun-al-Rascid's Asia; San Francisco sounds like Baghdad, and even a man's occupation, be he a barber, grocer, news vendor or ballad singer, acquires the evocative intensity characteristic of the ancient eastern world, *A Thousand and One Nights*.¹⁰]

And Vittorini adds:

Non delle *Mille e una notte* dove volano geni; ma di quelle (secondo me più favolose) dove si stringe conoscenza con i mercanti, facchini, barbieri, dove la Zobeide e le Amine tramano inganni come i personaggi femminili del nostro Boccaccio, e il califfo Harun-al-Rascid passeggia nottetempo per le vie di Bagdad in incognito. I barbieri di William Saroyan sono

⁹ Ibid., p. 229.

¹⁰ Vittorini, *Notizia su Saroyan*, 2008, p. 8.

infatti i più vivi e piccanti di colore che la letteratura dell'universo abbia dato dal tempo in cui qualcuno tra gli autori musulmani delle *Mille e una notte* scrisse l'indimenticabile *Storia del barbiere che aveva sette fratelli*.

[Not of *A Thousand and One Nights*, where genies fly, but of those (more fabulous I feel) where you make acquaintances with traders, porters and barbers, where Zobeidas and Aminos plot deception like the female characters in our Boccaccio, and the caliph Harun-al-Rascid walks the streets of Baghdad by night in disguise. William Saroyan's barbers are the most colourful and alive characters that literature has ever given since the time when one of the Muslim authors of *A Thousand and One Nights* wrote the unforgettable 'Story of the barber who had seven brothers'.¹¹]

Clearly, the overlapping of the real and the fabulous is always an uncertain and precarious undertaking as demonstrated by Scheherazade's fate, who ends up being sent to her death in a tragic epilogue in Edgar Allen Poe's tale. Vittorini knew this tale well; he translated the American writer's tales into Italian in 1936 and besides, he would also end his own storytelling prematurely, leaving his later works unfinished. The anonymous authors of *A Thousand and One Nights* end his list of favourite storytellers, but they are favourites to Vittorini, the reader. He does not court in this way the other side of the modern retrieval of *A Thousand and One Nights*, the opposite side, that of the myth of narrator who saves herself by letting her life coincide with her story in a kind of metaphor raised to the power of literary activity; a metaphor with which every writer can identify, transforming the revival of *A Thousand and One Nights* into a self-referential process.

It is this side of the myth of *A Thousand and One Nights* that Pier Paolo Pasolini follows. An intellectual, writer and film director, few left their mark on Italian post-war culture quite like him. Between 1973 and 1974, Pasolini wrote the script and then shot the film *Il fiore delle Mille e una notte*, becoming the narrator of the *Nights*, taking Scheherazade's place, who in those tales strung one after another, had found her own salvation.

Like Vittorini, Pasolini was also an intellectual *engage* who conceived his personal commitment as a constant challenge of lower middle-class prejudice and hypocrisy; a challenge made up of continual provocation and the ongoing trials that his works underwent due to their being considered an outrage against decency. His original myth is that of a sub-proletariat from the Roman working-class suburbs imagined as naturally and savagely alienated from

¹¹ Vittorini (*Saroyan l'armeno*) 2008, p. 4.

civilization, removed from middle-class homologation. But then he drastically relocates the myth of this uncorrupted world in the Third World: in Africa, in India, in the poor countries of the Middle East, in places that were also geographically distant from western civilization. The trips he went on there were, unbeknownst to him, the first inspections carried out for his film about *A Thousand and One Nights*.

It is by immersing himself in that world that Pasolini dreamt of ideally removing himself from the stereotypes of western, middle-class homologation, and for once, in the case of this film, he even gives up his explicit ideological commitment in order to sink, as a writer, into a world like that of *A Thousand and One Nights* dominated by pure storytelling.

The comparison between the original script and the film tells us a great deal about Pasolini's will to become himself both author and narrator in this new *A Thousand and One Nights*. The script in fact included a narrative framework in a further updating of that myth of the narrator princess who, in the Vulgate of the *Nights*, found space in the framework of the Arabian collection. And whilst the main character of that framework was the princess Scheherazade, that is, she who narrates (and who by narrating thereby saves herself), the main character of the framework in the film script was the same author of the film, the film narrator, in short, Pasolini, who acted in the film himself. The framework was conceived as being set in modern-day Cairo where the 'author of the film' (this is exactly how the script defines him) meets four young men from Cairo, an expression of that non-homologated world he dreamed of, but actually they have already been 'corrupted' by the jeans and the American T-shirts they are wearing. These men were already present at the beginning of the text and it is through their masturbating and their pleasure that the stories from *A Thousand and One Nights*, selected by Pasolini for his film, gush out like visions. In the second half of the film, the author joins these men and begins to kiss them one by one, causing the vision of more stories from *A Thousand and One Nights*, to pour out from that ecstasy. He had appeared to them beforehand as a poet and teller of tales, tales that speak of nothing, 'they are fairy tales', because, he says, along with the duty of 'writing about things that help the people in their fight', a writer should also have the 'right to dream and to listen to stories that don't concern that fight'; 'the author' openly claims the 'freedom' to be able to tell stories, not to 'scandalise only the lower middle-class, but also the communist lower middle-class', and he concludes: 'The *freedom* to tell political stories is needed, not the *obligation* to tell political stories.'¹² Significantly, Pasolini combines the freedom of provocatively free storytelling with the right to free

¹² Pasolini, *Il Fiore delle Mille e una note*, 2001, pp. 1799–1800. Translation mine.

expression of sexuality, which will soon lead 'the author' into kissing those four young men. Free from the west and from the ideological commitment it imposes, Pasolini saves himself in the assimilation–fusion to those men through kissing in a utopian attempt to become part of that Middle Eastern world free from western corruption, a world he does not belong to but to which he would like to belong. He is fascinated by the peasant civilization of the Arab world, a civilization that in his eyes has managed to stay authentic.

According to Pasolini's intentionally archaic vision, the true spirit of the Arab world is exactly that expressed in *A Thousand and One Nights* in which everything is dominated by the abnormal, perceived fable-like as normal. The abnormal is obviously, first of all, the abnormal of the magical, of magic perceived not as something extraordinary but as something possible. However, among the elements that the bigoted West perceives as abnormal, and which instead the fairy tale dimension of *A Thousand and One Nights* makes perfectly ordinary, he emphasises the insisted presence of stories in the collection that contain descriptions of homosexual love:

l'omosessualità è, con la magia, l'elemento antagonista delle *Mille e una notte*: l'elemento protagonista è [...] il destino [...]. Ci sono nelle *Mille e una notte* infiniti, patetici elogi dell'omosessualità e infinite esemplificazioni veneranti della magia: ma nessun tentativo di spiegazione. Ciò dà a questi fenomeni la stessa assolutezza della più pura normalità.

[Homosexuality is, along with magic, the antagonist of *A Thousand and One Nights*: the protagonist is [...] destiny [...]. In *A Thousand and One Nights* there are infinite, moving examples of praise for homosexuality, and an infinite number of illustrations venerating magic: but without any attempt at explanation. This gives to both phenomena the same absoluteness of the purest normality.¹³]

By making himself the narrator of this film, *A Thousand and One Nights* allows Pasolini to ideally save himself through a distancing in a non-western and fabulous space, free from middle-class prejudice, in which, free even from ideological commitment, he can allow himself a happy narrative break. Here no abnormality can stir up scandal, offence or trials. In the original project as proved by the original script, the author evidently felt the need to be himself present in the film, to make it plain he was the new and twentieth-century replacement for Scheherazade, in order to be able to save himself. And yet in

¹³ Pasolini, *Le mie "Mille e una notte"*, 1998, pp. 1909–10.

the film eventually produced there is no trace of this narrative framework in which the author appears, a choice going against the writer-director's tendency in his two previous films, adapted from the *Decameron* and *The Canterbury Tales*, in whose frameworks he appeared directly as an actor and as the author of the tale itself (in the *Canterbury Tales* he impersonates Chaucer, for example). This very same installation was reproduced in the contemporary framework of the script for the *Fiore delle Mille e una notte*, and yet it was never part of the film. In the end, Pasolini decided to get rid of it, to let the tales do the talking, but this is not to say he abandoned his own original intentions. The yearning for salvation transmitted by immersion in that different world (different because it is fairy tale and 'fabulous', and different because it has not been contaminated by western middle-class culture), a world to his eyes happily uncorrupted, pushes him in the end to letting go of the estranged presence of himself (western twentieth-century man) in the work dedicated to *A Thousand and One Nights*. Salvation is totally handed over to the tales strung together in the film, behind and in which the narrator visually disappears, completely absorbed within them. Pasolini becomes one with that world of the *Nights* and he sinks into the narrative space in which every single abnormality is seen as normal. For Pasolini, the desecration of his dream of *A Thousand and One Nights* will nevertheless come with the success afforded to the film by the public and critics, by the western middle-class public and critics who, through their approving glorification of the author's redeeming escape into otherness, make it precisely less 'other' and forced Pasolini towards a later abjuration of that film project conceived by him as a *Trilogiadella vita* (Trilogy of Life): which together with *Fiore delle Mille e una notte*, also involves the *Decameron* and *Racconti di Canterbury*. That success, wrote the author, corresponds to an upsetting of perspective, since:

la lotta progressista per la democratizzazione espressiva e per la liberalizzazione sessuale è stata brutalmente superata e vanificata dalla decisione del potere consumistico di concedere una vasta (quanto falsa) tolleranza.

[The progressive struggle for expressive democratization and sexual liberalization has been brutally overcome and glorified by the decision of consumer power to allow it great (as it is false) tolerance.¹⁴]

The third example of the reuse of *A Thousand and One Nights* in twentieth-century Italian literature, which I am here concentrating on, is that of Italo

14 Pasolini, *Abiura dalla 'Trilogia della vita'*, 1999, p. 600.

Calvino; an example in which the reasons for narrating come as much into the picture as who benefits from the storytelling. But what also comes into play are the literary theorist's point of view, who pays attention to the fable-like orality of *A Thousand and One Nights* in the absence of an identifiable author therein (almost straying into that apocrypha which was of great interest to Calvino), and his interest in structuralism and the design of the *Nights*, as well as the images deriving from the reuse of the Arabian collection that authors very dear to him, such as Stevenson, Poe, Queneau and above all, Borges had made, not to mention that *A Thousand and One Nights* represented for him the eastern equivalent of the fabulous that he saw represented by his beloved Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso*. Besides these multiple reasons of interest and the numerous references made to the *Nights* scattered across Calvino's non-fiction writing, it is above all in his *Se una notte d'inverno un viaggiatore* (If On a Winter's Night a Traveller), a novel written at the end of the 1970s, that the more insistent and organized references to the Arabian collection are concentrated. Calvino had been living in Paris for more than ten years at that time, living and breathing structuralism and meeting with members of the OULIPO. *Se una notte d'inverno un viaggiatore* is a story of readers and writers, and is centred around the interruption of the stories which elevates Scheherazade's trick into guaranteeing the survival of literature itself. As Calvino noted many times, Borges speaks of one of the *Nights* in which Scheherazade tells the sultan the story of the young Scheherazade who told the sultan a story to save her life. The narrative narrates itself and the *A Thousand and One Nights* of this inexistent tale (therefore, apocryphal) invented by Borges, is expressed with a metanarrative *mise en abyme*. It is a *mise en abyme* that Calvino ideally draws upon and expands (always in the shadow of *A Thousand and One Nights*) in *Se una notte un viaggiatore*.

The novel's main character is a reader, who the narrator addresses in the second person. The audience of the tales (as in *A Thousand and One Nights*) is therefore inside the text, a text that tells of the reader's attempt to finish reading a book, even if every time he starts reading a story, his enjoyment is interrupted for different reasons. From each interruption, the reader's curiosity is urged on to look for the continuation in what is both desire and submission to the charm of the narrative and which will lead him on to a happy ending. In reality however, the novel's entire plot converses with *A Thousand and One Nights*, beginning the initial motivation that lies at the base of the editorial mess of the novels that are interrupted or start in another one preventing the reader from finishing reading. A swindler, one Ermes Marana, lies at the heart of everything, a translation forger, who learned his skill in deception during an assignment in a Sultanate in the Persian Gulf. There he was hired by the

sovereign who suspected his wife of betrayal (not of their marriage bed, as in the case of Shahryar, but political) as a possible ally to mysterious rebels who send her coded messages in the books she devours and constantly asks the Sultan for. Marana undertakes to supply the Sultan's wife with books translated by him in which any possible original message gets lost and above all, he undertakes to keep her in a good mood using Scheherazade's trick by inserting the beginning of a new novel at the end of each one without her realising: so that the story is not interrupted. In a context that clearly owes a lot to the framework of *A Thousand and One Nights*, (marital relations, the anguish of betrayal, the seduction of narration) Calvino then alters the outlines of the event, replacing the princess Scheherazade, who tried to save her own life by telling stories every night, with the treacherous translator Marana who, in a sort of post-modern paroxysm, muddles up and rewrites the stories. He interrupts the tales by a contract, that is in many ways a double contract, as the author of *Se una notte un viaggiatore* also continually interrupts the novels told to him second-hand, as well as he who replicates the many creative and unfaithful modern translators of *A Thousand and One Nights*, who had already caught the attention of Todorov and Borges.¹⁵

Among Marana's life experiences there is his meeting with an old South American Indian called 'The Father of Story-Telling'. From his cave, the old man tells all the stories of the world without stopping, the reincarnation of all writers, including those of *A Thousand and One Nights*, in this case intentionally quoted: 'sarebbe la reincarnazione di Omero, dell'autoredelle Mille e una notte, dell'autore del PopolVuh, nonché di Alexandre Dumas e di James Joyce' ['he would be the reincarnation of Homer, of the author of *A Thousand and One Nights*, of the author of *Popul Vuh*, as well as Alexandre Dumas and James Joyce'.]¹⁶ The Father of Story-Telling represents in some way the loss of authorship, just as he is the embodiment of storytelling's original orality (oral like that of Scheherazade) whose place writing can never take.

But in this novel even the final part is explicitly in debt to the imagery from the Arabian collection, and even more so in light of the dynamics between orality, writing, apocrypha, and the loss of authorship. Calvino's main reader character, unlike the listener Shahryar who is satisfied every night by Scheherazade, instead has to search for the endings to the interrupted stories. Indeed, at the end of the novel he decides to go to a library to finally track down and read the stories he was forced to leave unfinished. By an umpteenth cruel twist of fate, all the books he requests are not available and his desire cannot

¹⁵ Todorov 1978, p. 46.

¹⁶ Calvino, *Se una notte d'inverno un viaggiatore*, 1991, vol. II, p. 724. Translation mine.

be satisfied. He gets to chatting with other readers in the library about their tastes in reading, until one of them tells him that the best story he ever heard as a child comes from *A Thousand and One Nights*. This story told the tale of Caliph Hārūn al-Rašīd who, disguised as an ordinary man as he was often used to doing, came upon seven men and a woman in a garden. The woman broke a necklace of seven white pearls and one black pearl into a chalice and ordered (on punishment by death) that whoever drew out the black pearl had to kill Caliph Hārūn al-Rašīd. Lo and behold but it was Hārūn himself who retrieved the black pearl. At this point, the caliph in disguise tried to gain some time by asking the woman to tell him why she wanted Hārūn dead. This he 'asks, anxious to hear the tale'. Only, the memory of this story held by the man the reader meets in the library stops here. He no longer recollects how the story ended, and says he has been unable to track it down in any edition of *A Thousand and One Nights* (just as Calvino wrote of not being able to find in any translation of the Arabian collection the story of the 602nd night of Borges 'in which Sharazàd tells Shahriyār a story in which Sharazàd tells Shahriyār').¹⁷ The undefinable and evasive text of *A Thousand and One Nights* made an impression on Calvino also for its jumbled specificity, and the opening of this tale (visibly apocryphal) told and heard in that still unfinished library, is but the umpteenth unfinished tale put forward in this book wholly modelled on the frame of the Arabian collection. Clearly it is significant that the last interrupted story expressly recalls *A Thousand and One Nights*, stopping on the very line 'asks, anxious to hear the tale', or rather, on the audience's desire for the storytelling that allowed Scheherazade's life to be saved in the Arabian collection (and which here associates Hārūn with the novel's Reader protagonist). The only story that comes to an end in Calvino's book is that of the main reader character, who after all his ups and downs marries someone as passionate about reading as him. They hole up in the bedroom (like the framing scene from *A Thousand and One Nights*) to pleurably devour both books and each other's bodies.

It is on this theme of the body that I wish to end this chapter, asking you to note how in all three examples of the Italian reuse of *A Thousand and One Nights* by such very different writers, are united by their referral to the imagery in the Arabian collection and by the constant referral to the body. It is the case for Vittorini, who in *Conversazione di Sicilia* tells us how he discovered female nudity upon first hearing those tales as a boy (besides, even the main character of his early novel *Il garofanorosso* had a lover, the prostitute Zobeida, whose name comes from *A Thousand and One Nights*), and it is also the case for Pasolini, whose film set out to provoke and scandalize the hypocritical left-wing

¹⁷ Calvino, *I livelli di realtà in letteratura*, 1995, vol. 1, p. 394. Translation mine.

conventional thinkers beyond any ideology, and in the name of physical and sexual spontaneity. And we have just seen this is also the case for a cold 'engineer of literature' such as Calvino, who plays the entire novel of interrupted stories on the reader's desire to enjoy the tale (and so make it their own) and the mirror-like desire of that same reader to make the female reader their own. Taking refuge in the imagery of *A Thousand and One Nights*, moreover, represents for all three a refuge in a symbolic and unreal dimension, which is that of literature itself, another distant dimension revealed, but not because of this, to be lacking in truth. The truth of this dream of somewhere else is given in each of these examples by the authenticity of the body's experience, the ideal rival for narrative fantasy and imagination. What is more, this corporeity, which though already a semantically central element in the Arabian collection is key to the modern Italian reuse of the *Nights*, succeeds in giving depth and concreteness to the magical dimension of the fabulous. It allows the twentieth-century dream of the Italian *Nights* to become more real.

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L'héritage des *Mille et une nuits* chez Michel Ocelot

Ilaria Vitali

Considéré aujourd'hui comme le plus important réalisateur de long-métrages animés après Émile Cohl, Michel Ocelot a toujours avoué sa dette envers les *Mille et une nuits*, connues d'abord dans la traduction d'Antoine Galland (1704–1717), œuvre « à la fois française et arabe »¹ marquant l'histoire de la littérature et de la culture françaises, puis dans d'autres éditions plus récentes, dont celle de René Khawam (1965–1967). Si l'hypotexte des *Nuits* a été déclaré à plusieurs reprises par Ocelot, la réécriture cinématographique interroge les textes-sources et les soumet à de nouvelles épreuves, en créant de circuits de sens inédits. Selon les termes de Dominique Maingueneau, la réécriture – terme qu'il faut prendre dans son sens le plus large – consiste à transformer un texte et à le réinvestir en exploitant dans un sens légitimant son capital d'autorité. En réécrivant ou en adaptant l'ouvrage d'un prédécesseur, l'artiste accrédite son œuvre d'une part de légitimité et lui confère une certaine autorité, celle du texte-source. Cependant, chez Ocelot, la réécriture filmique ne se limite pas à la volonté de s'inscrire dans le sillage d'une œuvre-monument et d'en tirer profit.

Azur et Asmar (2007) est sans doute le long-métrage de l'auteur qui s'inspire de plus près de l'imaginaire des *Nuits*, reprises sous forme de citations implicites ou explicites, ou bien d'allusions à certains motifs (on pense, par exemple, à l'oiseau Simorgh/Rokh, à la présence primordiale des djinns ou aux déguisements nocturnes de la princesse Chamsous Sabah, version féminine et enfantine du calife Hārūn al-Rašīd). Dans cet article, j'aimerais pourtant focaliser mon analyse sur une série de courts-métrages débutée dans les années 1980 sous le titre original de *Ciné-Si*. Cette série, conçue d'abord pour la télévision, se présente comme un projet de longue haleine, qui traverse toute l'œuvre d'Ocelot. Elle compte aujourd'hui 22 court-métrages, d'environ 12 minutes chacun, dont un florilège a été recueilli et redistribué au cinéma (*Princes et princesses* en 2000 ; *Dragons et princesses* en 2010 ; *Contes de la nuit* en 2011), suite au succès du long-métrage *Kirikou et la sorcière* (1998). À la différence de ce dernier, cette série de court-métrages n'est pas spécialement destinée aux

1 Chraïbi, Sermain, 2004, II. À ce sujet, on lira également avec profit Sermain 2009.

enfants et peut être appréciée, nous le verrons, à plusieurs niveaux selon les compétences du spectateur et sa capacité à activer les références intertextuelles (ce qu'Umberto Eco appelle la «coopération interprétative»²).

Il s'agira de considérer, dans un premier temps, la technique, la structure et l'origine de cette série, pour comprendre, dans un deuxième temps, l'usage qu'Ocelot fait de ces sources, dans quel but et de quelle manière il réactive le matériau narratif des *Mille et une nuits*. Cela permettra de dégager une «leçon» plus générale, non seulement sur la circulation et l'évolution des *Nuits* au fil du temps et de l'espace, mais sur le réemploi et l'actualisation des textes anciens.

1 Un héritage ancien entre Orient et Occident

L'intérêt des court-métrages d'Ocelot réside d'abord dans leur technique, celle des silhouettes animées, qui nous fait remonter aux origines mêmes du cinéma d'animation. En effet, ces œuvres d'Ocelot se présentent comme des « contes en théâtre d'ombres ». Aux débuts de sa carrière, le papier découpé s'impose à Ocelot par nécessité : comme il l'a lui-même avoué,³ il s'agit en effet de la technique d'animation la plus économique. C'est donc par un manque de moyens que l'auteur réalise en 1979 un premier court-métrage, *Les trois inventeurs*, en papier blanc gaufré et napperon de pâtissier. Ce premier ouvrage passe, au dire du réalisateur, presque inaperçu, mais reçoit le prix BAFTA (British Academy of Film and Television Arts) et, qui plus est, constitue pour Ocelot une sorte de matrice pour ses futurs ouvrages. Ce sera toujours à cause de l'absence de moyens qu'Ocelot reviendra au papier découpé dans les années 1980, pour entamer la série de court-métrages *Ciné Si*, que Jean-François Laguionie, célèbre réalisateur français de films d'animation et fondateur du studio La Fabrique, accepte de produire. Au lieu du papier blanc, Ocelot emploie cette fois du papier noir, ce qui transforme ses personnages en silhouettes.

La réalisation d'un film de ce genre repose sur une technique assez simple et artisanale, mais qui demande une précision d'orfèvre. Les personnages sont d'abord dessinés comme des pantins articulés (Ocelot les réalise en papier Canson noir) ; on perce ensuite des trous aux articulations pour poser les attaches parisiennes qui permettront le mouvement. Les pantins sont ensuite posés à plat et éclairés par en dessous : les éléments découpés apparaissent alors comme des silhouettes noires. Ces « ombres » se détachent sur des décors translucides réalisés en Canson aquarelle, leur couleur indiquant souvent le

² Eco 1979.

³ Gudín 2005, 272.

registre dramatique de la scène selon des conventions précises.⁴ L'animation se fait sous la caméra d'un banc-titre, image par image, selon la technique du *stop-motion*.

Bien évidemment, créer un film de silhouettes signifie se rattacher à la tradition inventée par Lotte Reiniger, auteur de ce qui est considéré comme l'un des premiers long-métrages d'animation, *Les aventures du prince Achmed* (*Die Abenteuer des Prinzen Achmed*, 1926), inspiré des *Mille et une nuits* (plus précisément de trois « contes orphelins » de Galland, *L'histoire d'Aladdin*, *L'Histoire du prince Ahmed et de la fée Pari Banou* et *L'Histoire du cheval enchanté*). Malgré les presque cent ans qui séparent Ocelot de Reiniger, la ressemblance entre les deux est assez frappante : une comparaison de quelques photogrammes suffit pour s'en convaincre, même si au fil du temps Ocelot s'est démarqué de plus en plus du style de la réalisatrice allemande et a fait évoluer la technique des silhouettes. Dans les années 2000, notamment pour la série *Dragons et princesses*, les personnages de papier des années 1980 ont été numérisés (vectorisés sur Photoshop), avant d'être animés par ordinateur, tout en gardant leur stylisation originare. Ils se détachent cette fois sur des arrière-fonds réalisés en relief, ce qui crée une sorte de théâtre en trois dimensions où les personnages sont étagés dans l'espace. Autre différence de poids : chez Ocelot, contrairement à Reiniger, la planéité et le graphisme pur des silhouettes sont contrecarrés par un usage magistral de la parole. Les personnages d'Ocelot expliquent, exposent, révèlent, racontent inlassablement leur histoire. Dans cette fascination pour la parole, pour les dialogues bien ciselés, à contre-courant des films de silhouettes qui sont généralement muets,⁵ on lit la passion d'Ocelot pour les mots. Le réalisateur se définit d'abord comme un conteur. Un conteur au parcours plutôt singulier :

Je n'ai été conscient de mon état de conteur qu'à l'âge très adulte, mais cet état était en place dès l'enfance. J'ai toujours été « bon en rédaction » à l'école, et à partir de huit ans (au moins) j'écrivais des histoires pour ma grand-mère (ce n'est pas dans ce sens que cela se passe habituellement !).⁶

N'oublions pas qu'Ocelot est l'auteur de tous les scénarios et les scénarimages de ses films, et que son œuvre cinématographique est doublée d'une œuvre

4 Jouvenceau 2004, ch. 3.

5 *Ibid.* Même dans ses ouvrages les plus récents, réalisés après l'apparition du cinéma sonore, Reiniger décide de continuer à réaliser des films muets.

6 Ocelot, Site officiel, <<http://www.michelocelot.fr/#bio-longue>>, consulté le 3 avril 2015.

narrative, ses films faisant l'objet d'un travail constant de novellisation,⁷ à savoir une transposition de l'écran à l'écrit, que l'auteur réalise personnellement.⁸

Par ailleurs, se rattacher à la tradition des silhouettes animées ne signifie pas seulement s'inspirer de Lotte Reiniger, mais aussi du théâtre d'ombre de l'extrême Orient, forme d'art très ancienne, pénétrée en Europe à travers la Turquie (on pense aux aventures de Karagueuz) et diffusée ensuite par les montreurs d'ombres italiens à partir du XVII^e siècle. Comme Laurent Mannoni l'explique :

Les plus anciennes mentions de théâtre d'ombres viennent de Chine, mais le Japon, l'Inde, le Siam, la Malaisie ont développé très tôt leurs propres traditions et techniques. [...] en 1775, un itinérant italien nommé Ambrogio, francisant son nom en Ambroise, présente un spectacle ambiteux à Paris et à Londres. L'adoption de la dénomination « ombres chinoises » reflète la mode d'alors pour les pays lointains.⁹

En Europe, cette passion pour le théâtre d'ombres oriental s'allie au XVIII^e siècle avec la mode des silhouettes, lancée par Etienne de Silhouette, dont elle tire le nom, et diffusée par la suite par des artistes comme Jean Hubert (1721–1786) ou John Miers (1758–1821). Pour cette raison, les « ombres » européennes sont généralement noires (en métal ou en carton), contrairement à celles de l'Orient, qui sont très colorées. Au XIX^e siècle, la mode du théâtre d'ombres, ainsi acclimaté, se diffuse en Europe et particulièrement en France. Le cas du cabaret parisien du Chat noir de Rodolphe Salis, célèbre pour ses représentations en ombres chinoises, créées par Henri Rivière ou Caran D'Ache, n'en constitue qu'un exemple. En reprenant la technique du conte en théâtre d'ombres par ses films de silhouettes, Ocelot se rattache donc à une tradition

7 Sur la novellisation, voir Baetens 2008. Il faut remarquer qu'Ocelot se situe constamment au croisement des arts : ses films ont été adaptés au théâtre, avec sa participation. On citera l'exemple de *Kirikou et Karaba* mis en scène et chorégraphié par Wayne McGregor (2007), ou celui de *Princes et Princesses*, mis en scène par Legrand Bemba-Debert (2009). Dans ce parcours de contaminations transémotiques, on rappellera également qu'Ocelot est le réalisateur d'une vidéo de la chanteuse Björk, pour le titre « Earth Intruders », toujours en théâtre d'ombres.

8 On pense au cas des romans, comme *Azur et Asmar* (Nathan, 2007), ou bien aux albums pour la jeunesse. Ces livres présentent souvent des images inédites des films, par exemple des illustrations tirées des dessins au trait avant tournage (*Azur et Asmar*), ou des photos spécialement faites avec les papiers découpés originaux du film. Cette activité de novellisation est parfois poussée jusqu'à des cas-limites de narrativité (création de livres-jeux, de livres-théâtres ou de véritables jeux-vidéos).

9 Mannoni 2011, p. 20.

orientale et européenne : une double inspiration qui se lit dans la structure aussi bien que dans la matière narrative de ses court-métrages.

2 Entre citation et création originale : structure, thèmes et motifs de la série

Chacun des 22 court-métrages d'Ocelot s'ouvre par un récit-cadre qui repose sur une structure fixe : la nuit, dans un cinéma désaffecté, avec l'aide du vieux projectionniste Théo, un garçon (Il) et une fille (Elle) se racontent des histoires, en puisant dans la tradition littéraire et dans le folklore. Ce dispositif qui se répète à chaque épisode a d'abord une fonction pratique, le récit-cadre permettant la sérialité des court-métrages et l'enchâssement des contes les plus divers ; à un deuxième niveau, chaque prologue a aussi la fonction de nous fournir des éléments herméneutiques qui contextualisent le conte qui va suivre ; le récit-cadre est là pour suggérer enfin la structure exploitée dans les *Nuits*, celle des récits emboîtés, des contes nocturnes, que l'auteur évoquera même dans le titre du dernier volet de ce projet en théâtre d'ombres, *Contes de la nuit* (2011).

Le procédé du récit-cadre n'aurait en soi rien d'original, si ce n'est que les conteurs d'Ocelot ne se limitent pas à raconter des histoires, mais ils les prennent littéralement en charge, en incarnant les différents personnages de leurs contes, dans une réalisation extrême du jeu d'enfance « Si j'étais... ».

Une fois le décor planté, une vignette faisant écho au cinéma muet nous annonce le titre de l'histoire qui va suivre. L'écran fictif redouble l'écran réel, dans une mise en scène du procédé. La fiction se fait métafiction, l'auteur est à la recherche d'une connivence avec le spectateur qui se trouve impliqué dans une histoire qui est en train de se construire sous ses yeux. Cette réflexivité de la mise en scène nous invite à l'intérieur de l'atelier de l'artisan, du fabricant d'histoires. Ocelot, qui semble parler par la bouche du vieux technicien, Théo, nous dévoile par ce dispositif les secrets de la réécriture. Cet alter-égo de l'auteur est là pour encourager les deux adolescents à se servir des contes anciens, en les incitant d'abord à consulter des livres dans la bibliothèque, à faire ensuite des recherches documentaires, et en leur expliquant enfin qu'on peut brouiller, transgresser ou subvertir le matériau préexistant. « Prenez des libertés » (*Le Garçon des Figes*, 1989), leur dit-il, « Vous êtes loin d'avoir épuisé toutes les possibilités des contes... » (*Prince et princesse*, 1989).

Comme on l'a vu, les deux jeunes gens n'ont pas de nom : ce sont tout simplement « Il » et « Elle », des figures nues, prêtes à incarner les personnages les plus divers, par le truchement des déguisements qu'ils créent eux-mêmes, en

se servant d'outils simples (stylo et ordinateur), voire de machines complexes et futuristes, comme le « costumatique », un automate à même de réaliser leurs costumes fantaisistes et d'habiller les personnages en quelques secondes. La stratégie du déguisement, magnifiée par cet engin hypertechnologique, est très courante dans les *Nuits*, où elle fonctionne tel un laisser-passer qui permet d'accéder à des lieux interdits et de dépasser des seuils réels ou fictionnels, ou encore de changer de rôle et de genre. Dans *The Arabian Nights Encyclopedia*, Ulrich Marzolph et Richard van Leeuwen montrent bien l'importance du déguisement au niveau narratif et métanarratif :

In the stories of the *Arabian Nights* disguise is a favourite device for the construction of plots and subplots. In general, disguise is employed to enter restricted or forbidden enclosures, to cross real or fictional boundaries, and to cross over from one realm into another. In some instances the crossing of boundaries in disguise is linked to a symbolic dimension: the hero not only changes clothes but also roles, turning from prince into merchant or physician. In this case, the disguise dissociates him from his normal environment and releases him from his official role.¹⁰

Chez Ocelot, les contes qui suivent chaque récit-cadre s'inspirent des traditions contiques les plus diverses, des pays les plus divers, allant des Antilles au Japon, de l'Égypte antique à l'Allemagne des frères Grimm. Dans cet ensemble de sources multiples, les *Mille et une nuits* tiennent une place de choix. Curieusement, cette source, déclarée par Ocelot dans de nombreux éléments épitextuels (entretiens, dossiers de presse, site officiel de l'auteur...), demeure cachée dans les prologues des contes eux-mêmes : il appartient au spectateur d'activer le réseau intertextuel – ou intermédial – pour dévoiler le palimpseste secret de ces court-métrages, le public étant implicitement invité dans l'atelier de fabrication des contes par le biais du dispositif du récit-cadre.

Parmi les court-métrages d'Ocelot qui se prêtent à ce jeu, il y a le *Prince des bijoux* (1992). Pour les lecteurs des *Nuits*, l'histoire est familière : en Perse, un garçon très pauvre tombe sous le charme de la fille du shah, que personne n'a le droit de voir et qu'il aperçoit la nuit, à la dérobée, dans le secret d'un jardin. Les deux jeunes tombent amoureux, mais pour épouser la princesse, le garçon devra montrer sa richesse au shah, en lui apportant les plus belles pierres précieuses, ce qui n'est pas facile, car l'aigle des diamants vole tout ce qui brille dans la ville et l'amène dans son nid. Aidée par la princesse, le héros parviendra au nid haut perché de l'aigle en se cachant dans la dépouille d'un bœuf et

¹⁰ Marzolph/van Leeuwen 2004, vol. II, p. 540.

volera à son tour les pierres précieuses, le conte se terminant sur l'image des diamants offert au shah qui cascadenent sur l'escalier du palais.

Si on active l'intertexte gallandien, on peut reconnaître dans ce conte la structure et certains motifs de *L'histoire d'Aladdin* (un garçon pauvre épris de la fille du souverain, que personne n'a le droit de voir ; des bassins de pierres précieuses offertes à un sultan avide pour obtenir sa main...), qui cohabite ici avec le deuxième voyage de Sindbad (*Loiseau Rokh et la Vallée aux diamants*). « Cela se passe au pays des *Mille et une nuits* [...] », nous glisse subrepticement Ocelot sans préciser davantage. « L'inspiration ici vient de l'Orient, et je me régale avec prince, princesse, sultan, turbans, clair de lune, palais, désert, pierres précieuses, aigle, cruauté et amour. »¹¹ Bref, un stock de motifs que les lecteurs des *Nuits* – notamment les lecteurs de Galland – reconnaîtront aisément. De sa lecture du recueil, Ocelot ne garde pourtant que quelques bribes, préférant voler des éléments et les agencer selon une mécanique nouvelle.

On retrouve la même dynamique dans le court-métrage de *L'écolier-sorcier* (2010). L'intrigue, qui baigne encore une fois dans la Perse immémoriale, est des plus espiègles. Le conte met en scène un sorcier et un jeune apprenti qu'il instruit avec dévouement, tout en cachant un projet monstrueux : le dévorer, pour multiplier son pouvoir. À la fin du conte, c'est pourtant le contraire qui se produit : le novice sera le bourreau de son maître.¹² Là encore, Ocelot s'amuse à brouiller les pistes, plusieurs éléments étant repris sans que l'on puisse trouver un ancrage précis dans un seul conte des *Nuits*. Du point de vue iconographique, comme dans le conte précédent, l'ambiance orientale est restituée par des marqueurs tels que les vêtements des personnages et leurs ornements – quoique en silhouettes – et surtout par les motifs décoratifs et les détails architecturaux des arrière-plans en 3D. Dans le prologue, l'auteur nous montre, par le dispositif métafictionnel du récit-cadre, certaines de ses sources, dont des miniatures persanes du XVII^e siècle, ce qui contribue à activer des liens intertextuels chez le spectateur. Du point de vue symbolique, la cannibalisation qui clôt le conte et qui se réalise à l'envers, l'apprenti dévorant le sorcier, peut être lue comme une réflexion plus générale sur le rapport entre maître et élève, entre le modèle et son continuateur, voire comme une métaphore du travail d'Ocelot, qui phagocyte la tradition des *Nuits*, sans se plier, en définitive, à son

11 Ocelot, Site officiel, <<http://www.michelocelot.fr/#le-prince-des-joyaux>>, consulté le 1^{er} avril 2016.

12 Soulignons au passage que la maison du sorcier est une grotte souterraine, hermétique comme tous les lieux qui recèlent le savoir chez Ocelot (on pense à la grotte sous le palais de la Sorcière dans l'épisode *La sorcière*, dans *Princes et princesses*, ou bien au palais de la princesse Chamsous Sabah, dans le long-métrage *Azur et Asmar*). Voir Ocelot/Gorgievski 2007, pp. 207–211.

immense autorité. Cette lecture est autorisée par l'auteur lui-même, qui a déclaré à plusieurs reprises de « manger » littéralement la tradition littéraire et contique qui le précède :

J'ai bien conscience de ne pas être original. D'avoir mangé à tous les râteliers, d'avoir la chance d'être dans un siècle qui a accès à toute sorte de chose et d'être dans un pays, riche, où j'ai accès à tous les pays du monde et à toutes les époques de l'histoire. Je mange tout ça, et ensuite c'est moi.¹³

En fabriquant de nouveaux contes, qui se détachent de plus en plus des textes matriciels, Ocelot réalise ainsi des formes d'actualisation originales qui jettent en même temps une lumière nouvelle sur les sources elles-mêmes. Il est difficile de définir ces court-métrages comme des simples « adaptations ». Ce concept est d'ailleurs refusé par l'auteur, qui avoue : « Je n'aime pas les adaptations. Je pense que c'est très mauvais de faire une adaptation. Ce que je fais moi, c'est peut-être très mauvais, mais ce ne sont pas des adaptations. [...] Je nomme mes inspirations, mais ce sont mes histoires. Ce sont mes tripes, mon cœur et le reste. »¹⁴

Les variations contemporaines d'Ocelot dépassent donc la simple adaptation et impliquent des inclusions intertextuelles multiples, déclarées ou cachées, dans la volonté de faire fusionner des techniques et des esthétiques, des traditions littéraires et artistiques les plus diverses, en jouant avec un patrimoine culturel qui tient compte non seulement des *Mille et une nuits*, mais de l'héritage des *Mille et une nuits*.

D'ailleurs, on l'aura compris, les *Nuits* auxquelles s'inspire Ocelot ne sont pas strictement celles de la culture arabe, mais plutôt celles de la littérature universelle. Le court-métrage du *Pont du petit cordonnier* (2010) est, en ce sens, un exemple réussi. Il constitue une transposition de l'anecdote du *Rêve du trésor* (Chauvin, n. 258), auquel Evaghélia Stead a consacré une étude très fine.¹⁵ On y trouve un homme très pauvre qui part à la recherche d'un trésor dont il a eu la vision en rêve et qui se situe loin de chez lui. Il abandonne alors sa maison pour le récupérer, mais une fois atteint le lieu rêvé, il ne trouve aucun trésor. Désespéré, il se confie à un homme qui lui avoue avoir fait un rêve similaire : dans la description de l'endroit où se trouve cet autre trésor, le premier homme reconnaît alors sa propre maison. Une fois rentré chez lui, il y découvrira en effet une fortune, son déplacement n'ayant pas été inutile.

13 Ocelot 2008.

14 Gudin 2005, p. 272.

15 Stead 2009.

L'attestation de cet anecdote dans le folklore international (répertorié dans le catalogue d'Aarne et Thompson sous le n. 1645, « The Treasure at home »),¹⁶ même si la version des *Nuits* insiste beaucoup plus sur l'importance du voyage, nous signale sa diffusion. Ce conte minimal, greffé « sur l'arbre des *Nuits* dans un deuxième temps de sa vie occidentale »,¹⁷ peut vanter une riche postérité : il a servi de canevas, entre autre, à l'un des premiers récits de Borges, *Los dos que soñaron* (1934).

Dans la réinterprétation d'Ocelot, qui se déroule dans l'Europe centrale (le pont du petit cordonnier du titre étant situé à Prague), l'accent est mis sur le courage du premier rêveur, qui quitte son pauvre village pour aller dans le vaste monde chercher son trésor, poursuivre son rêve, alors que personne ne croit en lui. Nous ne pouvons pas être sûrs qu'Ocelot ait lu le texte de Borges, cependant, comme chez ce dernier, le rêve, qui se répète trois fois, prend une place centrale et constitue le pivot autour duquel tourne la nouvelle version du conte. L'anecdote, très courte, s'étoffe donc chez Ocelot, et semble construire son sens au carrefour du folklore de l'Europe centrale, des *Mille et une nuits* et de la suite borgésienne. D'ailleurs, le conte du rêve du trésor métaphorise précisément, selon les mots de Stead, « la faculté combinatoire des récits et une méthode dialectique incitant au dialogue entre Orient et Occident ».¹⁸ Bref, une invitation à aller vers l'autre.

Une fois encore, le croisement des traditions contiques orientales et occidentales montre une extrême fertilité dans la série de court-métrages en ombres chinoises d'Ocelot. L'exemple le plus engageant en ce sens, et le dernier que je propose dans cette étude, est constitué sans doute par le conte *La reine cruelle et le montreur de fabulo* (1989), qui se présente comme une sorte de récit de science-fiction. Le spectateur est ici transporté en l'an 3000 : une reine toute-puissante refuse de se marier et impose à ses prétendants l'épreuve de la cachette : si, à l'aide de son « mégaradar », elle n'arrive pas à trouver le soupissant caché avant le coucher du soleil, elle l'épousera ; si, au contraire, elle le détecte, il sera désintégré par un « rayon de la mort ». Un pauvre « montreur de fabulo » (le fabulo étant un curieux animal imaginaire), réussira l'épreuve en se substituant à son animal, que la reine a voulu acheter et garder auprès d'elle, dans sa propre chambre.

Ce conte futuriste, où Ocelot s'amuse avec des animaux inventés et des machines hypertechnologiques, révèle en fait deux hypotextes anciens : le conte du *Lièvre de mer* des frères Grimm (1812) et *L'histoire du prince Calaf et de la*

16 Voir Chraïbi 2008, p. 155.

17 Stead 2009, p. 233.

18 Stead 2009, p. 247.

princesse de la Chine, faisant partie du recueil *Les Mille et un jours* de François Pétis de la Croix (1710). Si le premier nous conduit au cœur du folklore européen, le second nous amène encore une fois dans la nébuleuse des *Nuits*. *Les Mille et un jours*, cette contrepartie diurne des *Mille et une nuits*, se comprennent dans le contexte du XVIII^e siècle français qui leur est propre. En effet, « [1]a traduction française de Galland connaît un succès d'une grande ampleur, dès le premier volume, et déclenche un véritable engouement qui a eu pour effet, entre autres, de distendre et d'élargir le corpus même du recueil ». (Chraïbi, Vitali, 2015, 5) Les auteurs français ont été particulièrement sensibles à cette vogue de contes orientaux et orientalisants, répertoriés et analysés, entre autres, par Marie-Louise Dufrenoy, Raymonde Robert et Jean-Paul Sermain. *L'histoire du prince Calaf*, qui occupe les jours 63–80 du recueil de Pétis de la Croix, est en soi un bel exemple de l'élargissement du corpus des *Nuits* : elle relate l'histoire de Turandote, à l'origine de l'opéra de Puccini (1826), qui est à son tour redevable d'une adaptation théâtrale faite par Carlo Gozzi en 1762. Les *Nuits* engendrent toujours des nouvelles *Nuits*...

À plusieurs reprises, Ocelot a avoué sa dette envers le XVIII^e siècle français et la vogue des contes orientaux, qu'il ne se limite pas à adapter, mais se plaît à réinventer, en les alliant à d'autres traditions contiques et littéraires. Ainsi, dans le court-métrage *La reine cruelle et le montreur de fabulo*, le stratagème inventé par le héros est le même envisagé par le personnage du *Lièvre de mer* des Grimm : se cacher dans le seul endroit sur la terre qui n'est pas surveillé, celui où se trouve la personne qui surveille. Cependant, pour parvenir à ses buts, à la différence des Grimm et en se rapprochant plus de Pétis de la Croix, le héros ne jouit pas de l'aide surnaturelle d'un être secourable comme le renard du conte allemand qui le transforme en lièvre de mer. Point de métamorphose magique chez Ocelot : le garçon construit lui-même son déguisement en animal, se substitue à son fabulo et éprouve ainsi son mérite. Il n'est peut-être pas inutile de rappeler que la création de ce déguisement constitue une mise en abyme du récit-cadre de cette série en théâtre d'ombres (on se rappellera du « costumatique »), ce qui démultiplie la réflexivité du conte et ses jeux de miroirs.

3 Ré-animer des contes anciens

Si chacune des transpositions contemporaines d'Ocelot tient à elle seule, elle gagne donc en profondeur lorsque le spectateur active le réseau de références qui s'y cachent, chaque court-métrage faisant preuve d'une riche mémoire intertextuelle. Cette mémoire témoigne d'un dialogue sans cesse poursuivi, qui

montre à quel point les auteurs qui s'inspirent aujourd'hui des *Nuits* soient conscients de la chaîne dialogique qui les précède et dont ils ne sont jamais des récepteurs passifs. Dans l'essai *The Arabian Nights : A Companion* (1994), Robert Irwin a décrit magistralement l'influence comme un phénomène actif : les auteurs choisissent les textes par lesquels ils sont influencés, en faisant des choix précis parmi les milliers d'ouvrages par lesquels ils pourraient être influencés, à la recherche d'une sorte d' « autorisation rétrospective » pour leur travail : « Influence does not just pass down [...] like a stream running downhill. [...] Being influenced is an active process ».¹⁹

Je n'arriverai pas jusqu'à évoquer la figure oulipienne du « plagiat par anticipation », redécouverte de manière provocatrice par Pierre Bayard²⁰ et appliquée brillamment à la nébuleuse des *Nuits* par Jean-François Perrin, dans sa belle analyse des contes orientaux de Thomas-Simon Gueullette.²¹ Il faut cependant reconnaître que chaque auteur élit ses précurseurs et, comme Borges l'affirmait, « [s]on apport modifie notre conception du passé autant que du futur ».²² S'il y a donc, de la part d'Ocelot, la volonté de s'inscrire dans le sillage des *Nuits*, il y a également le désir de jeter un jour nouveau sur ce livre-monument. Ainsi, ces court-métrages inspirés des *Nuits* dilatent l'univers de départ, en proposant d'autres lectures. Cela nous dit que réécrire les contes de ce recueil aujourd'hui n'implique pas seulement la volonté de s'approprier le capital d'autorité rattaché à un texte célèbre et toujours présent dans l'imaginaire collectif, mais signifie actualiser ce capital, en interroger les contenus, les réinvestir d'un sens nouveau, en prenant en compte non seulement les textes-sources, mais cette immense bibliothèque – on devrait désormais dire « hémérothèque » – que sont devenues les *Mille et une nuits*. Dans cette perspective, on pourrait qualifier les contes en théâtre d'ombres d'Ocelot non seulement comme des films d'animation mais, en empruntant les termes de Séverine Abiker, comme des films de « ré-animation », en ce sens qu'ils revivifient un matériau ancien en le faisant littéralement bouger. Cette mise en mouvement sur l'écran est réelle aussi bien que symbolique, métaphore parfaite des extraordinaires circulations et évolutions des *Nuits* dans le temps et dans l'espace.

19 Irwin 1993, p. 286.

20 Bayard 2008.

21 Perrin 2011.

22 Borges 2006, p. 144.

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PART 4

The Nights, the Humanities, and the Sciences



American *Nights*

The Introduction and Usage of the Arabian Nights within the US's Print Modernity

Rasoul Aliakbari

To write upon America *as a nation* would be absurd, for nation, properly speaking it is not; but to consider it in its present chaotic state is well worth the labour

DIARY IN AMERICA 9 [1839]; italics in original

• • •

Nothing more need be said of the best tales of the *Arabian Nights*, in which number we include all of the former translation, except that we regard them as we believe they are viewed by everyone. We consider them as powerful delineations of national character, seen through a veil of delicately wrought fiction

'THE ARABIAN NIGHTS ENTERTAINMENTS', *American Quarterly Review* 302–03 [1829]

• • •

[It] is well known that many of our modern novelists have culled their ideas from the *Arabian Nights*

'THE TALES OF THE GENII', *The New York Mirror* 396 [1825]

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1 Introduction

A survey of scholarship on the Western reception of the *Arabian Nights* suggests that its presence in Europe, particularly in France and England, has often

been highlighted to the neglect of its circulation in New England.¹ This chapter examines some interconnections between the *Nights* and the formation of national subjectivity in the American antebellum period (1789–1861). Although much has been written about American literary orientalism,² the *Nights* is under-examined in the studies of antebellum print culture. Susan Nance has discussed some aspects of the *Nights* in relation to the growth of American capitalism;³ however, her study is by no means exhaustive. Simultaneously drawing on her research and distancing my argument from hers, I employ print-cultural studies tools to explain the recurrence of adoptions, adaptations, editions, and major publications of the *Nights* in New England prior to the Civil War. In this chapter I particularly aim to explore some of the appearances of the *Nights* in American antebellum print culture and demonstrate their use in the formation of American national subjectivity with such features as economic elitism and mass consumerism. In so doing, I also examine the changing political and economic structure of antebellum America and situate the interpretations of the *Nights* within this volatile context.

Additionally, though Nance mainly develops her argument to challenge postcolonial accounts of American orientalism, I aim in this discussion to demonstrate ways in which literary orientalism was employed as part of the formation of American nationhood. As such, where Nance downplays a postcolonial approach to eighteenth- and nineteenth-century orientalism, I do not reject such a reading, but seek rather to theorize the domestic dimensions and applications of antebellum literary orientalism, thus showcasing it as a bi-dimensional phenomenon. Furthermore, Nance ascribes agency to people (including performers, artists, and travelogue writers) who chose ‘to play Eastern’ – in print and performance – whereas I highlight the ways in which the changing socio-economic climate informed readers’ choices concerning production and consumption of cultural items, including the literary orientalism of the *Nights*. More specifically, Nance views the reproduction of Eastern elements in nineteenth-century American culture as means by which Eastern immigrants could survive economically; on the other hand, my argument focusses on how Eastern (ized) cultural products served the urgent need for an American national subjectivity. As such, though a binary opposition of Americans and foreigners, or *native-born* and *foreign-born*, is strongly implied in Nance’s work, this chapter aims to render such borders as porous and fluid as far as is suggested by the presence and use of the *Nights* in American print culture. Nance

1 Hereafter referred to as the *Nights*.

2 Christy’s description of Oriental echoes in the Transcendentalists’ works and Isani’s study of literary orientalism are two examples.

3 Nance 2009, pp. 19–51.

further ascribes an essence to the *Nights* in terms of its *imprint* on American society, whereas, even though I subscribe to the notion of influence in literary terms, I am more interested in how the specific readings, interpretations, amplifications, recastings, and editions of the *Nights* – within the larger corpus of literary orientalism – developed due to the particular material circumstances of the antebellum era, a significant moment for nation-state formation in American history.

American publishers and readers brought over the border-crossing corpus of the *Nights* and selected the imagery, settings, and characters that they required in order to imagine the American entrepreneurial character and its promise of affluence. The circulation of the *Nights* in New England began in 1794 when its first American edition appeared in Philadelphia. The recurrent motifs of voyaging and adventure in the *Nights* and its associated tales contributed to the formation of a distinct American trans-Atlantic identity and nourished the new nation's aspirations and growing subjectivity. Specifically, in this period the *Nights* was read as envisioning wealth, abundance, and supernatural transmutations, circumstances that New Englanders underwent during the formation of the American model of consumer capitalism. These motifs of the *Nights* served to shape the early American self-identity with such values as entrepreneurialism, pursuit of capital, and acquisition as universal goods.

The *Nights* was a major text through which pre-Civil War American fiction and literary print culture addressed the country's rapid socio-economic transformation and emerging subjectivity. The motifs of adventure, accomplishment, and transformation served as metaphors for the trans-Atlantic diasporic experience as well as the entrepreneurialism displayed by New Englanders of the time in pursuit of the American dream. Nineteenth-century America experienced a period of rapid political, economic, industrial, and social transformation, as railroads, factories, financial units, retailing, and the press expanded.⁴ By the mid-nineteenth century, improvements in transportation, expansions in industrialized production and foreign trade, and the relative growth in wealth and literacy rates brought about new opportunities for consumption that included not only literary print products, but also newspapers, theatres, museums, clothing, chain stores, and circuses.⁵ In this vibrant climate of rapid transformations, the *Nights*, with its rich topoi of adventure, transformation, and material abundance, caught the attention of New England

4 Technology was integral to the development of print culture during this time. Zboray has particularly noted how the railroad improved distribution of literary matter and 'helped to transform the nature of the reader's community life' (4).

5 See Zakim and Kornblith, *Capitalism Takes Command*.

readers as it paralleled their contemporary experiences of socio-economic transformation.⁶

2 Aladdin and the California Gold Rush

With regard to the mid-nineteenth century climate of change and boom, the California Gold Rush (1848–1855) is particularly notable. After the discovery of gold in California, this region was portrayed as a place promoting material gain. The discovery proved an important socio-economic factor attracting American and trans-Atlantic immigrants in pursuit of what they perceived as easily obtainable affluence. American writers of the time used the topoi of the *Nights* to produce a persuasive discourse about the discovery of gold and other precious materials in the western deserts. One figure in the *Nights* serving this purpose was Aladdin, a character from a poor background who was lucky enough to attain phenomenal wealth by travelling to unknown, remote, and abundant lands. Aladdin proved a fitting metaphor for the fortune-seeker in the discourse of western American mining in the mid-nineteenth century and afterwards.⁷ For instance, the *New York Times* described the gathering of diamonds, rubies, and emeralds in San Francisco as follows: '[i]t is realizing the stories of Aladdin, and the oriental tales where genies take wonderful fancies to disconsolate and poverty-struck vagabond princes, and show them a bushel or two of diamonds some morning before breakfast' (*The Way the Company Managed the Affair*). Aladdin became a significant piece of Orientalist literature in the antebellum period to the extent that it appeared not only in editions of the *Nights*, but also autonomously or in collections of selected stories from the *Nights*, appearing 39 times in total in the antebellum period.⁸

Nance has pointed to Aladdin and its metaphorical functioning in nineteenth-century American capitalistic culture.⁹ However, other tale cycles such as 'Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves' and 'Sinbad' also deserve mention for their popularity and usage in the shaping of the American identity. American children's literature, which emerged as a popular print genre in the early nineteenth century, incorporated some of the major stories of the *Nights*. While 'Aladdin' is an account of a person of poor background whose fortunes and schemes lead to upward socioeconomic mobility, 'Ali Baba and Forty Thieves'

6 Nance 2009, p. 32.

7 Francaviglia 2011, p. 88.

8 See Table 16.1.

9 Nance 2009, p. 15.

recounts a sudden economic improvement and the subsequent competition over precious resources. Ali Baba, a poor woodcutter, finds limitless precious resources thanks to luck, and manages to keep them due to his intelligent council and assistantship and in the face of fatal rivalry. 'Sinbad', meanwhile, describes voyages for the purposes of adventure and acquisition of material riches. The risk-taking oceanic sailor, Sinbad, who employed ingenious ways to survive hazards as he experienced the unknown and satisfied his desire for wealth, was a familiar figure for some New Englanders who had themselves voyaged across the Atlantic in hopes of attaining worldly success.¹⁰ In other words, in reading about Sinbad's voyages, New Englanders sought to find themselves in the stories. The themes of adventure, the attainment of material wealth, and economic advancement are consistent in many of the stories from the *Nights* that were published in the antebellum era. 'Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves' and 'Sinbad' appeared 82 times and 14 times, respectively, in print in the antebellum period.¹¹ In addition, 'Sinbad' and 'Aladdin' entered print in separate collections of stories at the same time the *Nights* first appeared in New England, in 1794, and 'Ali Baba and Forty Thieves' appeared in print as early as 1808.¹²

3 Economic Elitism

In nineteenth-century America, consumerism rose among the bourgeois class, who aspired to emulate the European aristocracy. With the gradual dissolution of the hereditary aristocracy, the rising middle class strove to symbolically take their place, mainly through acquiring goods. As Peter N. Stearns has noted, '[u]pper-class consumer habits may have sparked some interest, if not in specific forms of consumerism, at least in using consumer acquisition to make one's own mark in a hierarchical society'.¹³ Moreover, Americans had begun to establish trade connections with China, India, North Africa, and the Middle East in the eighteenth century. The American consumer ethos emerged mainly during the nineteenth century, as the country expanded its international commerce, and such global/colonial products as clothing, coffee, tea, and home

10 While Irwin deems Sinbad a capitalist like Robinson Crusoe and estimates that the element of trade in the *Nights* must have appealed to European readers (Irwin 2013, p. 148), the hypothesis can be more safely considered regarding the antebellum reception of the *Nights*.

11 See Table 16.1.

12 See *OCLC WorldCat*.

13 Stearns 2006, p. 30.

décor were introduced to the American market.¹⁴ During this period, a new appetite emerged for the acquisition and consumption of exotic materials such as teas, coffees, silk, or porcelain from Oriental lands.¹⁵ Consumption of Orientalia and other colonial goods was carried out as a socially symbolic act to define and/or promote one's elite identity and communal status.

Oriental matter served in this context to project a high-culture, elitist selfhood, since the leisure, wealth, and material satisfaction associated with the East were similar to the prospects of the American consumer capitalist ideology. New Englanders mostly associated literary Orientalia with verbosity and prolixity, and the East with extravagance and sumptuousness.¹⁶ The 'Oriental style' in American literary orientalism has been characterized as a metaphorical, elaborate, and excessive usage of language.¹⁷ This style was common in translations, re-creations, adaptations, and dramatizations of Orientalia. More specifically, the *Nights* contained, and in turn encouraged, an elaborate Oriental style. *The American Whig Review* described Edward Forster's 1847 New York edition of the *Nights* as an extraordinary and rich world in which, 'as the volumes dwindle to the end, there only remains an indefinite impression of Oriental magnificence and loveliness'.¹⁸ Furthermore, the 'Introductory Preface' to Forster's 1868 edition of the *Nights* characterizes it by its extravagance, fancy style, and rich imagery.¹⁹ Representations of the *Nights* in turn affected Anglo-American re-creations of the Orient in print, theatres, lectures, and scholarship, forging a pop-culture image of the East as excessive, fantastic, and profligate.

Subsequently, in the rapidly-changing American context, the supposedly fixed Oriental iconography came to signify social standing or elitism. The cultural capital associated with the acquisition of Orientalia in general and the *Nights* in particular helped American consumers to assume a superior social

14 Ibid., pp. 28–9, 33.

15 In his study of early American republican periodicals, Kamrath notes, 'After the American Revolution, for example, people's appetites for material pleasures – for exotic teas and coffees, silk from India, and porcelain and furniture from China – continued to grow' (7). Nance 2009, p. 45.

16 Nance 2009, p. 45.

17 Isani 1962, pp. 42–4.

18 1845–52, p. 603.

19 Forster 1868, p. v, p. xi. *The American Whig Review* also indicates that Forster's edition, published in New York, is based on Edward W. Lane's translation (601Footnote). Interestingly, nineteenth-century American readers perceived Lane's lucid and urbane translation as fantastic and extravagant. Unlike Lane's, Burton's edition, with its intensified erotic and exotic qualities, did not find its way into US print culture until the turn of the century; Burton's *Nights* was first issued by the Burton Society of Denver, Colorado, for private circulation in 1899–1900 (*OCLC WorldCat*).

status. Thus, the Oriental aesthetics and iconography that the *Nights* represented became symbols of high culture and superior social standing in American economic imperialism. In this sense, Orientalia as depicted in the *Nights* was used, not merely to figure otherness, but also to conceive of the emerging modern subjectivity of consumption-based elitism. This selfhood could project its supposedly cosmopolitan aesthetic appreciation and superior socio-economic status by, among other techniques, using the Orientalia suggestive of the cosmology of abundance in the *Nights*. This accounts in part for the prominence of the *Nights* in the discourse surrounding the emergence of consumerism as a defining component in the American nation-building enterprise.

In addition, colour printing was improved in the United States in the middle of the nineteenth century,²⁰ and the first works of chromolithography were produced in the mid- to late nineteenth century.²¹ In this context, the perceived extravagance of the *Nights* was amplified, as illustrations of the *Nights* and its tales appeared in colour. The *Nights* and its related literary orientalism portrayed affluence and leisure, motifs that fit the materialistic consumer culture in the making in the nineteenth-century United States.

4 The *Nights* and Mass Consumerism

Around the middle of the nineteenth century, consumption reached a peak, as transportation (mainly through railways) expanded into the west and the south, and advertising was more widely distributed. Mass advertisements, with their imagery of plenty and the easy availability of limitless commodities, were particularly responsible for forging the myth of an 'abundant society' in the nineteenth-century United States.²² Numerous successful financial enterprises, increases in manufactured output, improvements in transportation, and the growth of advertising made consumerism a nation-wide phenomenon. As such, industrialization played an important role in building a relatively homogeneous national community.²³

In nineteenth-century America, commodities were manufactured and distributed extensively across the expanding nation. The growing culture of advertisement in republican America helped to encourage consumerist hedonism with its portrayal of abundance. In this community, the emerging bourgeois

²⁰ Brekke-Aloise 2014, p. 201.

²¹ Menges 2001, p. 1.

²² Gottdiener 2001, p. 14.

²³ Zboray 1993, p. xvi.

class were able to position themselves socially through the accumulation of wealth and attainment of certain commodities. However, consumer culture was not accepted uniformly across the nation. In fact, these changes brought tensions with them, and many middle-class Americans felt the need to settle with the changing socio-economic conditions mainly by reading about them. According to Zboray, 'some Americans turned to novels and stories to help them address the personal challenges of rapid development and the diverse emotional experiences it brought ... Any illusion of order, of explanation, in a time of largely inexplicable disorder, had the potential both to sell and heal'.²⁴ Print culture, transported by railway, encouraged readers to think nationally, as readers across the nation would find legitimized role models embodying particular modes of consumption. In other words, literary print culture served to address the concerns of contemporary mass culture. Americans tended to read about the changing American chronotope and come to terms with the national character that was developing based on consumption. More particularly, literary print culture also reflected the Americans' engagement with the East, which helped to explain the popularity of Oriental tales, and especially the *Nights*. This corpus did not exclusively serve as an American projection of the Orient; nor was it merely a pre-modern, immaterialist, romantic gesture against the American materialism of the time. Rather, the *Nights* and its Oriental literariness were employed to reflect on the developing conception of the American national ethos as acquisitive and consuming.

In fact, the Oriental corpus, and particularly the *Nights*, also contained imagery and motifs of transformation and abundance, which served American readers as metaphors for the emergence of mass consumption in the United States. The orientalism of the *Nights* tapped into the American national consumer identity as it provided imagery of a world of commodities and consumption, during a time in which products were being manufactured and distributed across the expanding nation. In 1853, *Putnam's Monthly* described New York as an Oriental space and its residents as Aladdins. In their words, 'Yet this story ['Aladdin'] which dazzled our childhood's eyes with unimaginable splendors, grows daily tamer and tamer, before the passing wonders of the days in which we live. We also are Aladdins, and for us the Genii of the lamp are working' ('New York Daguerreotyped' 121). Eighteenth- and nineteenth-century American experiences of the Orient through the *Nights* and other examples of literary orientalism constantly featured icons of abundance, luxury, and acquisition, an ethos which both nurtured and flourished in increasingly

24 Ibid., pp. xvi–xvii.

urbanized and mercantilised New England.²⁵ In this context, Aladdin was employed as a metaphor of the middle-class experience of and collective participation in the hedonistic consumption that materialized in American urban spaces. As such, Aladdin was not seen as an *other*, nor as *a self*, but rather as a *collective self*. Moreover, this self was not necessarily aristocratic or high-brow; rather, it embodied a modern American mass subjectivity.

The emergence of consumer culture on a national basis was interconnected with the numerous interpretations and re-workings of the *Nights* at the time. The Oriental tale in general, and the *Nights* in particular, helped Americans to visualize and internalize the developing national ethos of acquisition and consumption, and thus participate more actively in a market-driven culture. This participation coincided with an increase in mass-manufactured output, and the circulation and amplification of the *Nights* corpus served to endorse the nation-wide fantasy of pleasure, affluence, and consumption.

5 Antebellum Popularity of the *Nights* and Its Distinct Usage in Print Culture

The material utility of the *Nights* and its orientalism explain, to a degree, its status in American print culture of the time. One typical example of the print distribution of the *Nights* can be seen in a document of book sales between 1794 and 1796 in Dumfries, Virginia, one of the eight main post towns of the time. This document indicates that the *Nights* topped the list of 'English fiction' bestsellers, with a total sale of 30 volumes, after only a few other books, including the Bible, with a total number of 47.²⁶ Moreover, the reading public sought 'the tried and true with a generous response to Shakespeare, *The Arabian Nights*, and Fielding'.²⁷ Also, in the early nineteenth century, a formative time for 'American' fiction, the *Nights* enjoyed popularity particularly due to its many elements that could be borrowed, imitated, adapted, and recast within the growing corpus of American fiction. As one early nineteenth-century American review suggests, 'it is well known that many of our modern novelists have culled their ideas from the *Arabian Nights*' ('The Tales of the Genii' 396). The continued popularity of the *Nights* in American fiction of the time is such that 'many American stories, of the first quarter-century in particular, evidence

25 Although Chraïbi has described the *Nights* in a medieval Arabic context, his reference to the book as a manual for young merchants also resonates with its use in nineteenth-century American culture. See Chraïbi 2004, p. 6.

26 Napier 1953, pp. 443–44.

27 *Ibid.*, p. 445.

the impact of this work';²⁸ and 164 major publications of the *Nights* appeared in the antebellum period.²⁹

Regarding the popularity of the *Nights*, it has also been said that 'between 1790 and the 1890s, Anglo-Americans cherished the *Arabian Nights* deeply, seeing it as a literary classic that coexisted with the Bible in helping people interpret West Asia'.³⁰ As the print numbers of the *Nights* and the Bible in the antebellum period are disparate – 186 versus over 8,000, respectively, as *OCLC WorldCat* indicates – *coexistence* can be too amicable a description of antebellum popular culture, which was often a non-monolithic and multifarious site of ideological struggles. For example, at the time, the Bible was regarded as encouraging Protestant Americans to work hard and abstain from pleasure, while the *Nights*, which portrays the pursuit of worldly resources, was perceived as endorsing consumption and hedonism. The re-creation of the Orient, as the literary print orientalism of the *Nights* suggests, was not so much a figuring of the East as exotic, depraved, romantic, or either superior or inferior to the West, but most importantly pertained to the concepts of capitalism and consumerism as parts of the American national character.

Moreover, as Nance has pointed out, 'for citizens who had just fought a war for economic and political independence, the *Nights* provided colorful metaphors of the potential contentment and plenty they might enjoy as consumers in a nation that, by 1840, was becoming a global powerhouse rivaled only by Britain'.³¹ While Nance alludes to the Oriental influence on, and provision for, American literary culture of the time, it should be noted that print culture, informed by the specific political and economic conditions of the time, employed, adopted, edited, and recast the *Nights* and its major tales in order to address these ongoing socio-economic transformations, using the tales' imagery and motifs of transformation and abundance to do so.

6 Concluding Remarks

Antebellum American orientalism did not present the East as either a demonic Other nor as a romantic alternative to the industrializing United States. Instead, the *Nights* and its literary orientalism served as a chronotope of abundance and hedonistic consumption which tapped into the developing

28 Isani 1962, pp. 86–7.

29 See Table 16.1.

30 Nance 2009, p. 21.

31 *Ibid.*, p. 20.

American national identity. The changing socio-economic circumstances due to industrialization and international trade coincided with the definition of the American national character as entrepreneurial, capitalist, and consumerist. These new circumstances challenged the Puritan ethos that valued accumulation of wealth and avoidance of expenditure as paths to redemption. During this time, consumption was on the rise; first, as an indicator of the superior socio-economic status of the developing American elite, and second, as a mass phenomenon in response to the new modes of manufacturing and distribution that were sweeping the new nation. The uses and prominence of this body of texts and its various reproductions to address the changes in the socio-economic order were in part due to the archetypes – such as Ali Baba, Sinbad, and Aladdin – seen as embodiments of the trans-Atlantic American diasporic vision of material affluence and self-promotion. Furthermore, the stories of the *Nights*, with their leitmotifs of plenty, accessibility of goods, pleasure in consumption, and extravagance, were profusely re-written, adapted, produced, and distributed in the antebellum period in order to address this vision and the socio-economic order from which it arose.

As such, the domestic application of the *Nights* in the discourse surrounding the rise of the nation-state is particularly noteworthy. *American Quarterly Review* more than once pointed to the *Nights* as representing and/or featuring a *national* character. Evaluating Jonathan Scott's translation of the *Nights*, the reviewer suggests, '[a]ll our future remarks on Arabic literature apply equally to that of Persia, Turkey, Syria, Egypt, Mauritania, and Tartary; for the writers of these countries differ in style amongst themselves no otherwise than would have been the case had all be longed to the same nation' ('The Arabian Nights Entertainments' 291). The reviewer further enumerates several parallels between Hellenic sources and the stories of the *Nights*, and holds that 'this shows the influence which the Greek writers had on Arabic literature, and holds well the Arabian Nights have represented the general national belief' ('The Arabian Nights Entertainments' 297). These statements can be interpreted, and correctly so, in accordance with conventional postcolonial discourse, as reducing the cultural, linguistic, and intellectual variance in the geographical East to a single definable object of query, as 'the Orient', and still further regarding it as a function of influences from the West – in this case, Greece. However, this should not blind us to the equally significant and thriving enterprise of American nation-building. In fact, while a conventional postcolonialist reading is useful to an extent, various dimensions of the functions of literary orientalism – specifically, the *Nights* – must also be taken into account. The same review suggests the links between contemporary American nation-building discourse and the *Nights*, contending that the many allusions and references to Arabs

contained in the *Nights* 'offer national characteristics, not the least important to those who have pleasure in considering the sources from whence the popular ideas of the West are lineally descended. The Eastern fables passed into Europe about the time of the Crusades, and in one form or other have there remained' ('The Arabian Nights Entertainments' 297). While the ideas of communal coherence and national ethos do not descend directly from the *Nights*, it is important to note how this corpus was interpreted and applied in association with a collective identity due to the material conditions of the time.

The *Nights* has been conventionally considered for its pseudo-ethnographic insights into the Orient. However, the American *Nights* is a complicated phenomenon that blurred the boundaries between fiction and non-fiction, Orientalism and Americanness, and provided an imaginative framework for the discursive order and material conditions in the historic moment of the formation of American nationhood. While this chapter has touched upon a certain aspect of the bourgeois readership of the *Nights* in the antebellum period, print culture is an extensive and constantly growing subject area; much is left to be studied on the production, transmission, circulation, and reception of the literary orientalism of the *Nights* and its tale cycles in antebellum culture.

Appendix

TABLE 16.1 Major publications of 'Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves', 'Sinbad', 'Aladdin', and *Arabian Nights* based on location of publication in the United States in the antebellum period (extracted from *OLC WorldCat*)

City/Title	Ali Baba and Forty Thieves	Sinbad	Aladdin	Arabian Nights
Albany				1
Andover				1
Baltimore			2	10
Boston	30	2	8	29
Bridgeport	1			
Buffalo	1	1	1	5
Cambridge				1
Charleston	1		2	

TABLE 16.1 Major publications of 'Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves,' 'Sinbad,' 'Aladdin' (*cont.*)

City/Title	Ali Baba and Forty Thieves	Sinbad	Aladdin	Arabian Nights
Chicago				1
Chillicothe		1		
Cincinnati				3
Cleveland				1
Cooperstown	2		2	6
Dover				2
Exeter				8
Halifax				1
Hartford				2
Ithaca				1
Newburyport		1		
New Haven	4			
New York	18	4	10	45
Northampton			1	
Norwich				3
Otsego	2			
Oxford	1			
Philadelphia	18	4	12	36
Pittsburgh				1
Providence				3
Rochester				1
Salem				1
Tuscaloosa				1
Washington	1			
Wilmington				1

TABLE 16.1 Major publications of 'Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves,' 'Sinbad,' 'Aladdin' (cont.)

City/Title	Ali Baba and Forty Thieves	Sinbad	Aladdin	Arabian Nights
Woodstock	1	1	1	
Worcester	2			
Total	82	14	39	164

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Jacqueline Kahanoff on the Margins of *A Thousand and One Nights*

Daniel Behar

In addressing Jacqueline Kahanoff's essay on *A Thousand and One Nights*¹ I hope not to tire the reader with the transitions between bracketed stories: her midrashic interpretation of the *Nights*, her life story, and my midrash of her midrash and life story. Primarily, Kahanoff makes a compelling case for us to read the tales as an organic whole but also as an open-ended text soliciting actualization in the present. The embedded stories must have had, in her view, unforeseen consequences on the fictional reality framing them. The infinite regress of embeddedness applies to her essayistic practice as well: *A Thousand and One Realities* reads the title of her essay, suggesting that the stories of the *Nights* continue to be told by being framed in new historical contexts.

Kahanoff first turned to writing to recover a real world that was lost and in retrospect seemed quite unreal. She was born in 1917 to a well-to-do Jewish middle-class family in colonial Cairo, a place of a pluralism, both frail and effervescent. Her parents were immigrants: the father an Iraqi merchant from Baghdad, the mother an educated woman hailing from the Tunisian Chemla family, who took pride in being the first woman to have read Proust in Egypt.² The house spoke French and Jacqueline went to the *lycée français*, and had a British nanny. Though born in Egypt, and attached to the place, she was part of a Europeanized bourgeoisie inevitably estranged from the Muslim majority. In one of her essays, she recalls that as a girl she was once asked by an English

1 The essay was probably written originally in English but the whereabouts of the original are unknown. The essay now exists only in Aharon Amir's Hebrew translation in *mi-mizrah she-mesh*, Tel Aviv, 1978, pp. 177–92. This book however has been out of print for years. The cited passages have been retranslated by me into English. In *Mongrels or Marvels*, a volume of Kahanoff's selected essays in English, the editors Deborah A. Starr and Sasson Somekh reverted to a similar method in order to include valuable essays whose original version could not be retrieved. It seems to be part of Kahanoff's fate as writer to have neither a genuinely *native* language nor a fixed original. Her mediation to the Hebrew reader through the filter of Amir's translations is not without difficulty, as Amir, a 'Canaanite' author and prolific translator, held a somewhat rigid ideology of language and was not very attuned to Kahanoff's delicate modulations of voice.

2 Matalon 2001, p. 35

lady on the beach in Alexandria about her origins: 'Thinking of my grandparents, I replied that I was Jewish and Persian, believing that Baghdad, the city they came from, was in the country from which all beautiful rugs came'.³ Her mother later chided her for not saying she was European. This farce of identities was a collective experience at a peculiar historical complex of geography, politics, and culture. Kahanoff is today mostly remembered for recording the experience of herself and her fellow Levantine women in a cycle of essays entitled *The Generation of Levantines*. I will quote one passage at length to give an idea of that world from within:

Our parents were pro-British as a matter of business and security, and we were pro-nationalist as a matter of principle, although we knew few Muslims of our age. We felt this nationalism to be an inevitable step on the road to liberation and true internationalism and sensing that we might be sacrificed to it, we accepted it as unavoidable and even morally justified. We hesitated between devoting ourselves to the "masses" and going to study in Europe, to settle there and become Europeans. [...] We felt cut off from the people and the country in which we lived, and knew that nothing would come of us unless we could build a bridge to a new society. Revolution and Marxism seemed the only way to attain a future which would include both our European mentors and the Arab masses. We would no longer be what we are, but become free citizens of the universe.

There was in us a strong mixture of desperate sincerity and of pretence, a tremendous thirst for truth and knowledge, coupled with an obscure desire for vindication, from both the arrogant domination of Europe and the Muslim majority which, we did not quite forget, despised its minorities. We would be generous and get even with the Muslim masses by introducing them to hygiene and Marxism.

Perhaps in our own time, we would witness and share in the undoing of Europe's dominion, the fall of all its barracks, and even perhaps, a return to the Promised Land. What would we, the Levantines, do in that world which would be ours? [...] Perhaps our ways would part, but together we belonged to the Levantine generation, whose task and privilege it was to translate European thought and action and apply it to our own world. We needed to find the words that would shake the universe out of its torpor and give voice to our confused protests. We were the first Levantines in the contemporary world who sought a truth that was neither in the old

3 Starr and Somekh 2011, p. 4.

religions nor in complete surrender to the West, and this perhaps, should be recorded.⁴

Their cultural hybridity was inscribed in their names: the Silvies, Enriettes, Rosies, and Jacquelines. I use the term hybridity with no intent of romanticizing. There was richness but also suffering in that life, an emotional erosion from self-deceit, a genuine displacement and double bind not easily lived through. This passage was written originally in English, the language in which Kahanoff found her voice, a 'neutral' universal language that bridged between her Latinate cultivation and the blank spot of the Arabic she never learned. In her maturity she recognizes the foolishness of the disdain with which she and her friends dismissed Arab letters. The version of the *Nights* she was reading was J.C. Mardrus' French translation and, though in some respect this distance was enabling,⁵ there is an undertone of regret for not being able to read it in Arabic. This essay might then have been of special significance to her, as she reached for that deeper self which knew no distinction between East and West: buried in its place in the East, it could be re-lived only in her mature voice in English.

Kahanoff subtitles the essay 'On the Margins of a Thousand One Nights', and I hope that by now it is clear why. Writing on the margins also signifies a certain contiguity with the text, and Kahanoff's manner of telling has strong affinities with the infinite bracketing of stories in the *Nights*. Kahanoff wrote one novel and several short stories of uneven value; the genre she ultimately mastered was the short narrative essay merging her personal perspective with broader social, cultural, and political concerns. This was the best medium she could find to represent a life in fractions, as she felt the life of her Levantine generation to be. The Israeli novelist Ronit Matalon, whose mother also belonged to that generation, suggests why this genre was adequate to the experience. Matalon describes her mother as a storyteller analogous to Kahanoff: '[my mother], who never tells a straight story, always gets caught up in its wide margins, in parentheses, in the small story that, in its way, illuminates the big story, both enriches and crumbles it; and at times, turns it upside-down'.⁶ The deviation from the common well-trodden narrative is thus perceived as constitutive of a personal accent of identity. Yet in these margins everything is desperately boundless: one does not know where a story ends or begins, when

4 Starr and Somekh 2011, pp. 11–12.

5 Kahanoff's manner of reception of the *Nights* is surely indebted to Mardrus' fanciful and elegant re-writing of the tales, as is her focus on psychoanalysis, sex, and gender issues. Her marginal note thus consciously comments on yet another deviation from a supposed original and continues the creative midrashic process of hermeneutic re-telling.

6 Matalon 2001, p. 34.

identity is this or that. The dynamic negotiation between myth and personal identity, big story and small story, in the nested tales of the *Nights* appealed to Kahanoff. In its margin there opens a field in the image of the mother-text: pregnant with danger and opportunity, full of sudden changes of fortune and shifting identities.

The essay's opening shows Kahanoff trying to adjust the essay's form to its content while retaining her sense of play and ironic distance:

Some say – but Allah is wiser and more benevolent – that the source of the legends in a thousand and one nights is those very ancient Indian and Persian tales; other wise men say – but Allah is wiser than them too – that all legends were made up by Man Son-of-Eve Our Mother, presenting himself with questions (always the same questions) about his nature and his relation to other creatures, and that through these tales he settles his quandaries, like a child telling himself stories to explain the world around him.⁷

The stories of origin are just more constructed stories and don't have to matter. Pragmatically put, the stories simply work in making sense of the world, an inescapable need if we wish to learn living with others and knowing ourselves. By transforming desire into communicable forms, Kahanoff maintains, the stories teach us to adjust to the reality of outside world and other people: '[stories] reveal our true nature in all its splendour and horror and since we are social animals, they help us adjust to our being and to the reality of others; [they] turn desire into love, which is eventually, where we find happiness'.⁸

As we shall see, Kahanoff's interpretation of the stories concentrates primarily on *ethos* rather than *logos* or *mythos*, on character and social context rather than rhetoric and plot. From this follows a psychoanalytical mode of reading, already apparent in the implicit association with Freud's ideas in *Das Unbehagen in der Kultur* (translated into English as *Civilization and Its Discontents*). Yet whatever theory she utilizes, Jacqueline paints her midrashic derivation with strong subjective colours of her own life as a woman of letters in the Levant.

Here is a brief summary of her decoding of the frame story: Shahryar, the analysand, is the bigger king and has to suffer grandly for the monstrous humiliation he believes himself to have suffered. It is a fiction by which his schizoid state is fed. His objectifying of women bespeaks profound helplessness: a

⁷ Kahanoff 1978, p. 177.

⁸ Kahanoff 1978, p. 178.

fear of being loved and giving love. But behind his mad frenzy of conquest and immediate annihilation there hides a subtler fantasy of being lovingly contained. His absolutist law runs on automatic and is therefore isolating and dehumanizing. So, while he wishes to keep it, he equally wishes to escape it. Scheherazade, omniscient narrator, sage and analyst all at once, is aware of this inner ambivalence. She comes to him of her own accord and thereby asserts her self-assured subjectivity and confidence in his potential to be cured. As the stronger side intellectually, she acknowledges his suffering and suspends judgement on his moral conduct; he concedes that there might be a law other than his own madness in order to be saved from isolation. Hinging on tenuous ambivalence on both sides, the rules of the game are changed. A joint transitory fiction called transference comes into being, a contract based on initial cautious trust. The analytical process lasting about three years ends in miraculous success, as Shahryar learns to recognize women as subjects and thereby opens his sympathy to the human world in its entirety.

Sketched in broad strokes, this seems quite a standard reading of the frame story. But Kahanoff carries this interpretation further. Scheherazade is presented as an archetype of womanhood cast in Kahanoff's mold. She is portrayed as gracious and tactful, learned yet unassuming, a cosmopolitan woman of worldly taste and culture. She is the complete universal woman in a Levantine localized version. Further along in the essay it is argued that this sense of tact cuts across all classes of society represented in the *Nights*, from the shoeshine to the Caliph. The ideal is so powerful, says Kahanoff, that even the logic of Muslim orthodoxy is subordinate to it. And the chief virtue of this cultural and social gestalt is that it can recognize women's sexuality and treat it with humour. In this respect, Kahanoff suggests, the East of the present has fallen far behind that of the past. The deceit, fornication, and lies attributed to women in the *Nights* are actually weapons to retain their freedom of choice and self-dignity in battling 'that Plague of the East' – the objectified woman.

Here we reach the heart of the matter – where psychology intersects with politics and culture – but let me first pause to look deeper into Scheherazade's figure as archetype. Henry James approvingly cites the Russian novelist Ivan Turgenev saying 'that the usual origin of a fictive picture begins almost always with the vision of some person or persons' who solicit elaboration, presenting themselves as vivid images *en disponibilité*, at the disposal of the novelist. A novel's germ lies in a 'Portrait of a Lady', and only from there come 'the necessities of unspringing in the seed'.⁹ Kahanoff's imagination is likewise stimulated by human individuals, mostly women, and she fictionalizes them in her

9 For James' ideas on character see: Kermode 1979, pp. 78–9.

non-fiction by providing them not only with a face but also with background and dress to increase their multi-dimensionality. Whether herself or others, these women stand at oblique angles to their milieus and the grand plots surrounding them. The biblical narrative commanded Jacqueline's attention as a set of mythical stories where character takes precedence over fable, as even the Biblical God is personalized, almost physically present in the unfolding of his people's destiny. The complex pattern by which the fates of Biblical characters are woven appealed to her self-conception. And she will work out her vision of humanity as the Bible does, around the small nucleus of the family: mother (Scheherazade), father (Shahryar), children. This would be the emotionally crowded arena where battles of opposing forces in culture and society are waged: families into which one is born and from which one escapes by establishing a new dynasty. It is still a prevalent paradigm by which society is represented in Middle Eastern fiction, both Jewish and Arab.

Kahanoff explores Scheherazade a fictional relative but, more to the point, as an actual possibility of her identity, a female type from which the Levantine cosmopolite is a deviation. Apart from Kahanoff, Scheherazade is said to be the patron-mother of a whole clan of Eastern women, who, though largely illiterate, are ever resourceful and self-possessed, educated in folktales and common know-how. They're the mothers, and especially grandmothers who are 'the real lords of the house, who never cease loving the wise Scheherazade and cultivating the memory of women from great periods of Islamic and pre-Islamic societies – educated, inspired, quick-witted, masters of themselves, their assets, and their families, a type which never entirely disappeared from the East'.¹⁰ This point is central because it makes the argument about women's rights as more than just an enlightened cause; indeed it ventures to say something about the secret *interior* life of women, their ancient wisdom which, from a progressive stance, would perhaps seem a barrier to progress, tall tales, and backward superstitions.

Kahanoff does not delude herself into implying that women actually run the show. So, let us briefly follow the political avenues in Kahanoff's thinking. Scheherazade is a strong force of culture but not self-sufficient; she shapes behaviour and values but stays clear of visible political power. Her contract with Shahryar is not merely psychoanalytical or nuptial; it is a frail social contract by which Shahryar is reinstated as a stable sovereign. And so it must be: there is no escape from the powers of the State and political authority. But what enables the radical reform is a fictional game in which the most asymmetric power relations in terms of muscle are revealed to be oppositely asymmetric.

¹⁰ Kahanoff 1978, p. 187.

Scheherazade knew all along the inner mystery of the human condition, its 'horror and splendour', and this is a real strength without which the king and his people suffer a wilderness of violence and misery. She embodies plurality, a thousand and one realities, without which society dries up. She holds multiple things together in precarious and charming illogicality and so instructs how to avoid moral absolutes. Though a member of the savagely disenfranchised, she doesn't play the victim. And why should she uphold the myopic pathos of victimhood? She has real power and can allow herself to forget resentment and show generosity of spirit. This stance is linked in Kahanoff's mind to moments of civil disobedience and non-violent revolutionary movements such as those of Gandhi and Martin Luther King, traditions of peaceful protest towards which she was very sympathetic.

So the marriage of Shahryar and Scheherazade prompts Kahanoff to propose a model in which governing power and culture, justice and virtue obtain as separate elements in tension without cancelling each other out. In another essay, Kahanoff recounts a story she used to conjure in her Egyptian childhood, about Pharaoh's rod, the phallic symbol of brute power. It had a ruby in it, an emblem of feminine taste and wisdom, but this emblem was stolen by a wicked priest. Pharaoh, weary of the rod with no ruby, delegated authority to the priest and became a dead god. The priest replaced the precious stone with a plain red one to deceive the people of Egypt, who were then condemned to self-oblivion, to endless misery the cause of which they would never know. Getting a tip from Pharaoh's daughter, Moses found the ruby but had to discard it due to the demands of realpolitik, when God sent him to exact ruthless vengeance upon Egypt for enslaving the Israelites.¹¹ Such is the story of the contagiousness of brutalized political power divorced from play, wisdom, and moral feelings.

At its most universalizing and abstract, this understanding of the frame story is about immortality through the perpetuation of the species: Shahryar is Everyman and Scheherazade his Salvation and Extension of Life. Interpreted allegorically, vitality and will-to-life are doomed to exhaustion without variability coming from culture and its differentiations. We should recall that Kahanoff acquired her refinement as part of a Cairene middle class, and that the original circulation of the *Nights* as a book has to do with the growth and expansion of a Muslim middle class in the Mediterranean basin in tandem with the decentralization of the Islamic empire. Mobility, geniality, and open-mindedness – along with the codes of conduct that regulate their dissemination – were core values of this civilized mercantile class. The plurality of realities

¹¹ Starr and Somekh 2011, pp. 9–10.

Scheherazade teaches the king to acknowledge came to be as a result of the rise of merchants, artisans, and entrepreneurs, a process so meticulously and richly described by S.D. Goitein. On the other hand, pure morality and culture without will-to-life is suicidal and leads to extinction. Kahanoff's vision for the future is built on an organic metaphor of a couple in unstable balance as necessary requirement for conception and procreation.

But her tale unfolds more concrete lessons and here we need some contextualizing. Kahanoff immigrated to Israel in 1954, choosing to live in the tribe's midst. Previously, she spent a brief spell in Paris, some significant educational years in the USA, but eventually felt dissociated from the collectives in both places. Israel was then a nation in the making. Though messy, in economic austerity, and ruled by an Ashkenazi political elite, it afforded a chance to make a difference as an intellectual outsider. In Israel her sense of estrangement was more familiar, the rhythms of the place more like the ones she knew from Egypt. Kahanoff introduced a new voice into the Israeli intellectual milieu, Matalon writes.¹² She spoke in empathetic, sober tones, and brought with her a Latinate European education very different from the stern moral temperament of Ashkenazi men raised mostly on Russian letters and trends of political thought. She became one of the first intellectuals to give voice to the Mizrachi element in Israeli society, to Arab Jews regarded as second-rate citizens by the Ashkenzai establishment.

The essay on the *Nights* isn't dated, but it is likely to have appeared in the late sixties, after the so-called glorious victory of Israel in the Six Day war. There was an ominous, messianic intoxication in the air. This was surely not the Promised Land Kahanoff had in mind. She was a moderate Zionist but firmly insisted that Israel should be Levantinized, adapted to the culture of the place, even though it left so much of that culture in ruin. The Messianism, the celebration of military prowess, and the chauvinism that accompanied it were, in her eyes, a step in the direction of the dry rod, brute monolithic power that hollows out democratic pluralism. The portrait of Scheherazade and the Muslim society she reflects – open, varied, imaginative – was an indirect yet bold way of stating the case and calling for more good sense to offset false Zionist dreams of grandeur.

The essay ends however with a critique directed not towards Zionism but towards the Arab world. To a large extent, this critique was latent all throughout the essay. It concerns what Kahanoff perceives to be the disease of women's objectification. Scheherazade, as Kahanoff understands her, exposes the social lie and hypocrisy practiced in Arab societies, which deny women sexual

¹² Matalon 2001, p. 35.

freedom despite valuing their sexuality. This observation is translated into the political realm at the close of the essay: ‘The people also dream of freedom, but dare not fight to attain it, burdened by the recognition that morals and obedience are one and the same. Only against the foreigner, or the ruling princes serving the foreigner, are the people willing to rise in revolt, without dealing directly with the real problem – their own freedom.’¹³ With obedience she unequivocally means the fear of the leader–father figure whose widespread cult uses an ideology of freedom as pretext for repression of women and minorities at home. This unfreedom is tightly bound up with cultural and political servility of the whole social organism. She did not live to witness the Arab spring. Yet the fact that it was not preceded by the kind of secularizing national movement promoting civil liberties for which she had hoped is possibly important for how things unfolded.

Matalon remarks that female identity is the litmus test Kahanoff applies to see what passes as reality or ideology in a given society.¹⁴ And applying this test, Zionism, in Kahanoff’s opinion, fared relatively though not exquisitely better than Arab nationalism. Matalon recounts that when she made a snarky remark about Zionism during the 1982 Lebanon war, her mother protested angrily by saying: ‘don’t you take my Zionism, you hear? Thanks to it I got rid of your father, my father, my brothers, and the prison they prepared for me in Egypt’.¹⁵ So to the extent that Zionism helped Jewish women be recognized as independent, it was valid, as a means not an end in itself. Elsewhere Kahanoff claims that unless Arab-Muslim societies make a breakthrough in that domain, that pluralistic Middle East, a fragment of which she carried with her, will not be realized. And Western Leftists uncritically defending the causes of Arab anti-colonial struggle, which seemed to worsen the condition of women, should think carefully, she said, whether it is not reactionary to sustain an idiotic male imperialism over the female half of humanity. The essence of concentrating on the *Nights* is to call attention to a living potential in the here and now waiting to be realized and become socially effective. Scheherazade is an archetype instantiated in subtypes and variations; Arab women with that wisdom are there, but still largely invisible.

Kahanoff illustrates this with a story from her childhood. As a girl she had one Muslim friend, Kadreya. Kahanoff told her friend about the story in the Haggadah, namely, that the Egyptians enslaved the Israelites, ergo, by a child’s wild exaggeration, the Muslims enslaved the Jews. Kadreya was incredulous:

13 Kahanoff 1978, p. 192.

14 Matalon 2011, p. 36.

15 *Ibid.*, pp. 37–8.

'It's not possible. I swear that not my father, or his father, or my grandfather's grandfather would do such things to your father, or his grandfather's grandfather. I love you; you are my friend'. 'Father also says Palestine is our Promised Land', Jacqueline replied, 'maybe I'm not Egyptian like you'. At this point Kadreya began to weep and Jacqueline had to calm her down: 'look, now that you are Muslims you aren't the same people as in Pharaoh's time, and you aren't like the Christians, always sending us all to burn in hell'. Kadreya suggested that as her father goes to Mecca and is still Egyptian, Kahanoff would make a pilgrimage to Palestine and live in Egypt so they could stay friends. Jacqueline was sceptical. She knew the Promised Land was more than a place of pilgrimage. Kadreya then steered the conversation to a surprising conclusion:

"If I could, I would give you the Promised Land", Kadreya said, "but you know the English are there, like in Egypt", she sighed and added honestly, "but I'm not so sure about my brothers giving it to you. Men are different. Listen, I'll tell you something if you promise not to tell". Jacqueline promised and Kadreya whispered in her ear: "I would like a religion where God is also a woman, not only a man".¹⁶

The humour and secular wisdom in this brief tale demonstrates Kahanoff's mastery of narrative and dialogue. It is this child-like perspective that she strove to attain in her writing, the source of candour and impudent protest, giving the lie to false pretense and scrambling social identities in all kinds of funny games. That lost innocence is perhaps the native land Kahanoff shares both with Kadreya and Scheherazade.

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¹⁶ The brief conversation with Kadreya appears in the essay 'Passover in Egypt'. See: Starr and Somekh 2011, pp. 14–19.

Healing by Exempla

Political Therapy in the Nights' Hypertext

Dominique Jullien

Antoine Galland prefaced his translation of the *Nights* by spelling out three merits of the tales he was about to offer the French public: first and foremost, their entertainment value (the tales were ‘agréables et divertissants’, pleasing and entertaining); secondly, their educational value (without incurring the fatigue of a journey, readers could discover the customs of Oriental peoples), and lastly, their moral value (readers so inclined could learn from the examples of vice and virtue displayed by the characters).¹ My focus will be on the pedagogical and moral dimension of the tales, which in turn is closely linked to the question of the relation between the individual tales and the frame tale, where the dramatic encounter between the storyteller and the king is played out every night. Depending on the greater or lesser significance they give this relationship, readers and critics tend to heighten or underplay the political and moral efficiency of the book.

In opposition to Mia Gerhardt’s reading of the *Nights* as a collection of tales without purposeful interactions between individual stories and the frame tale, most interpretations have focused on precisely these interactions, highlighting in particular the storytelling’s effect on the king. Translators such as Burton and Mardrus dramatized Shahryar’s reactions to the stories and his slow progression toward clemency, while critics have variously emphasized the moral, political, pedagogical, and/or therapeutic dimensions of storytelling. By underlining the *Nights’* proximity to the pedagogical tradition of the mirror for princes and the genre of wisdom literature broadly defined (fables, pious tales, exempla, and so forth), such interpretations have drawn attention to the political significance of a text which attempts to transform a murderous despot into a good king, mindful of his subjects’ well-being. However, since Shahryar is not a princely child in need of early ‘edutainment’, but an adult psychopath in need of medical help, Scheherazade’s stories, in addition to their political dimension,

1 Sermain and Chraïbi 2004, vol. 1, p. 21–2. Unfortunately, Robert Mack’s edition of Galland’s *Arabian Nights’ Entertainments* (Oxford World’s Classics, 1995) is shorn of any paratextual material.

aim to heal the sick king: they are both educational and therapeutic. In this chapter I propose to look at two cases where this connection between moral, political, and therapeutic stakes of the stories is especially explicit. The first is Burton's cluster of short wisdom tales (a mix of pious tales about hermits and animal fables, extending from the 146th Night to the 152nd Night), which aim to teach the king a lesson in good stewardship. Shahryar's remorseful response to these stories signals a small yet decisive step in the right direction, while the equivalence between the king's sickness and the kingdom's dysfunction is enhanced by Burton's intertextual reference to Boccaccio's *Decameron*, as we shall see.² The second is Eugène Sue's best-selling social problem serial novel, *The Mysteries of Paris* (1842–1843), which is rich in intertextual allusions to the *1001 Nights*. Toward the middle of the novel, a lengthy storytelling episode (itself a story-within-a-story) set in a Paris prison, reproduces the *Nights'* salvation story (the planned murder is delayed by the story and the curiosity it generates), its political lesson (the criminals are shown to being susceptible of reform by a moralizing tale), and its attempt at social therapy (the episode is part of the novel's campaign in favour of prison reform).

1 The Frame Story and the Question of Exemplarity

In her landmark study, *The Art of Story-telling*, Mia Gerhardt takes a dim view of the framing device of the *Nights*, arguing that it is merely a convenient way of gathering the heterogeneous jumble of stories into one large grab bag. There is no point in seeking a psychological progression or even a political lesson, she claims, since the book gives us little or no information about the effect of the tales on their intended listener, king Shahryar. 'As a framed collection the '1001 *Nights*' has no firm structure: the working-out falls short of the idea. As soon as the telling of the stories begins, the framework seems gradually to fade away. King Sheriyar rarely comments on what he has heard'.³ Gerhardt dismisses earlier critical attempts at interpreting the relation of the stories to the frame as unconvincing. In particular she dismisses Marie Lahy-Hollebecque's 1927 *Le Féminisme de Schéhérazade*, which reads the *Nights* as 'l'aventure du progrès',⁴ the adventure of progress, by pointing out that the study is based on the highly unfaithful translation of Mardrus, 'who made up little comic dialogues

2 Burton 1885, vol. 1, pp. 114–62. These tales are featured in *Calcutta 11*: see Marzolph/Van Leeuwen, vol. 1, p. 221.

3 Gerhardt 1963, p. 398. However, she does concede one exception to this rule: these are precisely the stories analyzed here.

4 Marie Lahy-Hollebecque 1927, p. 20.

between the king and Shehrezad'.⁵ Indeed, according to Gerhardt, the very choice of stories, especially the first ones, would seem to rule out the possibility that they have been chosen by Scheherazade for their therapeutic virtue, since they 'seem so ill-adapted to the dangerous situation' of Scheherazade. In particular, 'The Fisherman and the Demon ... seems a particularly tactless choice under the circumstances' (because of the black slave lover). Gerhardt concludes: 'All in all, in the first few stories, if we try to connect them with the frame, Shehrezad appears to be rubbing in the king's conjugal misfortune, rather than helping him to get over it'. As a consequence, Gerhardt comes down quite strongly on the side of serendipity: 'The obvious explanation is that the compilers did not ... strive to interrelate stories & frame, nor to keep alive the interest in the framing story itself'.⁶

In her denial of a purposeful relation between stories and frame, Mia Gerhardt is an outlier, since a majority of critics have sought rather to show just that. In contrast to Gerhardt's apolitical view, key recent scholarship has highlighted the politics of the *Nights*, such as Sandra Naddaff's essay which traces Salman Rushdie's political satire in *Haroun and the Sea of Stories* back to the *Nights*,⁷ or Wen-Chin Ouyang's analysis of the Egyptian reception of the book as a political allegory in her 2003 article 'Metamorphoses of Scheherazade in literature and film'.⁸ In their introduction to the 2004 edition of the Galland version, Jean-Paul Sermain and Aboubakr Chraïbi trace the stories back to the tradition of the mirror for princes, whose purpose is to educate rulers while entertaining them, through the use of exemplary tales and fables.⁹ Major critical readings have focused on the political lesson that gradually transforms a murderous despot into a good or at least an acceptable ruler. Ferial Ghazoul's book, *Nocturnal Poetics*, as well as Robert Irwin's article, 'Political Thought in the 1001 *Nights*', are good examples of this critical tradition.¹⁰ Having devoted an important chapter to a comparative analysis of the *Panchatantra* fables and Scheherazade's animal tales as pedagogical stories (I will return to this later), Ghazoul concludes that the reception of the *Nights* in modern Arabic literature is primarily political:

5 Gerhardt 1963, p. 398, Note 3. Curiously, Gerhardt appeared unaware that Marie Lahy-Hollebecque was a woman.

6 Gerhardt 1963, p. 399.

7 See Naddaff 2011, p. 487–96: p. 492.

8 Ouyang 2003, pp. 402–418.

9 Sermain and Chraïbi 2004, vol. 1, pp. iii–ix.

10 Ghazoul 1996; Irwin 2004, pp. 246–57.

Modern Arab readings and adaptations of *The Arabian Nights* have generally emphasized the political component inherent in the narrative. Poets, dramatists, and novelists used it to speak allusively of ideological issues most strikingly of the abuses of absolute power. *The Arabian Nights* itself invites such an interpretation since the frame story revolves around a despotic Oriental king and the strategy to resist him and liberate the citizens. What could be more pertinent to present-day Arab regimes than such a story? Notions of philosophical mazes, castration complexes, and existential predicaments may be extracted from *The Arabian Nights* by a Borges, a Barth, or Ashbery, but Arab writers have predominantly seen the political implications in the work – that of ruler vs. citizens.¹¹

Recalling the strong tradition that is found throughout the Islamic world of transmitting wisdom and information through teaching stories, Robert Irwin analyzes the reformist intent of the *Nights* stories in general, and in particular those stories linked to the exemplary genres – moral tales, fables, exempla – that aim to develop political virtue in their despotic listener.¹² By and large and with very few exceptions, the political message of the *Nights* is a conservative one, says Irwin: it preaches obedience and resignation rather than rebellion. In this, it is in keeping with the mainstream Islamic political theory which is above all realistic:

Submission to God, submission to Fate, and submission to the ruler dominate rather a large number of the stories. The political direction is determined at the outset, when Scheherazade, rather than thinking of how to overthrow the tyrant Shahriyar, instead proceeds to entertain him with stories ... The political theorists of the medieval Islamic world were realists. Rather than waste their time thinking of alternatives to despotism, they preferred to concentrate on how to get the best despot. In political theory and storytelling in the *Nights*, a despot could be improved by good servants who provided him not only with good advice, but also with stories that were conducive to political virtue.¹³

The importance of the political lesson in the *Nights* is thus clearly bound up with the genre of exemplary stories, whose pedagogical framework is replicated, to a greater or lesser degree according to translation, in the relation

¹¹ Ghazoul 1996, p. 135.

¹² Irwin 2004, p. 248.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 251.

between the storyteller and the king, or between the teacher and the taught, as Sadhana Naithani puts it in her essay, 'The Teacher and the Taught: Structures and Meaning in the *Arabian Nights* and the *Panchatantra*' (published the same year as Irwin's).¹⁴ However, the pedagogical framework is not the only one involved here, since Shahryar is not a young prince to educate for the throne (this is an obvious difference with the three royal dunces in the *Panchatantra*), but an adult king who has turned murderous after a traumatic experience: he therefore needs to be cured in order to be once again the just monarch that he was before the trauma.¹⁵ As Irwin points out, the therapeutic and the political dimensions are vitally connected, as the health of the kingdom is linked to that of its king: 'the prosperity of the land is dependent on the moral health of the king. If the king strays, his land becomes a wasteland'.¹⁶

Readings that highlight the curative virtues of storytelling draw on this connection, from Jerome Clinton's essay on 'Madness and Cure in the *1001 Nights*'¹⁷ (1985) to Daniel Beaumont's Lacanian reading in *Slave of Desire*,¹⁸ to, more recently, Marina Warner's book *Stranger Magic*, which points out 'structural analogies between the narrative of the *Nights* and the experience of psychoanalysis',¹⁹ and, even more concretely, weaves a web of associations between the sofa where the storytelling (and the cure) take place, and the modern-day psychoanalyst's couch:

The seating arrangement Freud devised, still practiced in analysis today, interestingly sets up a scene of eavesdropping, not conversation, which places the analyst in the position of the Sultan in the frame story of the *Nights* ... above all the very idea of the ransom tale bears on the uses of storytelling in the talking cure.²⁰

Feminist readings of the *Nights*, beginning with Marie Lahy-Hollebecque's 1927 study *Le Féminisme de Schéhérazade*, attacked by Mia Gerhardt, rely on a meaningful connection between tales and frame tale. Lahy-Hollebecque read the book as 'le duel de l'esprit contre la force, de la science contre l'ignorance, de la lumière contre les ténèbres' [the duel of mind against might, science against

14 Naithani 2004, pp. 272–85.

15 In Galland's version, King Schahriar is said to have been 'endowed with all [his father's] virtues', before the discovery of the queen's adultery (Mack 1995, p. 1).

16 Irwin 2004, p. 248.

17 Clinton 1985, pp. 107–125.

18 Beaumont 2002.

19 Warner 2012, p. 421.

20 *Ibid.*, pp. 419–420.

ignorance, light against darkness].²¹ The purpose of the stories, she claims, is not simply entertainment, but the king's education. While Lahy-Hollebecque's analysis was somewhat naïve – she based her analysis on Mardrus's translation, without suspecting that much of what she attributed to the original was in fact due to its *fin-de-siècle* translator – her pioneering approach can nonetheless be credited with helping to establish today's thriving critical tradition of feminist readings of the tales, from – among others – Fedwa Malti-Douglas, who argued that fiction is the best strategy to redirect the king's desire toward its proper, peaceful use, to Malek Chebel, who viewed the tales as examples of a feminized world, or Susanne Enderwitz, who claimed Scheherazade as an early feminist.²² Naturally, novelists also followed the same trend, reinventing Scheherazade as a modern-day feminist, from John Barth ('Dunyazadiad', *Chimera*, 1972), to Leïla Sebbar (*Shérazade*, 1982) or Assia Djebar (*Ombre sultane*, 1987 / *A Sister to Scheherazade*, 1993). In effect, feminist readings exhibit an interesting fusion of the political and the therapeutic, since they presuppose that the king's murderous misogyny is as much a psychological condition to be cured as a political injustice to be combated.

2 Burton's Hermits

Moving now to a specific instance where the political and the therapeutic converge, I would like to focus on a narrative cycle inserted into the third volume of the Burton version: the series of short fable-like tales involving hermits and animals beginning on the 146th night. Fables, Burton claimed in his 'Terminal Essay', and wisdom stories more generally (Burton calls 'fable' any kind of short moral tale with a lesson), are quintessential to Eastern culture where they are the most ancient literary genre, born of the need to disguise political criticism:

The Apologue or Beast-fable, which apparently antedates all other subjects in The Nights, has been called 'One of the earliest creations of the awakening consciousness of mankind.' I should regard it, despite a monumental antiquity, as the offspring of a comparatively civilised age, when a jealous despotism or a powerful oligarchy threw difficulties and dangers in the way of speaking 'plain truths'.²³

21 Lahy-Hollebecque 1927, p. 20.

22 Malti-Douglas 1991; Chebel 1996; Enderwitz 2004, pp. 187–200. On Marie Lahy-Hollebecque's influence on modern feminist interpretations of the *Nights*, see Jullien 2009, p. 146 ff.

23 Burton, vol. 10, p. 115.

There are over 400 fables in the *Nights*, and Burton criticizes Lane for omitting more than half of these. By contrast, Burton's version plays up the political and pedagogical dimension of the book: in his translation the lesson is driven home both in the choice of stories and in Shahryar's reaction to them. Burton's first set of short wisdom tales (in volume 3, extending from the 146th to the 152nd Night), offers a particularly interesting case of 'fables' (in Burton's broad use of the term) being used to teach Shahryar how to become once again a good king. This is done indirectly, through a cluster of interlocking stories featuring hermits and animals. The stories are organized as follows: first interlinked animal fables, the 'The Tale of the Birds and Beasts and the Carpenter', followed by 'The Hermits', a series of three Hermit stories, followed by more animal fables.

Thus, the Burton scenario sets up a kind of central triptych featuring three successive hermit anecdotes, framed by several animal stories. In the central hermit stories, misogyny is combined with a love for animals. The first story tells of a hermit who raised pigeons. Under his good care and blessing, the pigeons multiplied and lived around him until his death, after which they dispersed. The second story tells of a virtuous shepherd who tended his sheep with such care that the wild beasts had no power over his flock. One day the shepherd fell ill and was tempted by a woman who promised to cure him in exchange for sex: when the shepherd resisted the temptation, she revealed that she was an angel sent by God and departed with a blessing. In the third panel of the triptych, another pious man is told in a dream to visit the previous hermit. On the way, he rested from the scorching heat in a meadow graced by a tree and a fountain where birds and animals came to drink. His presence frightened the creatures away, at which point he wept with regret:

I rest not here but to the hurt of these beasts and fowls ... my tarrying here this day hath wronged these animals, and what excuse have I toward my Creator and the Creator of these birds and beasts for that I was the cause of their flight from their drink and their daily food and their place of pasturage? Alas for my shame before my Lord on the day when he shall avenge the hornless sheep on the sheep with horns!²⁴

He continued his journey and met the shepherd, who welcomed him joyfully, and the two spent the rest of their lives together as hermits, 'having clean put away from them riches and children and what not'.²⁵

²⁴ Burton 1885–1888, vol. 3. p. 128.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 128.

In contrast with the rest of the book, the hermit stories present a prelapsarian world of harmony between creatures. The animals in these stories appear to be mainly meek, domestic creatures (pigeons, sheep), which the hermits protect and care for. Generically, however, fable animals also represent the disenfranchised elements of society – slaves, servants, peasants, women and subordinates in general, as Ros Ballaster reminds us: fables give ‘voice to the powerless. Fables are a form of subaltern discourse, a means of seizing verbal authority’.²⁶ So the joint presence of animals and women in the cluster of hermit stories would appear both to convey and disguise a political message. Indeed, it seems that the lesson is being heard, since for the first time, Shahryar responds to these stories of cruelty toward animals by expressing some regret for his cruelty toward women: ‘O Shahrazad, thou wouldst cause me to renounce my kingdom and thou makest me repent of having slain so many women and maidens’.²⁷

The central triptych of hermit stories is framed by animal stories that focus on violence, particularly human violence toward animals. In response to Shahryar’s request for a bird story, Scheherazade tells two nested stories, in which the Duck tells the Peacock and his wife the story of ‘Lion and the Carpenter’, on the 146th and the 147th nights respectively. The second one, about the lion and the carpenter, is a condensed and simplified version of the fable of the animals collected in the eleventh-century Encyclopaedia of the Brethren of Purity. This story, itself an adaptation of a fable of Buddhist origin, is analyzed by Robert Irwin as an ‘ecological fable’.²⁸ While the story has particular appeal for a contemporary reader (animals complain about Man’s greed, cruelty to other living creatures, and reckless destruction of the environment), it is also a thinly veiled criticism of Shahryar’s despotic destruction of his kingdom. In the *Nights* version of the story, the animals, led by the lion, attempt to form an alliance against Man who mistreats them cruelly, but the rebellion fails through Man’s treachery, as the carpenter tricks the lion into entering a cage then sets it on fire. A typical fable moral (trickery wins over strength) here serves to illustrate a lesson about man’s tyranny over animals. It is also a bitter lesson

26 Ballaster 2005, p. 4.

27 Burton 1885–1888, vol. 3, p. 129.

28 Irwin 2004, p. 252. Irwin notes that the story denounces not just cruelty to animals but cruelty to humans as well (p. 253). In the *Epistle*, the animals bring a lawsuit to the court of the Jinn against men, accused of enslaving them and wrecking the environment; arguments go back and forth for some hundred pages. See Goodman and McGregor 2009. Another essay by Robert Irwin discusses the insertion of this animal fable into later editions of the *Nights* (Calcutta 2, the basis for Burton’s translation): see Irwin 1992, pp. 36–50, especially pp. 49–50.

about political failure. The same is true of the framing story in which it is embedded, the story of the duck and the peacocks: attempting to escape from this traumatic experience the duck seeks refuge on an island with the peacocks and the deer, far from Man; but their utopian community is short-lived as sailors eventually arrive at the island and kill the duck.²⁹

Then following 'The Hermits' (which takes up night 148), Burton's Scheherazade tells more animal fables that also deal with violence, in particular the 'Story of the Waterfowl and the Tortoise' and 'The Fox and the Wolf'. In the first of these the waterfowl, disgusted at the violence in the world and the mediocrity of his own kind, takes up life with a tortoise. In the second fable, the fox is the victim of the wolf's brutality, but then he is able to revenge himself by leading the wolf into a pit.

Salient themes throughout these fables are the violence of the powerful over the powerless, and the recurring utopian desire to retreat from it onto a sheltered island. In different ways these animals are hermits too – they exhibit the same desire to sever their ties to a tainted world. Capital lessons are being taught to the king in these pivotal nights. First, the suffering of the animals at the hands of Man evokes the suffering endured by the king's subjects. The stories serve to chastise Shahryar for his bad stewardship: he has lain waste his own kingdom, wantonly killing women of childbearing age. By contrast, the hermit characters carefully tending their animals offer an example of good stewardship that the king should follow.

Along with repentance, the king expresses a desire to leave his palace for a hermit's life: 'O Shahrazad, thou wouldst cause me to renounce my kingdom...' However, the goal is not for Shahryar to resign his throne and become a hermit (although he does just that in Naguib Mahfouz's rewriting of the *Nights*),³⁰ but to become a reformed monarch. Therefore, the hermits' rejection of women also offers the king an example that he should not follow, for fear of destroying the kingdom in another way. Hermit stories, stories about seclusion, about the utopian separation from society, here paradoxically serve to transition

29 A secondary theme in these stories is the importance of prayer: Scheherazade reveals that both the duck killed by sailors and the waterfowl killed by a falcon had neglected to say their prayers. Shahryar, who sometimes forgets to say his prayers before falling asleep, takes notice, and thanks Scheherazade for her lesson: 'O Shahrazad, verily thou overwhelmed me with admonitions and salutary instances' vol. 3, pp. 125–32. Thus, the fables teach the king a double lesson: a political lesson (his duty toward his subjects) and a religious lesson (his duty toward God).

30 'He abandoned throne and glory, woman and child. He deposed himself, defeated before his heart's revolt at a time when his people had forgotten his past misdeeds. His education had required a considerable time.... He left his palace at night, wearing a cloak and carrying a stick and giving himself over to fate' (Mahfouz 1995, p. 222).

back to it, since the king will learn from them not how to be a hermit, but how to be a good or at least an acceptable king, committed to his duty toward his subjects and the preservation of royal lineage and social integrity.³¹

This is also, of course, what the ten-day separation from the city of Florence accomplishes for Boccaccio's secular-minded hermits, who then find themselves better prepared to return to the fullness of social life. As Thomas Greene pointed out in his seminal essay on 'Forms of Accommodation in the *Decameron*', there is no Romantic estrangement from society in Boccaccio, but on the contrary, a horror at the communal dissolution brought on by the plague, and an exemplary return to a regenerated social order by way of the eremitic experiment.³² Perhaps this is why Burton chose as his epigraph for his version of the *1001 Nights* a quote from the *Decameron* ('Niuna corrotta mente intese mai sanamente parole'), which features on the first page of his translation along with the picture of the labyrinth, and which he translated by the equivalent proverb 'To the Pure All Things Are Pure'.³³ In *The Decameron*, the plague is both cause and metaphor of the societal breakdown, while the retreat of the youthful characters away from the diseased city-state allows them playfully to transition back to its reformed version.³⁴ Just as Boccaccio's spirited *brigata* fled the plague-ridden city of Florence for the beautiful country retreats of Tuscany, circling back to it in space and in story-time, so the secluded space-time of the *Nights* (the night, the harem, the talking cure of tales – all this 'nocturnal poetics', to quote Ghazoul's memorable title) will bring about the return of the enlightened king to what, from his kingdom, has survived and is poised to begin anew.

3 Sue's Reformed Monkey

What the garden does for the *Decameron*, what the bedchamber does for the *1001 Nights*, the prison does for Eugène Sue in the eighth section of the *Mysteries of Paris*, which appeared in 1842–1843 with a success that was comparable only to that of Galland's *Arabian Nights* in the previous century.³⁵ The way that

31 The fable of the animals is of Buddhist origin, as Robert Irwin reminds us: a faint trace of the conflict at the heart of Buddhism – the choice between a king's life and a hermit's life – still remains in its Arabic rewriting. See Ásvaghoṣa 2008, especially pp. xxxiii–xlii.

32 Greene 1976, pp. 114–28.

33 Burton 1885–1888, vol. 3, p. 6.

34 Boccaccio 1985. On this strategy of temporary separation, see Mazzotta 1976, in particular pp. 129–30.

35 Sue 1989; 2015.

this serial novel and early bestseller engages with the *1001 Nights* is essentially twofold. First, Sue appropriates the motif of the Prince in Disguise: the hero, Prince Rudolph von Gerolstein, is the ruler of a fictional German principedom who delights in dressing up as a working class man and descending into the slums of Paris to solve crimes, right wrongs, and save young girls from destitution and prostitution (including, as is well known, his own long-lost daughter, charmingly misnamed Flower-of-Mary). Karl Marx, in his early pamphlet *The Holy Family*, cruelly mocks the character he calls 'The German Harun el Rashid' for his philanthropic slumming, as well as the ludicrous pretensions of his author to reform society through storytelling.³⁶ I have analyzed elsewhere³⁷ the political dimension of the prince-in-disguise motif in Sue's *Mysteries*: in this chapter, I wish rather to focus on a different aspect of the *Nights*' intertext, the embedded story told in the prison by the petty thief and master storyteller Pique-Vinaigre (Bitters). The inmates, led by the sinister assassin Skeleton, are plotting to murder young Germain, who landed in prison following a false accusation, and who is suspected of being an informer. The attack is to take place during the storytelling episode, when inmates are busy listening to the story and the guard leaves for lunch. But the plan backfires: the inmates, including some of the assassins, become so engrossed and captivated by the 'fictional' adventures of the boy The Runt [Gringalet], his evil master Chops-Him-in-Two [Coupe-en-Deux], and the dangerous monkey Gunpowder [Gargousse], that they forget about the murder, while the prison guard also wants to hear the story so badly that he forgoes his lunch break. Germain's execution has been delayed by curiosity: the first level of analogy with the *1001 Nights* – storytelling as a life-saving device – is thus achieved. A second level of analogy concerns the political lesson that the author seeks to teach through his tale. Commenting on the paradoxical literary tastes of the hardened criminals who make up Bitters's audience, Eugène Sue notes that they tend to like naïve, moralistic tales:

Most prisoners, in spite of their cynical perversity, almost universally favor naïve, not to say puerile, stories in which an inexorable fate, after trials and travails without number, avenges the oppressed on those who tyrannize against them.... [W]e all know with what deafening applause

36 Marx and Engels 1956, p. 239. Later in the same book, the comparison returns once again: 'Herr Rudolph indulges in charity and dissipation like those of the Caliph of Bagdad in the Arabian Nights' (p. 268).

37 See Jullien 2009, first chapter: 'Le prince déguisé, symbole politique et motif poétique' (pp. 24–70); on Marx's comparison between prince Rudolph of Gerolstein and the caliph Harun al-Raschid, see p. 32 and following.

the common audiences in the theaters of the boulevard greet the victim's deliverance and the hissing and booing they rain down on the villain or the traitor.³⁸

Bitters's sentimental tale about a poor little boy who is terrorized, beaten, and starved by an evil master – a kind of poor man's *Oliver Twist* – is in fact the storyteller's version of the melodrama, the great popular genre of the nineteenth century, in which working-class masses, honest and criminal alike, delighted at the theatre.³⁹ What is at stake here, for the socialist writer Sue, preoccupied with reforming society, is the education of these proletarian masses: simple Manichean tales where innocents are saved and villains are punished are appropriate teaching tools, commensurate with their audience's literary and moral sophistication. The arch-villain Skeleton's concern is not simply that the guard refuses to leave the room, but also that his accomplices may be disinclined to let the murder take place, 'a murder in which their impassive behavior was to make them complicit', after hearing a story that appeals to their sense of compassion.⁴⁰

That the melodramatic tale functions as a kind of pedagogical fable is underscored by another character, the honest Slasher [Chourineur], who is in the employ of Prince Rudolph and got himself sent to prison in order to protect Germain: like an oversized and burly Dinarzade, Slasher stresses key climactic moments of the tale with his comments, pointing out the moral relevance of the story, and encouraging the inmates to side with the victim rather than the perpetrator. When the attack on Germain finally happens, Slasher defends him and enlists some of the inmates to help him, again by calling attention to analogies with the tale: Skeleton, like the evil Chops-Him-in-Two, picks on the weak, while he, Slasher, identifies with the monkey Gunpowder, who kills the villain at the end of the tale, thereby saving the child: 'Be careful, Skeleton! If you want to play Chops-Him-in-Two anymore, I'll play Gunpowder, and I'll slit your throat.'⁴¹

While Bitters's fable (in Burton's broad sense of the word) teaches inmates proper social ethics, the melodramatic prison episode aims to teach the novel's readers a third lesson that Sue spells out in his explicitly pedagogical conclusion to chapter 12: it is meant to dramatize and stigmatize the failures of the

38 Sue 2015, p. 1072.

39 Peter Brooks notes in passing the kinship between the melodrama and *The Mysteries of Paris*, which was at the time the novel most often adapted to the stage, as well as a direct novelistic counterpart to the genre of melodrama. See Brooks 1985, p. 88.

40 Sue 2015, p. 1080.

41 *Ibid.*, p. 1095.

justice system – which is merciless toward the poor yet lenient toward white-collar criminals, prices poor defendants out of the legal system, and locks petty delinquents in dangerous jails where they turn into hardened criminals:

To summarize briefly the theoretical and practical ideas we have tried to make clear in this episode of prison life: we will consider ourselves fortunate if we have demonstrated the insufficiency, sterility, and danger of group confinement; the disproportion that exists between our understanding of and punishment of certain crimes (domestic theft or burglary) and certain misdemeanors (embezzlement); and, finally, the material impossibility for the poorer classes to reap the benefit of laws and civil suits.⁴²

Eugène Sue's reformist goals, his social and political agenda, became more and more explicit as the *Mysteries of Paris* grew from being an entertaining slum thriller⁴³ into a passionately earnest utopian socialist manifesto, with similar 'conclusions' at the end of each major episode – even frequent authorial interruptions in the middle of the most dramatic episodes – which served to make the novel itself work like an exemplary tale. The book campaigned for prison reform, free lawyers, interest-free banks for the poor, communitarian farms, workers' compensation plans, and many other measures that were in fact implemented – some of them lastingly – after the 1848 revolution.⁴⁴

The tale told by Bitters has an appropriately theatrical ending: after the monkey Gunpowder, whom his master has taught to kill The Runt with a razor, turns on him and cuts his throat instead of the child's, all the slum's inhabitants parade to accordion music, carrying The Runt and Gunpowder in triumph.⁴⁵ No longer hated and feared, the monkey has been successfully reinserted into society, just like Slasher, the former criminal, has been reformed and is now working for the good Prince Rudolph. It is therefore possible to see in the monkey a fable animal of sorts, who facilitates a pedagogical reading of the story as a redemptive transformation of the dangerous classes into the laborious classes, to paraphrase historian Louis Chevalier's famous title about nineteenth century Paris.⁴⁶ In her essay, 'The Teacher and the Taught', Sadhana

42 Ibid. p. 1108.

43 Critic Sainte-Beuve slyly called it 'un roman bien épicé, bien salé, à l'usage du beau monde' (quoted in Bory 1962, p. 246).

44 On the role played by *The Mysteries of Paris* in the 1848 revolution, see historian Pierre Chaunu's classic study *Eugène Sue et la Seconde République* (Paris: PUF, 1948).

45 Sue 2015, p. 1092.

46 Chevalier 1958.

Naithani points out key similarities between the *Panchatantra* fables and the *Nights*: 'Both stories are built on the education of rulers', 'Both teach through the narration of stories',⁴⁷ and 'both are stories about storytelling'.⁴⁸ The same can be said of *The Mysteries of Paris*, which also aims towards the healing of societal ills and education of the despot: not the tyrannical monarch of old, of course, but the People, the new despot of the modern democratic age.⁴⁹

The storytelling episode set in a Paris prison in Sue's *Mysteries of Paris* offers some insight into the passionate quarrel of the serial novel (*la querelle du roman-feuilleton*) that raged throughout the nineteenth century, with people taking sides about the value of these entertaining, indeed, these addictive tales, as pedagogical tools for teaching the masses and healing society's ills. Analogous to Burton's hermit fables, Sue's modern *Arabian Nights* claimed a role in awakening minds and consciences, and both texts offered highly self-conscious narratives that purported to picture and also bring about acts of healing and teaching. Looking at what Benjamin called the 'afterlife' of the 1001 *Nights*⁵⁰ – both in Burton's highly idiosyncratic translation and in Eugène Sue's tale of modern Parisian slumdogs – we can observe a continuous preoccupation running through these widely different types of texts: the enduring dream of healing the polis through storytelling. Ros Ballaster captures the ambiguous status of the fable when she defines it as 'a story which delays or defers tyrannous action':⁵¹ whether the stories lulled the tyrant into a passive, non-harmful state of repose – the serial novel, people said, was a new kind of drug⁵² – or whether they prompted the tyrant to reformed action, whether the stories entertained and distracted, or reformed and taught, they were a way of acting out the intellectual's perennial fantasy of doing things with words.

47 Naithani 2004, p. 273.

48 Ibid., p. 284.

49 With the advent of universal (male) suffrage in 1848, the question of the education of the people became a politically burning issue.

50 Walter Benjamin, 'The Task of the Translator', *Illuminations* 1969, p. 71.

51 R. Ballaster, *Fables of the East*, p. 5.

52 On the debate of the serial novel, see Lise Dumasy (ed.), *La Querelle du roman-feuilleton: littérature, presse et politique, un débat précurseur (1836–1848)*, Grenoble: ELLUG, 1999. On the analogy between serial novels, oriental tales, and drugs, see D. Jullien, *Les Amoureux de Schéhérazade*, pp. 33–41.

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The Devil in the Details, or, Economics in *Thousand and One Nights*

Eyüp Özveren

Ah comme J'aimerais savoir ce qui se cache derrière tout cela.

HUSAYN in 'Yasamin la favorite du sultan et les syndic des tailleurs', in *Trois contes inédits des Mille et une nuit* (2015)

•••

Là, nous nous désaltérons avec du thé pour nous préparer à découvrir dignement cette merveille: Kairouan.

D'abord un intense délire qui nuitamment culmine dans le mariage arabe. Pas d'impressions isolées, mais un tout. Un extrait des Mille et une nuits avec quatre-vingt-dix-neuf pour cent de réalité.

PAUL KLEE (1914) 'Journal de Paul Klee'

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L'art ne reproduit pas le visible; il rend visible.

PAUL KLEE (1920) quoted in Susanna Partsch, *Klee*

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1 Introduction

The *Thousand and One Nights* (hereafter *Nights*) is considered a 'universal literary monument'.¹ Ever since its first introduction to Europe in the early eighteenth century by Antoine Galland, who discovered a manuscript in late 1701² and translated it into French (1704–1717), it has had a wide influence on the arts

1 Achour 2012, p. 7.

2 Miquel 2004, p. 335.

and humanities.³ The *Nights* has also inspired many a writer who takes storytelling seriously. Consequently, Scheherazade's business has also been taken up by many and flourished. So much so, that among the most recent storyteller characters in the genealogical line of Scheherazade, one comes across, of all people, Joseph Stalin, the ruthless dictator of USSR, who resorts to storytelling as a 'relatively innocent' torturing device in the latest novella of Milan Kundera, entitled *La fête de l'insignifiance*.⁴ To this day, historians of economic thought and economic historians remain immune from the attractions of the *Nights*. This chapter is the expression of a desire to fill this lacuna. It identifies an intriguing convergence between the representations of economic phenomena such as wealth, finance, credit, markets, production, and innovation in the *Nights*, on the one hand, and the economics of diverse economists such as Karl Marx (1818–1883) and Joseph A. Schumpeter (1883–1950), as articulated in *Das Kapital* (vol. 1, 1867) and *The Theory of Economic Development* (1911 and 1934), respectively. It proceeds with the further exploration and explication of this convergence.

In pursuing the convergence between the *Nights* and economics, our immediate concern is to focus on an analysis of economic representations and their association with economic analysis in the *Nights*. It should now be of no surprise to the reader that numerous stories in the *Nights* recount the functioning of a bazaar in much the same way as the market was conceived by Adam Smith and political economists such as Karl Marx, and later on, the Austrian economists, including Schumpeter. This is a question I have explored in a previous work.⁵ The immediate concern of this chapter is to investigate how finance, credit, production, and innovation are represented in the *Nights* as economic categories and relate to one another. For the sake of brevity, the focus will be exclusively on two stories, 'The Story of Hasan of Basra', and 'The Story of Abu Kir the Dyer and Abu Sir the Barber'. These two stories are available in Mardrus's translation but not in Galland's, as they are traceable to the Egyptian, and not the Syrian, family of stories. In expressing our preference for these two stories, the choice in favour of Mardrus's translation becomes understandable. The first story, the beginning of which bears rich economic relevance, will be associated with Karl Marx's vision of economy that was well-received by Schumpeter. As such, its beginning will serve us as a springboard to take an economic analysis in a different direction from that of the

3 Jorge Luis Borges claimed that European romanticism was actually triggered under its spell. See Borges 1994, p. 60.

4 Kundera 2014.

5 Özveren 2007, pp. 629–55.

storyline. The second story is more thoroughly economic in content and will be subjected to a full-fledged Schumpeterian interpretation. Our working hypothesis is that in these stories we encounter a Schumpeterian embryonic conception of the relationship that involves finance, credit, production, and innovation.

There is however a further factor that has hitherto been overlooked and deserves full consideration here. It has to do with our 'overarching objective' that will constitute the subject-matter of the last section of this chapter. We propose that the progress of the narrative of the *Nights* actually serves as a metaphor for the Schumpeterian economic process. Faced with the threat of summary execution, Scheherazade, *la maîtresse des mots*, is forced to tell a new story every night to Sultan Shahryar, *le maître de sujets*, in order to save her life. Her storytelling is repeated from one night to the next but with a difference in its content. By continuously prolonging this act of storytelling by recourse to the practice of repetition with a difference, she is actually forced to innovate in order to remain in her competitive business; in other words, she is herself an entrepreneur. The situation she finds herself in is therefore similar to the precarious existence of the merchant-entrepreneurs, the *maîtres des choses*, who, as major characters of some of the stories, often stand to lose everything with a slight turn of their fortunes at any moment. In order to disclose the further consequence of this affinity, we should recall the anxiety of the character, Husayn, in the story 'Yasamin la Favorite du sultan et les syndic des tailleurs', who wished to know the reason behind what he had experienced by his senses, as already quoted in the epigraph to this chapter.⁶ But we should also proceed further and give a favourable hearing to the advice of Paul Klee, the modern painter, next in line, who stated that good art renders visible the otherwise unseen. Klee, whose art developed into new heights after a personal revelation under the impact of local shapes and colourings he encountered during a trip to Kairouan in Tunisia in 1914, has been aptly characterized as *maître des lignes* (Master of Lines).⁷ We should thus delve into the hidden deeper truth of the text. It is argued here that the *Nights* owes some of its centuries-long unrivalled literary influence to its generalization of a Schumpeterian economic principle into the characteristic machinery of its own constitution.

⁶ Chraïbi 2015, p. 64.

⁷ Partsch 2015, p. 23 and p. 54.

2 The Wealth of the *Nights* as ‘un formidable magasin d’histoires’ for Economists

The stories⁸ of ‘merchants and diamonds, mountains, castles, and talismans’⁹ in the *Nights* were translated from one language to the other as they were heard and carried by itinerant storytellers and merchants, and eventually found their way into Arabic.¹⁰ The *Nights* is a folkloric construct of the oral tradition,¹¹ built over a very long time and extending, in the case of some stories, to hundreds if not thousands of years. It was put into writing much later, hence even the earliest manuscript fragment we have at hand dates from the ninth century. After this transition and until recently, the oral tradition continued to survive, occasionally contributing to new texts.¹² In short, this whole adventure has aptly been variously described as an ongoing ‘creative work’,¹³ a ‘nomadic text’,¹⁴ a ‘veritable ocean of stories’¹⁵ or better still, a ‘nebula’¹⁶ that has travelled far and wide and back and forth. Or, as Ulrich Marzolph articulates, ‘the broad tradition generated by the *Nights* represents a multifarious tapestry peacefully incorporating both a phenomenon of “Oriental” origin and a vibrant and dynamic constituent of Western culture’.¹⁷ Complexities originating from periodic shifts between the coexisting oral and written forms have been further

8 We have come to think of the *Nights* as stories (or tales) not only because the stories were far more important than their rivals, but also because Galland shifted the emphasis to the story by leaving out poetry and levelling off other literary forms. The *Nights* in fact brings together forms as diverse as Indian tales of magic and marvel, novellas of various sorts, ancient Arab legends and tales, didactic stories, fables, parables and proverbs, trick stories and humour, anecdotes and short stories, love poems, epic poems and elegies. See Junqua and Kerouani 2013, pp. 17–18.

9 Schwab 1984, p. 136.

10 Maḥmūd Ibn ‘Umar al-Zamahšarī cited in Pinault 1992, pp. 1–2.

11 Galland noted in his diary the importance of the live tradition he witnessed in Istanbul: ‘C’est une chose estonnante que la grande quantité de contes et de fables que les Turcs ont. On s’etonne de la longueur des nos romans, qui ont jusques à dix ou douze tomes. Les Turcs ont des romans d’Alexandre de cent vingt volumes; ils en ont d’autres de cinquante, de soixante, etc. Il y a, dans le Bezestein, certain libraires qui ne font autre trafic que de prseter ces livres à lire pour quatre ou cinq aspres, et surtout ils on grande foule, pendant l’hyver, que les nuits sont longues, parce que c’est là l’occupation que les Turcs prennent en ce temps là, de s’assembler pour entendre lire ces fables pour lesquelles ils ont un penchant tout à fait grand’. See Galland 2002, p. 242.

12 Gerhardt 1963, p. 39.

13 Pinault 1992, p. 249.

14 Ghazoul 1996, p. 150.

15 Feullebois 2012, p. 50.

16 Brémond 2004, p. 32.

17 Marzolph 2006, p. vii.

complicated by the translations, liberal or otherwise.¹⁸ The penetration of print technology into this intriguing process from the Calcutta editions (1814 and 1818) onward has also left its mark on the perception of the *Nights* by a worldwide literate readership. Despite this newfound global audience, however, audiences in the Arab world still frequented traditional recitations in coffeehouses as eyewitnesses to a rich performance art.¹⁹

The geography of the *Nights* attests to its historical as well as linguistic diversity. A cursory look at the itineraries of Marco Polo (1254–1324) and Ibn Baṭṭūṭa (1304–1368) gives us an important clue about this geography. Polo set off from Venice and travelled East, all the way to China, in order to do business. Ibn Baṭṭūṭa began from Tangiers in Morocco and ventured as far as China. The attraction of the East was shared by both. That was where people went to see, to learn, and to make money. The union of the two itineraries, backed by their narrative accounts, gives us a vast geography encompassing both the Silk Road and the Spice Route. This is where the stories of the *Nights* first flourished and crossed linguistic boundaries.

It is often overlooked that the first translation of the *Nights* from an Arabic manuscript was into Ottoman Turkish in the sixteenth century.²⁰ This omission

18 Some translations were ‘flat’ while others were ‘creative’ (Borges 1994). Whilst Lane (1839) censored the erotic content in conformity with Victorian morality, Burton and Mardrus defiantly exaggerated it. See Irwin 2004, pp 25, 38. Mardrus claimed he had a seventeenth century manuscript that has not reached us. See Junqua and Kerouani 2013, p. 31. The claim may have been intended as a cover-up for his simultaneous use of different manuscripts and editions. His translation was otherwise based on the first Būlāq edition that came out in 1835 in Egypt. Paradoxically this edition contains neither the Aladdin nor Ali Baba tales included in Mardrus’s translation. See Junqua and Kerouani 2013, p. 40. Hence, his fictive claim for possession of an unheard-of manuscript could have served to explain such oddities. His claim would allow him to improvise even more liberally. This is a return to oral storyteller with a vengeance in the age of print technology.

19 An eighteenth-century eyewitness observed: ‘I have more than once seen the Arabians on the Desert sitting round a fire, listening to these stories with such attention and pleasure as totally to forget the fatigue and hardship with which an instant before they were entirely overcome’. See Colonel Capper quoted in Richard Pole quoted in Pinault 1992, p. 13. During the first half of the nineteenth century, stories from this book were still being told in Cairo by professional storytellers (Lane 1836). This tradition survived in Egypt and inspired the *Arabian Nights & Days* (1982/1995) novel of Naguib Mahfouz. It was also well and alive in Syria before the current war paralyzed the country.

20 This is the so-called ‘Kayseri Manuscript’. See Grtozfeld 2004, p. 460. An eleven-volume translation into a Turkish manuscript was acquired by the Bibliothèque Mazarine in 1660. See Junqua and Kerouani 2013, p. 30. The listing of the diverse languages into which the *Nights* have been translated, such as French, English, German, Italian, Dutch, Russian, etc., omitted Turkish probably because the author considered a translation into Turkish as being non intercivilizational. Agina 2004, p. 273.

is to be explained by the fact that this earliest translation took place within the civilizational parameters of a common culture that spread over the above geography. This geography hosted many languages across which the stories of the *Nights*²¹ had already been translated during the era of a predominantly oral tradition. The stories that were ultimately collated and inscribed into different manuscripts actually originated from disparate oral traditions. They were improvised and hence calibrated with other texts, time and again, before they became once again subject to the redaction involved in the making of successive manuscripts. These originated either from Asian countries, including Iraq and Syria, that served as a basis for Galland's translation and extended to 280 nights, or from Egypt. This attests to a process of 'iteration' whereby the economic representations were tested against, and approximated to, the existing economic realities of the places and periods concerned. The anonymity of the origins of oral stories combined with the collective nature of the cultural process of their iteration serves to strengthen their representative quality. In light of this 'learning process' inherent to a storytelling tradition, there would have been ample opportunity to modify, improve, and correct such a collectively produced text over such a vast geography and span of time.

The above argument consolidates the potential superiority of collectively constituted folkloric texts over singly-authored ones as far as the realism and truthfulness of their representations are concerned. The *Nights* has a unique place among the many such texts that constitute this subset. Whereas the principle is valid, albeit in different degrees, for all elements of this subset, the specificity of *The Thousand and One Nights* gives an added importance to its study from the economic point of view. *The Thousand and One Nights* has been compared in Europe, where it was imported and subsequently adopted, to Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, Boccaccio's *Decameron*,²² and even Cervantes' *Don Quixote*; each literary works that heralded the coming of the modern novel.²³ The same is also likely to be true of comparisons with the fairy tales²⁴ compiled by Charles Perrault or the Brothers Grimm.²⁵ Had an empirical study

21 *The Thousand and One Nights* has been rightly compared to the camel caravans that continuously crisscrossed this space with their merchandise. See Junqua and Kerouani 2013, p. 11.

22 One similarity between the *Nights* and *Decameron* is striking: 'Both have a frame story in which stories are told under the shadow of death'. Irwin 2004, p. 226.

23 Van Leeuwen 2014, p. 128.

24 In fact, we are not faced in the *Nights* simply with fairy tales: 'the majority of them are as different as possible, in structure, tone, outlook and appeal, from anything found in Grimm'. Gerhardt 1963, pp. 277–78.

25 We thought that a comparable wealth of economic representations could perhaps exist in the storytelling traditions of Greek or Jewish diaspora communities that shared the same

been undertaken, it would likely be shown that in none of these texts could one find a comparable centrality of the economic phenomena and its embryonic analysis. This is most likely due to the fact that the historical geography of the *Nights* played host to the most economically advanced and integrated civilization of its time. It was the common civilization of a bazaar-centred economic network, one that was constantly shaped and reshaped by merchants operating, if not actually travelling, on a long-distance basis. It is no surprise then that merchants take their place among some of the leading characters of the *Nights* as well as often constituting the audience for these stories. More significantly, merchants played a major role in transmitting these stories along their routes. The language of these stories conveys the tones and messages of merchants' simple, straightforward, and transparent correspondence.²⁶ Whereas merchants make only an occasional appearance as one among the several characters in the European texts of the above kind, they occupy the central place in the *Nights*.²⁷ Their daily lives, consumption habits, professional concerns, conduct of business, interactions with one another, as well as with the sovereign, not to mention their dealings with artisans and customers, find their way into the stories and appear in realistic and truthful representations.²⁸ The values and worldview of these merchants shaped the content and the morals of the stories,²⁹ in a manner distinctive to the *Nights*.

Ever since the dawn of modernity, allusions to Ali Baba or Aladdin have inspired generations of business ventures and investors by occupying an important place not only in the public imagination but also in active advertisement campaigns. The name of the Chinese equivalent of eBay, Alibaba, is supportive evidence for our research hypothesis. The *Nights* provides us with a rich

geography. The preliminary findings by way of recourse to two publications (Angelopoulos 2013; Andrić 2001) contradict our expectations. A study found that in fact what appealed most to the Greeks were stories of the *Nights* that deal with the countryside. (Tonnet 2004, p. 420) In contrast, the *contes* collected by a scholar trained in economics and law reflect the cunning and wit of East European Jews among whom merchants, moneylenders, small traders, shopkeepers, and artisans were prominent. There exists much on credit and wealth but hardly anything on production and innovation. These stories belong to a much later date as indicated by the presence of a bank. Dymchitz 2004, pp. 16, 418, 481.

- 26 Sermain and Chraïbi 2004, p. vii. The authors rightly dub the *Nights* as a 'mirror of princes'.
- 27 The observation that merchants occupy so central a place in these stories could have disturbed the aristocratic and elitist French salon sensibilities where contempt for merchants prevailed as late as the times of Galland, as has been raised. See: Sermain 2009, p. 128. In the original context, merchants are attributed a social distinction, almost a nobility by virtue of their lineage. Gerhardt 1963, p. 379.
- 28 The claim to verisimilitude has been a constant in all translations of the *Nights*. Van Leeuwen 2004, p. 130.
- 29 Gerhardt 1963, p. 190.

treasure trove of information combined with occasional quasi-theoretical insights that also serve to substantiate our argument. It is no coincidence that a literary critic has referred to the *Nights* as deploying economic concepts such as a 'treasure', the 'value' of which has for a long time gone unnoticed among the Arabs for whom it now provides a source of pride.³⁰

The recognition of the *Nights* as a universal masterpiece today owes much to Galland's central role in transmitting it from Arabic into French. However, he did much more than would be expected of a translator. He reworked the content of the *Nights* by incorporating the so-called 'orphan' stories, as well as rewriting some of the stories.³¹ He did so in order to arouse pleasure in the French reading public of his time.³² He often foregrounded a storyline that could help orient the reader and move them along their way. However the prominence of the story-line inevitably exerted a certain disciplinary effect on the narrative content.³³ Non sequitur side-line elements and descriptions

30 Kilito 2004, p. 523. This characterization resounds in the many marvels, such as the cave of Ali Baba or the magic lamp in Aladdin. What we are faced here is an overflow of treasure from within the text to the real world within which the book constitutes an object.

31 Some of the most popular stories before Galland were not included in the manuscripts. Galland heard these stories either from a Syrian Maronite whom he met several times in Paris, or he adopted them from sources that remain unknown to us. Some of the most popular stories, such as 'Aladdin and the Magic Lamp', 'Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves', and 'Sinbad the Sailor', are among this category of 'orphan' stories. On the basis of the brief notes he took while listening to Hanna Dyāb, he wrote down some of these stories rather liberally. His source was himself a man of strong storyteller credentials – just as Galland, characterized as 'conteur né' (Junqua and Kerouani 2013, p. 38) – as we know from his travelogue. (Dyāb 2015, pp. 284n, 334). Moreover, Hanna was also a professional translator. It seems as if Hanna mirrored Galland who himself mirrored the numerous anonymous storytellers he mimicked as the next one in line as he wrote his *Nights*.

32 Galland was also an excellent diarist who maintained a scientific truthfulness to his accounts of his travels. He drove his point home forcefully when he wrote about his diary: 'Vous n'yaurez point trouvée ces événements surprennants qui engagent agréablement un lecteur, parce que je n'ai point l'avantage d'être de ceux qui semblent n'être nés que pour les aventures, ou plutôt parce que je ne suis point propre à en inventer'. (Galland quoted in Bauden 2000, p. 22). As such, he banished the pleasure of writing for the sake of enjoying the pleasure of narration. Whereby he invoked in the reader a corresponding pleasure in his writings other than his diary (Bauden 2000, p. 24). First among which was the *Thousand and One Nights* that overshadowed the rest by a wide margin, something that he once regretted: 'Tel est le monde: on a plus de penchant pour ce qui divertit que pour ce qui demande de l'application, si peu que ce puisse être'. Galland quoted in Bauden 2000, p. 36.

33 This disciplinary effect also affected the structure of the narrative. In contradistinction to Galland's revealed preference for a single linear storyline, manuscripts contain 'cycles' of stories as subunits of the *Nights*. Most notable in this respect are the cycles to do with

were thus deliberately left out. Those of us who look for 'evidence' of economic realities of the time in the *Nights* are thus deprived of much detail that could be of interest and value to economic historians. This is all the more so because it is through these apparent non sequiturs that storytellers made their individual contributions, which shed precious light on the economic context in which they narrated their tales.

Joseph-Charles Mardrus (1899–1904) has been much criticized for his 'liberal' and 'imperialistic' translation (1899–1904) of the *Nights*.³⁴ He deliberately re-Arabized what Galland had de-Arabized and sought to exhibit its exoticism and difference.³⁵ In conformity with the literary fashion of his times, Mardrus conceded the overwhelming importance of the story-line and restored the relative autonomy of textual parts as well as non sequitur elements. This inevitably enhanced the richness of details³⁶ as far as their value as data and information is concerned. It is because of this that Mardrus's translation is more useful to economists. Although Galland, as a French savant, had at least travelled to the Ottoman Empire,³⁷ Mardrus was born into an allegedly Christian family of Caucasian ancestry in Cairo in 1868, the cultural capital of the Arab world. He was brought up by a local nurse who told him tales. He studied in Lebanon under strong French influence. He went to Paris in 1893, and then became a doctor for *Messageries Maritimes* in 1895. He went back to the Levant

Abbasid Baghdad (Hārūn al-Rašīd cycle) and Fatimid Egypt (Baybars cycle). Hence there is good reason to link an important core of this classic text to the Baghdad of Caliph Hārūn al-Rašīd during the Abbasids and a second core to Fatimid Egypt. Galland's task was facilitated because he worked with a Syrian manuscript that excluded the Egyptian stories.

34 Mardrus claimed he had a seventeenth century manuscript that has not reached us. See Junqua and Kerouani 2013, p. 31. The claim may have been intended as a cover-up for his simultaneous use of different manuscripts and editions. His translation was otherwise based on the first Būlāq edition that came out in 1835 in Egypt. Paradoxically this edition contains neither Aladdin nor Ali Baba included in Mardrus's translation. See Junqua and Kerouani 2013, p. 40. Hence his fictive claim for possession of an unheard-of manuscript could have served to explain such oddities. Thanks to it he could improvise even more liberally. This is the return of the oral storyteller with a vengeance in the age of print technology.

35 Sermain 2009, p. 93.

36 'Le docteur Mardrus, amateur de la perfection du détail' (Paulvé and Chesnais 2004, p. 25). This was in conformity with the trend in favour of bringing to light the ethnographical side of *Nights* as of the mid-nineteenth century. Junqua and Kerouani 2013, p. 34.

37 Thrice, in 1672–3 to Istanbul, in 1677–8 to Izmir, and in 1679–88 to the many *echelles* in the Levant. He was specifically asked by Colbert to collect manuscripts. Galland 2002, pp. 273–5). His descriptions of merchandise in his translation has been related to what he observed in the shops of the bazaars in Istanbul. See Larzul 2004, p. 263.

where these stories were still being told.³⁸ This was the basis of his attraction to the French reading public of his day, and he deliberately perpetuated this image.³⁹ His added attraction for us is due to the fact that he is more or less a contemporary of Schumpeter, if not of Marx.

3 Sketches from an Album, Occidental or Otherwise

Karl Marx began as a philosopher and developed additional highly specialized interests in politics and economics in the course of his struggle to go beyond other philosophers and change the world. He aspired to revolutionize philosophy, and succeeded in elaborating his critique of political economy, which would be fated to render him one of the most influential political economists in modern history. He also developed an interest in the study of history because of his concern with the genesis of capitalism. In this context, he developed the concept of the 'Asiatic mode of production' (in collaboration with Friedrich Engels) that would subsequently cast a dark shadow over 'Marxism' until the collapse of the Soviet Empire in 1989 and beyond. This 'ambivalent' mode of production was stated to be built on the foundations of Oriental Despotism. Marx and Engels argued that Asiatic societies were essentially resistant to change. For this reason, their structures had to be destroyed by outside interference in order for capitalism to develop on their soil. Marx and Engels welcomed the French colonization of Algeria because they thought that the Emir Abd-el Qader (1808–1903), the religious and military leader of the Algerian rebellion against French colonial rule, was resisting the kind of reforms which Marx considered essential. Through this position, he entered into the pantheon of nineteenth-century European Orientalists critiqued by Edward Said (1978). Neither Marx nor Engels had been to the Middle East of the *Nights*

38 He was exposed to the tales early in his childhood through his nurse and the local storytellers: 'il y a aussi le *rāwī* le contour public, qui, à la tombée de la nuit, hissé sur une petite estrade, dévoile à un public charmé les legends de l'Orient: les batailles gagnées par les grands sultans, les intrigues des harems, les voyages des bons genies dans des pays où l'on n'arrive que par des tapis magiques... Il raconte, mime, s'emporte, tempête et vocifère, pleure et rit, s'accompagnant parfois d'un instrument à cordes. Jauaugeant de l'œil l'intérêt de son audience et le nombre de piasters qu'il pourra en tirer, il ajoute aussi des épisodes de son cru, variant de jour en jour selon son humeur' Anatole France is quoted as remarking: 'Nous avons ici l'Arabie avec tous ses parfums' Paulvé and Chesnais 2004, pp. 18, 39.

39 The stories could also proliferate with new additions. This gave a new life to the *Nights* in conformity with its original character. The *Nights* thereby gained in variety but lost in uniformity. Sermain and Chraïbi 2004, p. 5.

or the Asiatic world for any reason. As one playful philosopher⁴⁰ of our time put it, paraphrasing the opening sentence of the Communist Manifesto, having posthumously become a political economist, Marx's spectres continue to haunt philosophy.

Unlike Marx, Joseph Schumpeter (1883–1950) has not become a household name outside economists. He was born into a family of local textile entrepreneurs. He studied law at the University of Vienna, and took his Ph.D. in 1906. In 1909, he was appointed as Professor of Economics and Government at the University of Czernowitz. The period in between these dates remains somewhat obscured in standard biographies, probably because it was overshadowed by his first appointment in 1909 and his later appointment as a chaired professor at Harvard University, which he would hold from the 1930s to his death in 1950.

We do know that, before deciding to pursue an academic career as an economist, Schumpeter spent a brief period of time (1907–1908) as a lawyer and a newly-wed in Egypt. He would later refer to this period as a Thousand and One Nights kind of adventure. He was far too energetic not to get involved in other adventures as well. First, the young Schumpeter managed the finances of the khedive's daughter with much success. He reduced the rents by half on her estates, and in the process, he enlarged her fortune. For this he was generously rewarded with a bonus beyond his agreed upon salary. Second, Schumpeter oversaw the renovation of a sugar refining factory by adopting cost-reducing techniques of production that enhanced efficiency and boosted profits. As a result, he gained first-hand knowledge of doing business in a multicultural environment and bore witness to the implementation of a specific innovation process that had yet to be theorized and incorporated into economic theory.⁴¹

While confronting such practical daily realities of economic life, Schumpeter was at the same time immersed in thinking and writing as he worked on his book. We are told that he made the best use of his time, squeezing in a great deal of independent work to his rigid work schedule in Egypt. This simultaneous pursuit of professional and intellectual interests must have led to the inevitable give-and-take between these two domains of activity. As such, it is unthinkable that the effect of these experiences would not ultimately manifest themselves with a time-lag in his *Theory of Economic Development*. As soon as he could secure an academic appointment in his native country, he left the Cairo (and Alexandria) of the Nights behind. Whether or not this Nights experience, as he called it, could ever slip from his hands is another matter.

40 See Derrida 2006.

41 Allen 1991, p. 67.

Schumpeter's conception of economic development has been set against the allegedly inspiring backdrop of the then-backward city of Csernowitz in western Ukraine where he spent the first two years of his academic career. It was as if he distilled his conception of economic development from what he observed in the thriving Jewish community of this peripheral town caught in the throes of economic take-off. Is it not surprising that Schumpeter, whose time in Egypt was not much less than his time in Ukraine, would receive such a powerful lesson from the little that was observable in Csernowitz, and yet remain utterly ignorant of the vibrant and complex economic activities unfolding before his very eyes in Egypt? Especially given that Egypt was strongly connected to a world economy with its market-oriented monocrop agriculture boosted by the high international demand generated by the American Civil War, on the one hand, and a noisy bazaar economy with a history of some thousand years, on the other. All the more surprising since we know that he was personally involved in economic affairs as a lawyer in Egypt, whereas he worked neither as a lawyer nor as an economist in Csernowitz.⁴²

4 *'Far from the Madding Crowd' of the Bazaar*

One of the fascinating aspects of Middle Eastern and North African bazaars is their crowded, yet virtually chaotic harmony. Numerous noises and colours continuously assemble and disassemble from one moment to the next. This vibrancy also found its way into depictions of bazaars in the Nights. The difference between this aspect and what Adam Smith referred to as the constant 'hustle and bustle' and 'higgling and haggling' of the marketplaces that he had observed in Europe is one of degree, as far as the economic functioning of markets is concerned. As a matter of fact, European markets of the time were overshadowed by their Eastern counterparts. In spite of this, they attracted so much attention from economists because they were relatively new in Europe. This was the spell of the 'visible' that gave a certain turn to their inquiries as a result of which the centre of so much economic analysis has been occupied by markets to this day. There have been few dissenters from this viewpoint, and Karl Marx was among them. The contrast between the visible and the invisible inspired Marx's differentiation between the 'noisy sphere of circulation' and the 'hidden abode of production'. Markets have to do with exchange, as Marx

42 Perhaps this case is a good indication of how twentieth-century scholarly perceptions have been deeply affected by Orientalism.

observed, as well as the exchange of equivalents. In order to understand the way a capitalist economy worked, one had to leave the noisy sphere of circulation, that is the markets, and move to the 'hidden abode of production', fundamentally, the factory. It was in this workplace that 'unequal' values were being exchanged as if they were equal. Marx had in mind the exchange of labour-power for wages in a social system where workers had nothing else but their labour-power to sell for their survival. Deprived of the means of production by dispossession they had already experienced in agriculture and small crafts, they were forced to sell their labour-power for a subsistence wage. For Marx, production was more important than exchange.

Obviously, the 'hidden abode of production' is no less real or indeed 'invisible'. If the classical economists missed it on first sight, this was because their attention was attracted elsewhere. 'The hidden abode of production' is less immediately visible, given the attractive 'hustle and bustle' or 'higgling and haggling' of the marketplace. Nevertheless, markets are not only immediately visible, but also directly observable. They are transparent, as Fernand Braudel emphasized. Because they are transparent, they easily yield data on prices and quantities, which are explicitly quoted and can be subjected to neat economic analysis. It is next to impossible to disguise information in the transparent marketplace. If one is interested in observing as much as possible and at no cost, one would thus turn to the marketplace. On the other hand, if one is interested in either exploring (1) the hidden cause(s) of what takes place in the market (as Marx was), or (2) hidden information, one would turn one's attention elsewhere. 'Secrets of Trade' are of first and foremost of importance to businesspeople involved in production. However, such 'secrets of trade' would become public knowledge in a short time if they were placed in the marketplace. Their storage is thus vested in business enterprises that are not open to access. It is no coincidence that 'secrets of trade' such as production techniques, tacit knowledges, innovation capacities, strategies, and so forth have all been stored in business enterprises and factories as emphasized by the current economic literature on firms, as well as national and regional innovation systems.

The beginning of 'The Story of Hasan of Basra' in the Nights is told as if to illustrate the above point. The port city of Basra is conveniently chosen for the setting of the opening scene of the story. Basra was well known for its bazaars that hosted vibrant exchange at the nexus of long-distance trade routes since time immemorial. These routes were both seaborne and riverine as well as overland, and they connected the Mediterranean with the Indian Ocean and beyond. The leading character of the story is Hasan, a young man who inherits his father's wealth which he squanders quickly. In order to give him a second

chance to start a decent life, his mother opens a jewellery shop for him with her share of the inheritance. In this jewellery shop, Ḥasan works as an artisan with his hands and tools. This would make him an average craftsman making a decent living and commanding respect. His life trajectory would be expected to have no major ups and downs.

5 The Economic Story Par Excellence

‘The Story of Abu Kir the Dyer and Abu Sir the Barber’ is of prime importance for any economist reading the *Thousand and One Nights*. The economic content runs throughout the story. It is embedded in a moral that is serviceable to society at large and it concerns the value of true camaraderie. However, as far as we are concerned, the moral of the story is one thing and the proto-analytical, matter-of-fact description of the capitalist mechanism as an economic process, quite another. Whereas the moral of the story (in favour of ‘moral conduct at any cost’) obliquely challenges capitalistic behaviour from the viewpoint of ‘what ought to be’, the ensuing description identifies capitalism most correctly from the viewpoint of ‘what actually is’. In any case, the moral of the story which is given precedence in the manuscript entails a twist of irony that attests to the primacy of the real.⁴³ The ultimate moral of the story can thus be moderated: The economic behaviour that most conforms to morality and public interest – with the least concessions from economic rationality – is preferable to that which does not. No economist could object to this claim, as it entails killing two birds with one stone, or what in their nomenclature would qualify as ‘pareto-optimal.’

The story begins in the grand port city of Alexandria. The main characters are two neighbours and comrades who own adjacent shops in the marketplace. One is Abu Kir, a cleaner and dyer of clothes, and the other, Abu Sir, a barber. Abu Kir is a man of bad habits, whereas Abu Sir is a virtuous man. These qualities are ascribed to their conduct of trade. The bad habits of Abu Kir include: (1) taking money in advance from customers with the pretext of buying dyes for which he would have to pay; (2) deferring delivery dates; and (3) selling (as yet) unclaimed clothes before observing a certain grace period. Due to his continuous professional malpractice, he damages his reputation, or undermines the ‘trust invested in him’ as the now fashionable economic parlance would

43 He who behaves consistently according to moral prescriptions nevertheless becomes a victim of injustice and his name is forgotten, whereas his rival's name survives – to this day – as the name of a neighbourhood in Alexandria.

put it. Under these circumstances, Abu Kir cannot continue his trade. At this moment of dire difficulty, he approaches his neighbour, asking for a helping hand. There is nothing unusual about this, as it befits the traditional bazaar ethics of professional and neighbourly solidarity. As expected, his good neighbour Abu Sir extends him a helping hand. As a result of this support, however, Abu Sir finds himself in economic difficulty because he cannot replenish his own tools of trade and keep his business going. In economic terms, Abu Sir cannot sustain the cost depreciation for his business. He eventually loses his shop and becomes an itinerant barber thereby undergoing what is called 'downward mobility' in mainstream Marxian parlance. Ideally, traditional bazaar ethics was intended to protect comradely small-business owners from the unexpected hazards of the market process. One would assist the other in times of difficulty and then expect reciprocity when the latter ultimately fell himself into need. By reciprocal lendings, loans would cancel each other out and small business holders would in the longterm be saved. What disrupts this process here is that one party, because of the dishonesty of his character, systematically abuses it, thereby making it asymmetric, and hence both parties go down at the end of a vicious circle. Fast approaching this point, Abu Kir approaches his neighbour and proposes that they emigrate together to another city where they can make a new start and seek their fortunes individually. However, he suggests that they continue to support each other and share the profits they will make abroad.⁴⁴ He also suggests that they pack their baggage with the traditional professional and neighbourly solidarity of the marketplace, from which he alone benefitted. Abu Sir agrees, presumably because he sees no other way out for himself. Whereupon, they depart Alexandria.

They arrive in an unnamed port after a long voyage. It is more likely that this port is an imaginary one conveniently constructed to convey a message about logically conceivable but unlikely economic processes. It requires a state of economic backwardness and isolation that would be almost impossible to find in the vast seaborne geography surrounding either the Mediterranean or the Indian Ocean at that time. Soon after their arrival, Abu Kir steals Abu Sir's money and heads for the bazaar to shop around. He notices that all the people around him are wearing either white or blue clothes.⁴⁵ Abu Kir sees a dyer's shop where there is only blue dye and upon talking to the dyer learns that he has never heard of other colours. Moreover, he finds out that this dyer charges

44 Mardrus 2002, p. 7. This is to this day a common practice among businessmen who aim to reduce risks involved by profit (and loss) sharing in joint ventures.

45 One could possibly imagine a similarity between this image of the *Thousand and One Nights* and one from the People's Republic of China during Mao's Cultural Revolution, where and when only blue clothing was available.

an exorbitant price, 20 dirhams per work, that would be done for half a dirham in Alexandria! The dyer informs Abu Kir that there are altogether 40 dyers in this town, and none of them knows any colours other than blue and white (the natural colour of undyed cotton). The dyer also tells Abu Kir that in this place, one inherits the right to profession only from one's father.

We see thus what economists label 'restricted entry' into trade. Abu Kir tells the dyer that he is himself a foreign dyer who masters different colours. If the local dyer were to hire him as a wage worker, he suggests, he would teach his master the 'secret of the trade', and in this way he could differentiate himself from the other dyers and make even more money. His offer is rejected because of the principle of 'restricted entry' into trade collectively agreed upon by the guild members of the city. Whereupon, Abu Kir approaches other dyers one by one with the same proposal in an attempt to convince any one of them to break the rule. There is an economic rationale behind his action. One dyer could see that by infringing on the common practice he could benefit from the best of two possible worlds jointly. This would be for two reasons: (1) as long as no one else followed his course, the monopoly of the trade would remain intact and the prices would continue to be exorbitant; and (2) he would also make an additional gain, what economists call an 'entrepreneurial profit' because of the colour(s) he would uniquely offer for sale. Once again, Abu Kir is rejected by all the dyers who prefer to preserve their professional solidarity. Abu Kir then seeks an audience with the guildmaster and complains of discriminatory exclusion. He seeks through his good offices entry into trade, but the guild master tells him that their customs and tradition forbid him to allow this. Abu Kir is thus back at square one. We are faced here with what an economist would describe as a 'static equilibrium situation' where no economic change could develop from within the system. This kind of economic structure preserves the advantages of its own guild members against potential entrants, in return for which, they remain in solidarity among themselves and completely committed to keeping the existing economic system intact.

When Abu Kir sees all doors closed before him, he pleads his case to the sultan of the city. The sultan advances him money to start up a workshop where clothes could be dyed in various colours. The consumers find themselves more 'sovereign' than ever as they reveal their preferences for different colours. This partnership between the sultan and the merchant gives rise to a prosperous business enterprise that outcompetes the old-fashioned, tradition-bound dyers. Now it is their turn to apply for wage work in this manufactory, but they are turned down, because the sultan has assigned a slave workforce to

the new manufactory.⁴⁶ This new enterprise is the largest of its kind, hence factory-like, but working primarily with slave labour. We are thus led to a new state of economic equilibrium. In this new situation, the guild's traditional monopoly is undermined. However, this does not bring perfect competition by itself, as the former monopoly is now replaced by the monopoly of this uniquely new business enterprise. This change would not have come about, if, upon the appeal of Abu Kir, the sultan did not interfere from without and finance the entrepreneur in the first place. The second equilibrium can be 'stable' unless the economic agents involved have learned their lessons. Future innovators will take the matter into their hands with the lessons thus acquired, and the wealth amassed will be transformed into financial capital extended to potential entrepreneurs. Thus, no need for outside intervention. If this were to occur, there would certainly be an internal dynamics that would lead to successive equilibria. This is the trajectory of what is called 'creative destruction' which involves a motion along points of short-lived equilibria as being instances of the 'exceptional' phenomenon of 'perfect competition' associated with 'zero profit' (meaning normal profits). This is viewed as dear to mainstream economists, yet far from being the true description of the economic process for most of the time, when positive – albeit inevitably declining – 'entrepreneurial profits' are being made, a characteristic of Schumpeter's 'dynamic' economic theory.

The 'Story of Abu Kir and Abu Sir' moves along much – but not all of – the Schumpeterian trajectory. Only the end remains uncertain. The fact that the convergence does not go the whole way is due to the precarious, and often times accidental rather than systematic, nature of the link between wealth, finance, and credit on the one hand, and production, merchants, and artisanal entrepreneurs on the other. It is no surprise, then, that in this story the necessary financing comes from the sultan. The *deus ex machina* resolving this difficult connection was by no means restricted to the wealth of sultans. Other types of marvels appear to intervene in numerous stories. The cave of Ali Baba is a case in point. It is no less than a marvellous substitute for the then lacking institution of the bank.

46 Mardrus 2002, pp. 12–13.

6 The Economics of the Storyteller's Trade

We can now address our overarching objective. Schumpeter saw entrepreneurs as those who came closest to being the equivalents of medieval heroes under capitalism. Schumpeter therefore thought highly of both entrepreneurs and capitalism. He thought highly of capitalism because of the entrepreneurs it fostered. In his view, entrepreneurs were the beast of burden, that is, *persona causa* of economic development. In short, they were pro-active agents of economic and social change. Even so, they were fewer than capitalists. In contrast, the role capitalists played in the economic process was secondary and passive. They rented out their capital to entrepreneurs and lived off profits. In Schumpeter's mind, unlike what conventional wisdom would make us think, capitalists and entrepreneurs were essentially two different types, and the two only occasionally and temporarily coincided in real life. In a manner reminiscent of medieval heroes, courageous as entrepreneurs were, they did not resort to the sword, but rather to their cunning in bringing about numerous kinds of innovation by which they made positive profits. This sets up a model for stimulating competition to repeat their successes. But as rivals also succeeded in their endeavours to compete, positive profits gradually declined to zero profits. As we saw above in the Schumpeterian scenario, the heroic entrepreneur, by his own success, undermines himself and is no more. He becomes at best one more capitalist among many, thanks to the positive profits he made during his prime time. Becoming a capitalist is understandably desirable for a successful entrepreneur because it would bring a stable social status. This is all the more so, because remaining entrepreneurial is next to impossible as it requires one to repeat under increasing duress one's successful performance in innovating. The ease of doing more of the same, as would befit a routine-based capitalist, eventually outweighs the joy of adventure in exploring unknown ways of doing things as is in the nature of entrepreneurial spirit. Thus, the entrepreneur is likely to concede, sooner or later, to the capitalist waiting in him.

Scheherazade, 'the lady of the stories',⁴⁷ is an erudite and cultured woman who tells stories to entertain, surprise, amuse, and pacify her listeners.⁴⁸ She is the archetypal storyteller. She is also prolific: 'Not only does Scheherazade tell stories, but some of the characters in her stories tell stories, and some of

47 Mahfouz 1982/1995, p 94. She is also conceived as the 'mother' of *Nights*, that is, she is associated with the tradition of linking stories with motherhood that was fashionable in Europe in Galland's time. See Boidin 2012, p. 18. No wonder why she has also become, at least since Galland's translation, the best ambassador of the *Nights* as she represents as well as symbolizes it. See François 2012, pp. 91, 102.

48 Boidin 2012.

their characters in their stories also tell stories'.⁴⁹ Scheherazade is thus one of the many who constitute what has been aptly called as the 'tribe of storytellers'.⁵⁰ She tells the meta-story within which these other storytellers take their turns to tell their secondary and tertiary stories. Early on, we emphasized that many of the characters in the stories are merchants. We now focus on the fact that these merchants themselves become a subset of storytellers. It remains to be seen if the corollary follows naturally: Commercial undertaking is a subset of the broader category of storytelling; [or] both the merchant and his trade are engendered by a common archetypal activity. We need only to demonstrate that they share a common dynamic, that is, a *modus operandi*. Fortunately, Walter Benjamin comes to our help:

To say nothing of the by no means insignificant share which traders had in the art of storytelling; their task was less to increase its didactic content than to refine the tricks with which the attention of the listener was captured. They have left deep traces in the narrative cycle of *The Arabian Nights*.⁵¹

This is also to do with the frame-story centred on Scheherazade who aspires to save her life by virtue of her storytelling skills. The narration is more important here than what is actually being narrated, that is, the content, including its moral lessons. Narration for the sake of narration comes first, and its true purpose is to cultivate pleasure in the audience.⁵² That this primary objective is suggested as the only true weapon⁵³ in the hand of Scheherazade to escape her pending death sentence increases its value.⁵⁴

49 Irwin 2004, p. 4.

50 Benjamin 1936/1968, p. 85.

51 Benjamin 1936/1968, p. 101.

52 Sermain 2009, pp. 48–9.

53 Once granted the privilege to relate her stories, Scheherazade gains the upper hand vis-à-vis Shahryar, in a basically master-subject (or slave) relationship. Her source of strength, that is, her 'human capital' as economists prefer to say, is 'her knowledge and wit'. See Ali 1981, p. 3. 'Shahrayar, by being completely entangled in her fictional web, mesmerized by her narration, evokes the image of an enslaved titan'. Ghazoul 1996, p. 24. Along with almost every other character in the *Nights*, the sultan is victim to an 'abject inability to resist a good story'. Pinault 1992, p. ix.

54 'We speak of "value" because we are concerned with "exchange" here; an exchange between a story told and time, that is, the prolongation of life'. See Chraïbi 2004, p. 98.

The tradition of *Nights* is illustrative of a paradox concerning the nature of the frame-story.⁵⁵ It is the strongest frame-story of its kind and has remained unrivalled to this day. Yet the frame-story is *haiku* like, in the sense that it is short and condensed, and although it is far from being elaborated upon, it remains extremely functional.⁵⁶ In comparison with many of the stories that have found their way into the manuscripts, this aspect of the frame story attribute stands out. Whereas many of the [embedded] stories have become subjects for a storyteller exercising their trade through repetitive improvisation and improvement, the frame-story is hardly narrated in the same ways. It introduces an effect of anti-orality that reinforces textual stability. The frame-story (in interaction with the few related stories) gives the *Nights* a certain unity and structure:

The Arabian Nights is constructed like a game of skill (as opposed to a game of chance) such as chess. There are infinite ways of playing the game, but it remains – despite its many variations – a chess game. Similarly, the text preserves its identity although it is performed, as it were, in more than one way.⁵⁷

In conjunction with the above paradox, there exists also an asymmetry between the beginning of the frame-story and its ending. In the old days of oral storytelling, many a listener knew the beginning, but fewer the end, when the tales were being told night after night.⁵⁸ It is highly probable that the listeners entering coffeehouses had either heard about the beginning from others who

55 The frame-story, 'Persian in origin with Indian borrowings', that was translated into Arabic and Islamized in eighth or early ninth century Baghdad concerns a Sultan, Shahryar (who ruled over the territories and islands of India and China) and his future wife, Scheherazade. There exist three other supporting characters, the Sultan's younger brother Shahzaman (who ruled over neighbouring territories from his capital in Samarkand), the wife's younger sister, Dunyazad, and the Vizier Dandan, the father of these two sisters. Both Sultans witness in turn the disloyalty of their wives. Shahryar decides to take his revenge from all women by marrying a virgin every night and having her executed the next day in order not to experience another disloyalty. As the country runs out of virgins, Scheherazade decides to take the challenge by marrying the Sultan despite his father's warnings. She devises for herself a strategy to avoid her execution by having it delayed from one day to the following because of an interest in her story she can cultivate in her husband by suspending her narrative in a crescendo moment. Hence, she launches herself on a successful career in an otherwise deadly game.

56 See Ghazoul 1996, p. 16, and Irwin 2004, p. 235.

57 Ghazoul 1996, p. 4.

58 Some listeners continued to attend successive nights, as fitting for the Middle Eastern tradition of '*samar*' in Arabic, that is, 'causerie du soir'. Junqua and Kerouani 2013, p. 13. It

had told them, or the storytellers from time to time repeated the beginning for the benefit of newcomers. This would mean that the literary style we now find in manuscripts of the beginning of the frame-story bears the mark of this periodic task of summarizing; hence its seemingly condensed nature. In focussing our attention on the asymmetry between the beginning and the ending, we see that many of the extant manuscripts preserve the beginning, but the ending has found its way into only a few. Nevertheless, this asymmetry is far from accidental nor is it devoid of a consequence.⁵⁹ Thanks to this asymmetry, the narrative of the *Thousand and One Nights* maintains an intrinsic ability to branch out and proliferate. The narrative does not proceed in a smooth linear way but rather in terms of leaps and bounds with occasional flashbacks and flash-forwards, as well as the periodic forking of paths along which stories lead to further sub-stories. There exists thus a hierarchy of stories not only in terms of quality or content, but also in terms of overall positioning. There is first the ultimate frame story. Next, there exist the lesser enframed stories.⁶⁰ Then there are the much more numerous framed stories and ultimately the ‘inserted stories’.⁶¹ This narrative-within-the-narrative structure of *Nights* reminds one of a hall of mirrors where images are forever multiplied. This attribute is all the more confounded as the principle of digression prevails more often than that of progression between successive stories. This has only served to further compound the manuscript from one version to the next. We are faced here with a process rather than a structure. Moreover, the process tends to continue rather than come to a close.⁶² The existence of several paths only one of which does not lead to a dead end, if not to infinity, makes the narrative structure resemble

is unlikely that any one single person sat throughout the entire sequence of narrative performance.

59 Sermain 2009, p. 58.

60 Gerhardt 1963, pp. 395, 397, 400, 402, 403, 415–16.

61 Gerhardt 1963, p. 388.

62 The title shift from ‘Thousand’ to ‘Thousand and One’, attributed to the Turks (See Junqua and Kerouani 2013, p. 15) may be significant in this respect. In Turkish ‘*Bin Bir*’ does not only imply far too many as the authors contend, but also involves a squaring off, bringing to a close as manifest in the ultimate numerical symmetry of 1001. In Turkish, the final ‘1’ brings a process to an end but also heralds the beginning of a brand-new series. In this sense it reinforces the one ending of the frame-story with Scheherazade being elevated from womanhood to the status of a wife and mother. As such, it is the reflection of a desire to bring to an end an otherwise interminable story, nevertheless with a concession of ample space for accommodating additional stories for the remaining numerous nights. Just as the advent of manuscript(s) gave the oral tradition a new turn, and the print technology to manuscripts still another, the contemporary possibilities of the internet usher the next such turn. See Sironval 2013, p. 8.

a labyrinth.⁶³ The ending thus remains a loose end.⁶⁴ In a master-text where stories beget further stories so as to proliferate, it is natural that any conclusion is bound to remain contentious. Using the jargon of Marxist economics designed to characterize the nature of capital accumulation under capitalism, we are therefore faced here with an 'endless accumulation' of stories. Storytelling of this kind has an inner dynamic of its own that does not observe any stop signs, all the more so if an artful Scheherazade is involved.

Scheherazade tells stories to escape her death. She 'consumes' and 're-processes' stories in her narration as long as it gives pleasure to the listener and cultivates a desire to hear the rest. Otherwise, there would be eventual 'diminishing returns' to her narrative. This is all the more likely as one hears successive stories, and certain patterns emerge in mind which help to predict the course of events.⁶⁵ Faced with Shahryar who will make the ultimate decision concerning Scheherazade's life, an eventual 'diminishing marginal utility' of her stories would indicate that the bells toll for her. Therefore, it is vital for her to keep the Sultan's curiosity in her stories alive. This is all the more difficult as they start from a point in time when there is a perfectly asymmetric relation of information between Scheherazade and Shahryar, which is to say that she knows all the stories and he knows none. But as time goes by, Shahryar accumulates a certain knowledge of stories as a result of which her 'stock of trade' is being depleted. Hence the balance of knowledge is expected to shift gradually in favour of the Sultan as her stories seem more and more alike. Under normal circumstances, time is supposed to work against her.

The above principle at work on the macro scale is not merely asymptotic, it is also effective from one moment to the next. Every night she has to stop at the right moment, call it what you will, the crescendo, the climax, or the

63 Ghazoul 1996, p. 39.

64 Van Leeuwen 2004, p. 140. This becomes apparent when compared with an alternative ending found in a less popular version. See Grotzfeld 2006, p. 91.

65 'Enchanted castles, hands beckoning from dimly lit doors, cannibalistic ghouls, talking fish, flying horses, troglodytic bandits, one-handed dervishes ... the reader's first impression is likely to be of the immense diversity of the stories in the *Nights* and of the free-flowing imagination, or imaginations, which shaped them. But after a while, the reader starts to notice things – such as how many of the heroes of the *Nights* are born to elderly couples who pray for a child, how often the hero will be told, 'Whatever you do, do not open that door' (but in vain, for he will certainly open it) or how often disasters or opportunities come in threes. In time, each story comes to resemble another story, and the reader begins to recognize the patterns and permutations. Fantasy has its rules. The imaginative universe of the Arab storyteller was subject to invisible constraints'. Irwin 2004, p. 214.

equilibrium beyond which interest in her story would be expected to decline.⁶⁶ Hence she walks on a tightrope from one night to the following. Her progress is of an incremental kind between successive equilibria. Furthermore, there exists an ultimate potential limit: She could run out of stories. There are instances when she resorts to books she reads in order to come up with new stories for her audience. Nevertheless there exists a potential limit which can only be shifted but is insurmountable. Given this constraint, she has to economize with resources at her disposal. That is why there are stories which are quite similar except for one or two stylistic or substantive difference. It is as if stories exchange either parts, characters, endings, narrative styles, or genres among themselves, other things being the same.⁶⁷ This means the storyteller has to combine as much repetition as possible with as little difference as she cannot do without incorporating. The 'art' of storytelling, which I prefer to call here the storyteller's 'trade', is hence first and foremost repetitive. But mere repetition would bring with it inevitably satiety, boredom⁶⁸, and estrangement⁶⁹ connected with decreasing utility, especially when the listener is Shahryar, a man noted for his depressive state of mind and insomnia, and whose restlessness brings him to anticipate uncontrollable nervous attacks. Fortunately, Scheherazade has at her disposal a box of tools, or 'narrative techniques', as we may more appropriately call them, that also help her keep Shahryar's interest in her storytelling alive by even occasionally turning repetition into an advantage. Repetition can give the listener a great pleasure if it is properly deployed.⁷⁰ Scheherazade artfully uses a number of techniques to this effect. One of these techniques has been called 'repetitive designation'. This is one instance where repetition is stripped of its danger and thus becomes a plus by careful narrative

66 'L'épisode raconté ne doit être ni trop court, ni trop long'. Junqua and Kerouani 2013, p. 20.

67 *Thousand and One Nights* has correctly been characterized as a 'mécano des contes'. C. Brémond cited in Sermain 2009, p. 171. Moreover, '[i]ts segmentary character based on autonomous narrative blocks and detachable enframed and framing stories, make it easier to de-link the parts and recycle the narratives, or specific blocks of them, for an infinite number of new ends'. Ghazoul 1996, p. 151).

68 Mahfouz, in his sequel novel, takes this point into account when he makes Shahryar order Sindbad: 'but don't repeat anything unless it is necessary'; and he describes this inevitable state of over-saturation when he makes Shahryar say to Scheherazade: 'I am on the point of being bored with everything'. Mahfouz 1982/1995, pp. 210, 216.

69 In John Barth's novella, 'Dunyazadiad', Shahzaman recounts his experience of repeated intercourse with women imitating his brother: 'Though I took many, with their consent, I wanted none of them. Novelty lost its charm, then even its novelty'. Barth 1972/2001, p. 52.

70 Aoyagi 2006, p. 70.

manipulation.⁷¹ Another such instance concerns the repetition of leading-words and leading-sentences. These repetitions help encapsulate the theme, help the reader or listener actively articulate the meaning of the story – and be proud of it, we may add, – and function as connecting threads between the episodic segments of the narrative.⁷² Homonymous main characters indicate a repetition in characters that blurs in the imagination and memory of the audience.⁷³ There are also repetitions in contents and more specifically in motifs, so much so, that the text becomes a ‘gallery of repeated motifs and imitated stories’.⁷⁴ No matter how much she exploits the possibilities of repetition to her advantage, Scheherazade can only keep interest alive in her narration if she can pursue a strategy of ‘repetition with a difference’; difference here being the equivalent of ‘novelty’ or ‘innovation’ in Schumpeter’s economics. In other words, each new story she tells should also have something ‘new’ and ‘extra’ so as not to remain a mere repetition.

This is fortunately in keeping with the intrinsic property of storytelling. As one authority puts it, ‘No repetition can ever be identical’, and ‘So, when we insist on telling over and over again, we insist on repetition in re-creation (and vice versa) ... And the same story has always been changing, for things which do not shift and grow cannot continue to circulate’. Hence follows the principle: ‘Very softly, a-new a-gain’.⁷⁵ This is essentially a perpetually creative process.⁷⁶ How far she will exceed this minimum with added ‘difference’ is also of critical importance. If she invests too much novelty in her next story, then the effect of the novelty itself may decrease from that story to the following, thereby leading to an equally dangerous trajectory of diminishing returns to novelty. The ultimate consequence of keeping interest alive at the expense of boredom would amount to the same thing.

71 ‘[T]he initial reference establishes an object (e.g., a garden-window or a saddlebag full of dates) in the background of a scene and readies it for its appearance at the proper moment. Repetitive designation creates thereby an effect of apparently casual foreshadowing and allows the audience the pleasure of recognition at that later movement when the object reappears and proves significant’. Pinault 1992, pp. 17–18.

72 Pinault 1992, pp. 21–2.

73 ‘This work provides us with fictional characters functioning as vacant spaces where diverse subjects meet together. We recall that figures in this collection often come to being by repeating other figures, and will be repeated by other characters. This repetitiveness gives them a particular mode of identity: identity emerging from the transference of self to others or, so to speak, open identity’. Aoyagi 2006, p. 78.

74 Aoyagi, 2006, p. 83.

75 Minh-ha 1989, pp. 122–3, 128.

76 Pinault 1992, p. 251.

To make up for the decreasing marginal utility of her stories, Scheherazade has to innovate more and more.⁷⁷ However, because this would also make innovation as such eventually a routine activity and thereby arouse the boredom of Shahryar, she has to do more, that is something different. What is needed is not just more of the same, but also qualitative leaps and bounds within the paradigm of innovation that will have periodic shock-effects on the listener. Fortunately, Scheherazade has a tool box of such tricks⁷⁸ at her disposal that come as the 'means of production' of her trade. First of all, she does not tell a story per night. She tells either less or more by practicing the 'art of interruption'.⁷⁹ One convenient tool in this respect is either to prolong the details or to resort to the opposite, that is, 'summary presentation'⁸⁰ where events are elliptically recounted for the sake of narrative speed-up. A second tool of the trade is to rank stories in an increasing order in terms of the interest and excitement they can provoke from the listener, a tactic supported by periodic sneak previews of what is yet to come. There is always a better, more interesting, more real, or more extraordinary story in her stock yet to be told somewhere down the line. Every time she ends a story, she tells the Sultan (and/or her sister) that her next story is not less but more effective in this respect. Just as she can rank her stories, she can also use sudden jumps from one genre to another as an effective tool of trade, all the more so, when this occurs in conformity with the listener's expectations and for the effect of orchestrating the shifting moods.⁸¹ As far as narrative logic is concerned, '[t]here is no indication that the order of the *arrangement* of stories is meaningful'.⁸² However, this seeming disorderliness gains a new meaning when we see it as an effect of Scheherazade's narrative strategy by deploying different tools of trade along the way. This shift between stories corresponding to different genres is far from random. It is well arranged

77 Mahfouz emphasizes the importance of innovation by a counterfactual experience. Accordingly, Sindbad the Sailor tells Shahryar that one important lesson he derived from his travels is that 'to continue with worn-out traditions is foolishly dangerous'. Upon hearing Sindbad's story, the sultan admits in a low voice a generalization of the very idea, 'Traditions are the past and of the past there are things that must become outdated'. Mahfouz 1982/1995, pp. 213, 214.

78 The Scheherazade of Barth's novella is well aware of this fact when she says self-confidently: 'Artists have their tricks'. Barth 1972/2001, p. 4. She elaborates further: 'It's in words that the magic is – Abracadabra, Open Sesame, and the rest – but the magic words in one story aren't magical in the next. The real magic is to understand which words work, and when, and for what; the trick is to learn the trick'. Barth 1972/2001, p. 7.

79 Chraïbi 2004, p. 10.

80 Pinault 1992, p. 26.

81 Boidin 2012, p. 30.

82 Ghazoul 1996, p. 93.

by Scheherazade in advance and sometimes demanded by Shahryar himself. Different genres coincide with different subject-matters, such as love, crime, travels, and fairy-tale marvels, in addition to instructive pieces, anecdotes, poetry, and songs, not to mention scatological jokes and satire, rhetorical debates, long heroic epics, mystical devotional tales, (proto-) science fiction, pornography, and chronicles of low life:⁸³ '[T]he alternation of full-length and short stories with small lots and series of anecdotes gives a pleasant effect'.⁸⁴ More importantly, it serves to break the monotony of storytelling by altering the pace. It fosters 'surprise'⁸⁵ in the audience; a must for the perpetuation of the narration.

In sum, Scheherazade fights an uphill battle like the entrepreneur who wishes to preserve his heroic spirit by resisting his death that will come along with his transformation into a capitalist. Scheherazade, however, does not make entrepreneurial profits but gains her life. Hence, innovation is incorporated into her survival. She does as a storyteller what Schumpeter thought was actually next to impossible for an entrepreneur. The 'dynamics' that remained wanting in the economic theory we surmised from the 'Story of Abu Kir and Abu Sir' is thus more than well provided in the mechanism of Scheherazade's own storytelling. Scheherazade is the ultimate entrepreneur, the entrepreneur par excellence. Moreover, capitalism and its corresponding economic theory are far more ancient than often thought and have their roots elsewhere than in the West.

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83 Irwin 2004, pp. 2, 207.

84 Gerhardt 1963, pp. 31, 117.

85 Chraïbi 2004, p. 97.

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Index

Page numbers in *italic* refer to illustrations, while page numbers followed by *t* refer to tables.

- Abbas Hilmi II 190, 193
Abbasid caliphate 177
Abbott, Nabia 22, 23
'Abd al-Fattāḥ, Muḥammad 187
Abd-el Qader, Emir 305
Abdel-Halim, Mohamed 92, 101
Abdülaziz, Ottoman sultan 177
Abdülhamid II, Ottoman sultan 177, 193
Abdülmeccid, Ottoman sultan 177, 181, 182
Abū al-Farağ al-Işfahānī 171–172, 173
Abū al-Ḥasan 5, 11, 178–180, 181, 182, 230
Abū al-Ḥasan Ibn Ṭahir 166–168
Abū al-Ḥasan al-Muğaffal aw Hārūn al-Rašīd
(al-Naqqāš). *See* 'Abū al-Ḥasan the Fool or Hārūn al-Rašīd'
'Abū al-Ḥasan, ou le dormeur éveillé' (Ishāqī)
5, 6–7, 11, 16–18
See also 'Abū al-Ḥasan the Fool or Hārūn al-Rašīd'
'Abū al-Ḥasan the Fool or Hārūn al-Rašīd'
(al-Naqqāš)
in general 175, 178–180, 199
choice of 179
'Egyptian versions' of play 181
performance history of 180–181
as petition 176, 181–182
See also 'Abū al-Ḥasan, ou le dormeur éveillé'
Abu Hassan (Weber) 179
Abu Kir 309–312
Abū l-Fuḍūl 201–202
Abū Nuwās 186
Abu Sir 309–311
Abū Yūsuf 12
adaptations. *See* film adaptations; theatrical adaptations
adaptations filmiques 247
Adventures of Sindbad the Sailor (*Przygody Sindbada Zeglarza*) (Leśmian) 218
advertising 261
'Affān Ibn Sulaymān 14–15
Ağā'ib al-Aqdār ('The Miracles of Destiny')
(Wāṣif) 183
al-Aḥḍab, Sheikh Ibrāhīm 192
Ahmet Muhtar Pasha 185
Ā'isha 'Iṣmat/Ayşe Ismet ('Ā'isha Taymūriyya)
191–192
Akel, Ibrahim 5, 17–18, 28, 57–65
Aladdin 258–259, 262–263, 302
'Aladdin and the Magic Lamp' 266–268*t*,
303*n*31
Alexandria 180, 308
Alf layla wa-layla (manuscript) 58
Algeria 305
'Alī (helper of Ma'rūf) 207–208
'Alī (shopkeeper) 207
'Alī (son of al-Faḍl) 189, 191
Ali Baba 137–138, 302
'Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves' 258–259,
266–268*t*, 303*n*31
Ali Çelebi 91
'Alī Ğanāḥ al-Tabrīzī 208–209
Alī Ğanāḥ al-Tabrīzī wa tābi'uhu Quffa ('Alī Ğanāḥ al-Tabrīzī and his servant Quffa') (Farağ)
in general 198
and Arabic heritage 210–211
sources for 206–208, 212
summary of 208–209
Aliakbari, Rasoul 255–268
Alibaba (e-commerce company) 302
Al-Sāhir, Kāzīm 224
American print culture
influence of *Nights* on
and California Gold Rush 258–259
and consumerism 261–263
and elitism 259–261
and popularity of *Nights* 263–264
See also United States
American Quarterly Review (periodical) 265
The American Whig Review (periodical) 260
Amin, Dina 205
amour et banc 124–126
Les amoureux de Schéhérazade : variations modernes sur 'Les Mille et une nuits'
(Jullien) 127

- Amselle, Jean-Loup 70
 Anderson, Adam 58
 Anderson, David 58
 Anderson, James 57, 58–59
 anecdotes (*ḥabar/aḥbar*) 171–172, 173
 animal stories 287–288
 animals, in fables 286–287
 animation (cinématographique/cinematic)
 241–242, 243–244, 250
 Anīs al-Ġalīs 168–170
 Aoyagi, Etsuko 319n73
 ape–human attractions 158
 apocrypha 236, 237, 238
 approbation
 for Galland's *Nuits* 94, 96, 110–111
 for Pétis de la Croix's *Jours* 103
 arabe. *See* Arabic language
 Arabian Affairs (*Awantury arabskie*)
 (Makuszyński) 216, 218
The Arabian Nights Encyclopedia 152
The Arabian Nights Entertainments (Lane)
 and paratextuality 157
 relationship with Burton's *Nights*
 in general 142, 144, 159–160
 Burton on 149
 of poetry in 144–146
 of stories in 146–148
 sources for 151
 views on 260n19
The Arabian Nights (Forster) 260
Arabian Nights (Haddawy) 152
 Arabic heritage, revival of 210–211, 213
 Arabic language
 knowledge of
 of Burton 142, 143–144, 150
 of Lane 142, 150
 manuscript for compilation 4–7, 10–14
 manuscripts pour compilation 3
 Arabic literature 8–10
 Arabic theatre
 creation of identity for 199
 European influence on 176–177
Arabic Themes in Twentieth Century Polish
Literature (*Wątki arabskie w literaturze*
polskiej XX wieku) 217
The Art of Story-telling (Gerhardt) 281
 Asiatic mode of production 305
al-'Aṣr al-islāmī (Ḍayf) 171
Athenaeum (journal) 149
 Aulnoy, Marie-Catherine d' 87
L'auteur des Mille et une nuits (Schwab) 83
 author's rights (*droits d'auteur*) 83
 authorship
 in general 111–112
 of Galland 83, 97, 98, 108–109, 111, 112, 151,
 303
 loss of 237
 autorité divine/absolue 134
Les aventures d'Abdalla, fils d'Hanif (Bignon)
 72, 73
avertissements
 in Dutch pirated copies 96
 in Galland's *Nuits* 106, 108
 See also advertising
Awantury arabskie (Arabian Affairs)
 (Makuszyński) 216, 218
 al-Azhar sād 9483 & 'ayn 133413 adab (Cairo)
 28
Azur et Asmar (Ocelot) 240

badawī (desert) poetry 164–166
 Badawī, Muḥammad Muṣṭafā 179, 189, 190
 Baghdad The Thousandth and Second Night
 (*Bagdad Tysiqc Druga Noc*)
 (Ostrowski) 224
al-Baḥīl (The Miser) (Naqqāš) 178, 181
 Ballaster, Ros 287
 banc et amour 124–126
 Barbin, Claude
 career of 88–89
 death of 93
 editorial politics of 91
 and Galland 82, 89–92
 See also Barbin publishing house
 Barbin, Jules-Paul 93nn48–49
 Barbin publishing house
 in general 82
 Barbin managing. *See* Barbin, Claude
 and fairy tale books 84, 88, 92–93
 financial difficulties of 92–93
 and Oriental tales 88
 veuve Barbin managing. *See* Cochart, Marie
 veuve Jombert managing 100n83, 102n93,
 103n97
 veuve Ricœur managing. *See* Gontier, Anne
al-Barīd (journal) 183

- Baronchin, Françoise (veuve Jombert)
100n83, 102n93, 103n97
- Barth, John 318n69, 320n77
- Basra 308
- Basset, René 6–7, 12
- Bauden, Frédéric 91
- Bayard, Pierre 250
- Baybars, Aḥmad Samīr 193
- 'Baybars' cycle 27–28, 29–31, 34, 304n33
- Bayle, Pierre 88
- bazaars 307
- Bazzi, Rachid 15
- Beaumont, Daniel 10, 284
- Behar, Daniel 270–279
- Beirut city council 182
- Beirut edition 179
- 'Les belles anecdotes des Anciens.' *see Kitāb Laṭā'if aḥbār al-uwal*
- Bencheneb, Rachid 176, 179, 184
- Benjamin, Walter 314
- Berwiński, Ryszard 224
- bestialité 15
- Bible 264, 275
- Bibliothèque bleue* 112
- Bibliothèque Bodléienne d'Oxford 60–61
- Bibliothèque Nationale de France 96
- Bibliothèque orientale* (Herbelot) 17, 89
- Bibliothèque Royale de Paris 5, 17
- Bibliothèque Universitaire d'Édimbourg 58, 60–62
- bibliothèques au Maroc 40–45, 46
- Bignon, Jean-Paul 72, 73, 82, 103, 104, 109
- Bijoux indiscrets* (Diderot) 72, 73, 74t, 76, 78
- Bitters (Pique-Vinaigre) 290–292
- Blachère, Régis 164
- BNF Arabe 3619 (Paris) 28
- Boaistuau, Pierre 77t
- Boccaccio, Giovanni 289, 301
- Bodleian Library (Oxford) 60–61
- Boesche, Roger 78
- Boileau, Nicolas 79
- book core 3–4, 7
- The Book of the Thousand Nights and One Night* (Payne)
and architextuality 157
relationship with Burton's *Nights*
in general 142–144
Burton on 149
of poetry in 145, 146
of stories in 147
sources for 151
- book production 112
- Borges, Jorge Luis 236, 248, 250
- 'boyish women' (*ḡulāmīyyāt*) 32–33, 35
- Braudel, Fernand 308
- Bremond, Claude 16
- Breslau edition 5, 17, 22, 28, 179
- Briasson, Antoine 96, 98
- Brodie, Fawn M. 143
- brothers 25, 26
- Brunel, Pierre 71n11
- al-Buḥturī 172
- Būlāq edition 48–54, 151, 300n18, 304n34
- Buḡbuḡ 204
- Buḡbuḡ al-Kaslān* (Lazy Buḡbuḡ) (Faraḡ)
in general 198
language in 206
sources for 204
summary of 204–205
- Burton, Richard
annotations in copy of Lane's *Nights* 144–148, 145, 146, 148, 159–160
on ape–human attractions 158
Arabic knowledge of 142, 143–144, 150
et la chronique d'Ishāq 5
enhancements of 300m8
on fables 285
Kennedy on 153
on Lane 142, 150
Lane-Poole on 149–150
legitimacy of translation of 149
life of 154
obituary of 149
Payne on 151
reputation of 148–149, 160
works of
Supplemental Nights 142, 143, 149
1001 Nights. *See 1001 Nights*
mention of 280
- Buzurg Ibn Šahriyār 15
- Le Cabinet des fées* (Mayer) 74, 77t, 87–88
cachet. *See Ḥātām*
Calcutta (1856) edition 186
Calcutta II (1839–42) edition 143, 147
California Gold Rush 258–259

- 'Caliph's Confession, or the Power of a Tale'
(*Wyznanie Kalifa, czyli o mocy baśni*)
(Kaczmarek) 219
- Calvino, Italo 236–238, 239
- The Canterbury Tales* (Chaucer) 301
- The Canterbury Tales (Racconti di Canterbury)*
(Pasolini) 235
- capitalists 313
- Cardahi, Soliman (Qardāhī, Sulaymān) 185
- Cassim 137–138
- Cavelier, Jean 97n70
- caves (of Ali Baba) 137–138
- Caylus, Anne Claude de 72, 73, 74t
- Cazotte, Jacques 72, 73, 74t, 79
- Cellier, Antoine 90
- censors 94, 96, 98, 103
- Cervantes, Miguel de 301
- '*La chaise volante*' (*Story of the Labourer and Flying chair*) 57
- Charpentier, François 90
- Chaucer, Geoffrey 301
- Chauvin, Victor 6
- Chebel, Malek 285
- childhood world 228–231
- Chops-Him-in-Two (*Coupe-en-Deux*) 290–291
- Chraïbi, Aboubakr 18, 106, 282
- chromolithography 261
- cinéma français. *See* Ocelot, Michel
- Ciné-Si* (Ocelot)
description et récit-cadre 240–241, 244
héritage de *Mille et une nuits* 244–249
- 'City of Apes' 158
- Civilization and Its Discontents (Das Unbehagen in der Kultur)* (Freud) 273
- classification des contes de *Mille et une nuits* 18
- Clinton, Jerome 284
- Cochart, Marie (veuve Barbin)
and Galland 95
as publisher 93, 94–95, 96, 100, 102, 103
- colonialism 153, 154, 156–157, 158
- colour printing 261
- compilations de la littérature arabe classique et moderne, évaluations par orientalistes occidentaux 8–10
- complexities, in networks 152–154
- 'The Concubine and the Caliph' 32
- 'The Concubine of al-Ma'mūn' 32
- concubine stories 27, 32
- consumerism 259–260, 261–263, 265
- contact zones 70, 71
- 'Conte' (Rimbaud) 132–137, 140
- Contes* (Perrault) 93
- contes anglais* 94
- contes de fée* (fairy tales). *See* fairy tales
- Les Contes des fées* (d'Aulnoy) 87
- contes orientaux* (oriental tales). *See* French oriental tales
- contes philosophique* 87
- contes turcs* 100
- Contes turcs* (Pétis de la Croix) 71
- Conversazione in Sicilia* (Vittorini) 229–230, 238
- Crébillon, Claude Prosper Jolyot de, fils 72, 73, 74t
- cross-dressing 32–33
- Csernowitz 307
- Cuper, Gisbert 94–95
- Czesiek 223
- Danchet, Antoine 98
- Darnton, Robert 111
- Ḍayf, Ṣawqī 171, 173
- De l'Origine et du progrès du café* (Galland) 97n70
- Decameron* (Boccaccio) 289, 301
- Decameron* (Pasolini) 235
- déguisement 245, 249
- Dehnel, Jacek 221
- Delaulne, Florentin 97, 109–111
- 'La délivrance après la difficulté' (*Kitāb al-Farağ ba'd al-šidda*) (al-Tanūhī) 5–6
- desert (*badawī*) poetry 164–166
- despotism/despot 76–78
- deux rêveurs (ou rêveur de Bagdad) (histoire) 123, 124
- 'Le dévoilement des mystères, sur la découverte des trésors' (*Ḥall al-rumūz fi 'ilm al-kunūz*) 16
- Diderot, Denis 72, 73, 74t, 76, 78–79
- disguises 245, 249
- 'Dislocating Scheherazade: *The 1001 Nights*, Paratextuality, and the Illusion of a Static Text' (Lundell) 157

- divine authority 134
Dīwān (‘Ā’iṣā ‘Iṣmat) 192
 Diyāb, Ḥannā 97, 108, 109, 112, 303n31
 Djinnns. *See* génies
 Dobie, Madeleine 70, 75
 Dodson, Michael S. 153
Don Quixote (Cervantes) 301
 ‘Le dormeur éveillé’ 108
Los dos que soñaron (Borges) 248
 doublets 32
dramatis personae
 in frame story 23–26
 motifs of 23–24
 names of 26
 See also under specific names
droits d’auteur (author’s rights) 83
 Dubos, Jean-Baptiste 88
 Duggan, Anne E. 69–80
 Dulac, Hyppolite 185–186
 Dunyāzād/Dinarzād 22, 23–24, 25, 26,
 32–33, 35
 ‘Dunyazadiad’ (Barth) 318n69, 320n77
 Dziekan, Marek M. 217
 Dzienis, Jolanta Maria 219
- L’écolier-sorcier* (Ocelot) 246
 economic development 307
 economics, of storytelling 313–321
Edinburgh Review (magazine) 149–150, 159
 Edinburgh University Library 58, 60–62
 édition Breslau de Habicht 5, 17
 See also Breslau edition
L’Éducation sentimentale 125–126
 Egypt
 Hārūn al-Rašīd stories in 185–188
 printed entertaining stories in 186–188
 theatre troupes in 184–185
 El-Enany, Rasheed 202
 elitism 259–261
 Encyclopaedia of the Brethren of Purity 287
 Enderwitz, Susanne 285
 Engels, Friedrich 305
 Enlightenment 69–70, 75
 entrepreneurs 313
Eugénie Grandet (Balzac) 124–125
 evil 134–135, 136
 ex libris 45–47, 47, 48
Ex Oriente (Tuwim) 224
 exemplarity 281–285
 fables 285–286
Fables de Bidpai 91
 al-Faḍl (vizier of Ibn Sulaymān) 189
 Faḍl al-Dīn Ibn Ḥāqān 168–170
 al-Faḍl Ibn al-Rabī‘ 14
 fairy tale books
 in general 87–88
 and Barbin publishing house 84, 88,
 92–93
 fairy tales (*contes de fée*)
 books of 84, 87–88, 92–93
 emergence of 83–84
 influence of *Nights* on 85–86, 94
 superiority of 301
 transmission of 111
 See also French oriental tales
 family 275
 Farāğ, Alfred
 on *Nights* 212–213
 and revival of Arabic heritage 210–211, 213
 works of
 Alī Ḥanāḥ al-Tabrizī wa tābi’uhu Quffa.
 See *Alī Ḥanāḥ al-Tabrizī wa tābi’uhu*
 Quffa
 Buqbuq al-Kaslān. *See* *Buqbuq al-Kaslān*
 Ḥallāq Bağdād. *See* *Ḥallāq Bağdād*
 as middle literature 213
 Rasā’il Qāḍī Iṣbīliyya. *See* *Rasā’il Qāḍī*
 Iṣbīliyya
Le Féminisme de Schéhérazade (Lahy-
 Hollebecque) 281–282, 284–285
 feminist readings, of *Nights* 284–285
 femmes. *See* women
Ferec ba’d eṣ-ṣidde 99
La fête de l’insignifiance (Kundera) 297
Fihrist (Ibn al-Nadīm) 23–24
 film adaptations 247
 See also under specific names of films
 Finkielkraut, Alain 69–70, 75
Il fiore delle Mille e una notte (*A Thousand and*
 One Nights) (Pasolini) 232–235
 ‘The Fisherman Ḥalīfa with Qūt al-Qulūb and
 Hārūn al-Rašīd’ (Wāṣīf)
 in general 175, 183–184
 performance history of 184–185
 political themes in 176, 188
 sources for 184
 Flügel, Gustav 10

- Fontenelle, Bernard de 94, 96, 103
 'Forms of Accommodation in the *Decameron*'
 (Greene) 289
 Forster, Edward 260
 Forty Viziers (*Kirk Vezir*) stories 100
 Foucault, Michael 78
 Foucault, Nicolas-Joseph 104
 'The Fox and the Wolf' 288
 Foy-Vaillant, Jean 90
 fragment de *Mille et une nuits* acheté en Inde
 description et parties 58, 59–60
 histoires incluses et comparaison avec
 autres manuscrits 57–58, 60–62
 table des matières 57
 versions proches 60–62
 fragment of 'A Book with a tale of thousand
 nights' (Chicago) 22, 23
 frame stories
 in films of Pasolini 233–235
 in 'Hundred and One Nights' 25, 26, 27, 35
 in *The Mysteries of Paris* 290–291
 in *Night*
 in general 57, 133, 315–320
 doublets in 32
dramatis personae in 23–26
 epilogue of 27–34, 315–317
 and exemplarity 281–285
 Galland's removal of 107–108
 interrelations between 281–285,
 314–315
 Kahanoff on 273–277
 mirroring in 28–29, 31, 33, 34
 mise en abyme in 28–29, 31
 prologue of 23–26, 315–317
 reshaping of 22
 in *Rasā'il Qāḍī Ishbīlyya* 211
 used in Polish novels 221–222
 France
 colonialism of 305
 Enlightenment in 69–70, 75
 fairy tale books in 84, 87–88, 92–93
 Orientalism in 160
 Fredro, Aleksander 222
 freedom 278
 French cinema. *See* Ocelot, Michel
 French culture, and *métissage* 69–70
 French literature. *See* littérature française
 French oriental tales
 influence of *Nuits* on 71–80, 72, 74^t, 75^t,
 77^t, 85, 87
 published in periodical press 74, 76^t
 Freud, Sigmund 273, 284
 'Les fruits des parchemins' (*Tamarāt*
al-awraq) (al-Ḥamawī) 6
 Ğa'far (vizier of Hārūn al-Rašīd)
 in 'Abū al-Ḥasan the Fool or Hārūn
 al-Rašīd' 178, 181–182
 in 'The Fisherman Ḥalīfa with Qūt
 al-Qulūb and Hārūn al-Rašīd' 188
 in 'The Story of Hārūn al-Rašīd with Uns
 al-Ġalis' 189–190
 in 'The Story of the Slave-Girl Anīs al-Ġalis
 and Nūr al-Dīn 'Alī Ibn Ḥāqān' 169–
 170
 mention of 175
 Ğa'far al-Barmakī 14
 'Ğa'far le Barmécide et le vieux Bédouin'
 (Ishāqī) 6, 14
 al-Ġaḥīz 200, 202
 Galland, Antoine
 and authorship of *Nuits* 83, 97, 98,
 108–109, 111, 112, 151, 303
 and Barbin 82, 89–92
 and Delaulne 109–111
 as diarist 303n32
 et génies 131n10
 histoire ajoutées par Scott 57
 Mahdi on 84
 manuscrit d'Ishāqī pour *Mille et une nuits*
 5, 17–18
 on *Les Mille et un jours* 100, 280
 et moralité dans *Mille et une nuits* 128n3
 and Pétis de la Croix 110
 and veuve Barbin 95
 and veuve Ricœur 104–105, 108–109
 works of
De l'Origine et du progrès du café 97n70
Menagiana 97
Les Mille et une nuits. *See* *Les Mille et une*
nuits (Galland)
Smyrne ancienne et moderne 90–91
 mention of 296
 Ğamīl Buṭayna 165
 Ğānim Ibn Ayyūb 190
See also 'Histoire de Ganem'

- Il garofano rosso* (Vittorini) 230–231, 238
 Gautier, Théophile 129
gazal poetry
 in general 163–164
 love as theme in 165
 and ‘The Story of Nūr al-Dīn’ 173–174
 and ‘The Story of the Slave-Girl’ 171, 173–174
 and storytelling 171–172
 two variations of 164–166
 women as theme in 165
 See also desert (*badawī*) poetry; urban (*‘udri*) poetry
gazal poets 165, 171
 al-Gazzālī 4
 gender 29–31
The Generation of Levantines (Kahanoff) 271
 Genette, Gérard 152, 155–156
 ‘Génie’ (Rimbaud) 131–132, 135
 génies (Djinnis)
 in general 78
 chez Galland 131n10
 chez Rimbaud 131–132, 135–137, 140
 genre shifts 320–321
 geography, of *Nights* 300–301
 Gerhardt, Mia 30, 85n11, 143, 280, 281
 Gerolstein, Prince Rudolph von 290, 291, 292
 Ghazoul, Ferial 282–283, 315
 God 275
 Godsall, Jon R. 150
 Goitein, S.D. 277
 Gontier, Anne (veuve Ricœur)
 as editor 105–106
 and Galland 104–105, 108–109
 as publisher 102–104
 good vs. evil theme 170
 Gosselin, Nicolas 112
 Granara, William 163–174
 Grande, Nathalie 91
 Green, Arthur O. 185–186
 Greene, Thomas 289
 Gregory XVI, Pope 221
 Grimm, brothers 248–249, 301
 grotte (Ali Baba) 137–138
 Grotzfeld, Heinz 7, 25–26
 Gueulette, Thomas-Simon 72, 73
 Ćuḥā 211–212
 Guinet, Magasin de 112
ḡulāmiyyāt (‘boyish women’) 32–33, 35
 Gunpowder (Gargousse) 290–292
 Guyaux, André 139
ḡabar/aḡbar (anecdotes) 171–172, 173
 Habicht, Maximilian 5, 17
 Haddawy, Husain 152
 Hahn, Franz 71n11
 al-Ḥakīm, Tawfiq 175, 194
 Ḥalifa 183, 188
Ḥalifa al-Ṣayyād ma’ Qūt al-Qulūb wa-Hārūn al-Rašīd (Wāṣif). See ‘The Fisherman Ḥalifa with Qūt al-Qulūb and Hārūn al-Rašīd’
Ḥallāq Baḡdād (The Barber of Baghdad) (Faraḡ)
 in general 198
 narrative mode in 203–204
 political themes in 202–203
 sources for 200, 212
 summary of 201–202
 writing of 200
 Hamilton, Antoine 72, 73, 74f
 Hammer, Joseph von 57, 57n6
 Hammoudi, Rafika 127–140
 Hanna, Nelly 8–9
Haroun and the Sea of Stories (Rushdie) 282
 Hartford Seminary 96
 Hārūn al-Rašīd cycle 304n33
 Hārūn al-Rašīd
 in ‘Abū al-Ḥasan the Fool or Hārūn al-Rašīd’ 178–179
 in ‘The Fisherman Ḥalifa with Qūt al-Qulūb and Hārūn al-Rašīd’ 183, 188
 as metaphore in musical plays 177, 182, 192–193
 in ‘The Story of Hārūn al-Rašīd with the Nobleman Ġānim Ibn Ayyūb and Qūt al-Qulūb’ 193
 in ‘The Story of Hārūn al-Rašīd with Uns al-Ġalīs’ 189–190, 192–193
 in ‘The Story of Nūr al-Dīn’ 166–168
 in ‘The Story of the Slave-Girl’ 169–171
Hārūn al-Rašīd ma’ al-Amīr Ġānim Ibn Ayyūb wa-Qūt al-Qulūb (al-Qabbānī). See ‘The Story of Hārūn al-Rašīd with the Nobleman Ġānim Ibn Ayyūb and Qūt al-Qulūb’

- Hārūn al-Rašīd ma' Uns al-Ġalīs* (al-Qabbānī).
See 'The Story of Hārūn al-Rašīd with
Uns al-Ġalīs'
- Hārūn al-Rašīd plays 175, 194–195
See also under *specific plays*
- Hārūn al-Rašīd stories
in general 175
cruelty in 186
in khedivial Egypt 185–187
popularity of 179
See also under *specific stories*
- Hasan 308–309
- Hastings, Warren 58
- Ĥātām* (sceau/cachet) 47–48, 47, 48, 52, 53
- Ĥayyāt, Yūsuf 184
- Hazār afsāne* 23
- Heath, Peter 170
- Hemingway, Ernest 229
- Hen, Maciej 221–222
- Herbelot, Barthélemy d' 17, 89
- heritage theatre (*masraḥ al-turāt*) 199
- hermit stories 286–287, 289
- 'The Hermits' 286–287
- Ĥiġāzi, Salāma 180, 185
- The Highly Civilized Man: Richard Burton and
the Victorian World* (Kennedy) 153
- al-Ĥikāyāt al-'aġība* ('Histoires
merveilleux') 17
- ḥil'a* (honorary robes) 33
- 'L'histoire d'Aladdin' 246
- 'Histoire de Codadad et de ses freres' 99, 106
- Histoire de Fleur d'épine* (Hamilton) 72, 73,
74^t
- 'Histoire de Ganem' 99, 105–106, 109
- Histoire de Geoffrey* (Nodot) 92–93
- 'Histoire de la jeune esclave Tawaddūd' 44,
45
- 'L'histoire de la noblesse du Barmécide Ġāfar
contre le marchand des fèves' 11
- 'L'histoire de la princesse et du singe' (Išḥāqī)
12, 15
- Histoire de la sultane de Perse et des visirs*
(Pétis de la Croix) 100
- Histoire de Mélusine* (Nodot) 87
- 'Histoire de Noureddin' 108
- 'L'histoire de Wardān le boucher, de la femme
et de l'ours' (Išḥāqī) 12, 15, 16
- 'L'histoire d'Ibrāhīm al-Mahdī' 11
- 'L'histoire d'al-Mutawakkil et de la belle
esclave Maḥbūba' (Išḥāqī) 12
- Histoire du grand Genghizcan* (Pétis de la
Croix) 100n83
- 'L'histoire du prince Calaf et de la princesse
de la Chine' 248–249
- 'Histoire du Prince Zeyn Alasnam' 99, 106
- 'Histoire du siège volant' 57
- Histoires ou contes du temps passé* (Perrault)
87
- History of Sexuality* (Foucault) 78
- Al-Ĥizāna al-Ḥasaniyya (Bibliothèque Royale,
Rabat) manuscrits de *Mille et une
nuits* 41, 45, 46, 47–48
- Ĥizānat Mū'assasat 'Allāl al-Fāsī
(Bibliothèque de la fondation Allal El
Fassi, Rabat), manuscrit de *Mille et
une nuits* 43, 46
- Ĥizānat Muḥammad Dāwūd (Bibliothèque
de Mohammed Daoud, Tétouan),
manuscrits de *Mille et une nuits* 42,
46
- Ĥizānat al-Zāwiya al-Nāširiyya (Bibliothèque
de la Zaouïa Naciria, Tamegroute)
(région de Zagora), manuscrits de
Mille et une nuits 42–43, 46
- Hoffman, George 103–104
- The Holy Family* (Marx) 290
- homosexuality 234
- honorary robes (*ḥil'a*) 33
- Ḥudādād. See 'Histoire de Codadad et de ses
freres'
- Huet, Pierre-Daniel 85, 102n93
- Ḥümāyūn-nām* 91
- 'Hundred and One Nights' 25, 26, 27, 35
- al-Ḥūrī, Šakir 185–186
- Husayn, Taha 165
- al-ibāḥī* (profane) 163, 174
- Ibn Baṭṭūṭa 300
- Ibn al-Dawādārī 16
- Ibn Ḥiġġa al-Ḥamawī 6
- Ibn Kamāl Bāšā 16
- Ibn al-Nadīm 23–24, 27
- Ibn Rašīq 165
- Ibn Sulaymān 189–190
- Ibrahim (gardener of Hārūn al-Rašīd) 169–
170

- 'Ibrāhīm al-Mahdī' (Ishāqī) 6
 Idrīs, Yūsuf 199
 Idrīs Ibn Būṣṭī Ibn al-Baġdādī al-Maktabī 45, 47
 If On a Winter's Night a Traveller (*Se una notte d'inverno un viaggiatore*) (Calvino) 236
Illuminations (Rimbaud) 129, 130–138, 140
 illusions 209
 Inde. *See* fragment de *Mille et une nuits* acheté en Inde
 India. *See* fragment de *Mille et une nuits* acheté en Inde
 influence of *Nuits/Nights*
 in general 70, 296–297, 300
 on American print culture. *See* American print culture
 on fairy tales 85–86, 94
 on French literature and culture 127–129, 240, 250
 on French oriental tales 71–80, 72, 74t, 75t, 77t
 on Italian literature and art. *See* Italian literature and art
 on poetry 219–220
 on Polish literature and art. *See* Polish literature and art
 Rimbaud on 129, 130–138, 140
 on serialized novels 127–128
 'Informations pour les gens à propos de ce qui est arrivé aux Barmakides avec les Abbassides' (*ʿIlām al-nās fīmā waqaʿa li-l-Barāmika maʿa Banī l-ʿAbbās*) (Ishāqī) 4
 interfecundity 70, 71
 interludes, in Farāġ's plays 209
 interruptions 320
 intertextuality 156
 Irwin, Robert 143–144, 163, 172, 250, 259n10, 282, 283, 284, 287
 al-Ishāqī, Muḥammad Ibn 'Abd al-Mu'ṭī
 contes sexuels 15–16
 études par orientalistes occidentaux 8–10
 sources pour *Mille et une nuits* 4–7, 10–13, 16–17, 18
 See also *Kitāb Laṭā'if aḥbār al-uwal*
 Ismā'īl, Sayyid 'Alī 189, 190, 191, 192, 193
 Israel 277
 Italian literature and art
 influence of *Nights* on
 in general 227–228
 on Calvino, Italo 236–238, 239
 on Pasolini 232–235, 238–239
 and theme of body 238–239
 on Vittorini 228–232, 238
 Italy. *See* Italian literature and art
 al-Itlīdī 4
 James, Henry 274
 Jaworski, Krzysztof 223
 Johnson, Rebecca 70, 76
Journal des Sçavans (journal) 84–85, 95
Journal of the American Geographical Society of New York (journal) 149
 Jullien, Dominique 127, 280–293
 Kāfūr 211
 Kahanoff, Jacqueline
 life of 270–271, 277
 works of
 The Generation of Levantines 271–272
 me-mizrah shemesh 270, 272, 273–278
 Mongrels or Marvels 270n1
 'Passover in Egypt' 278–279
Kalila wa Dimna 91
Das Kapital (Marx) 297
 Kayseri Manuscript
 in general 27
 epilogue of frame story in 35
 narrative structure in 28–29
 mention of 22, 300n20
 Keller-Rahbé, Edwige 89
 Kennedy, Dane 153
 Al-Khozai, Mohamed 176, 177, 190–191, 192
 Kilito, Abdelfattah 39, 123–126
 king's brothers 32, 35
Kirk Vezir (Forty Viziers) stories 100
Kitāb al-Aġānī (Abū al-Faraġ al-Iṣfahānī) 171–172, 173
Kitāb Laṭā'if aḥbār al-uwal ('Les belles anecdotes des Anciens') (Ishāqī)
 anecdotes et frivolités 10
 comme source pour *Mille et une nuits* 4–5, 6, 7, 10–11, 18
 comparaison avec 'Le Rêve du trésor' 13–14

- Kitāb Laṭā'if aḥbār al-uwal* ('Les belles anecdotes des Anciens') (Ishāqī) (cont.)
 comparaison des contes de *Mille et une nuits* 13–18
 écriture du livre 10
 études par orientalistes occidentaux 8–10
 sources citées 7–8
 titre entier et description du livre 7–8
- Kitāb al-maḥāsīn wa l-aḍḍād* (al-Ġāhiz) 200, 202
- Kitāb al-'Umda* (Ibn Rašīq) 165
- Klechydy sezamowe* (Sesame Tales) (Leśmian) 218
- Klee, Paul 296, 298
- knowledge
 of Arabic language 142, 143–144, 150
 and power 78–79
- Kubarek, Magdalena 216–225
- Kundera, Milan 297
- Lacoste, Bouillane de 139
- Laguionie, Jean-François 241
- Lahy-Hollebecque, Marie 281–282, 284–285
- Laitou* de Rimbaud 139
- Landau, Jacob 183
- Lane, Edward William
 Arabic knowledge of 142, 150
 Burton on 150
 censoring by 300n18
 and work of Ishāqī 5, 17
 works of
The Arabian Nights Entertainments. See The Arabian Nights Entertainments
- Lane-Poole, Edward Stanley 5, 6, 149–150, 159
- Leeuwen, Richard van 184, 245
- Lesage, Alain-René 99, 104
- Leśmian, Bolesław 218
- Lettres Persanes* (Montesquieu) 73, 74t, 77–78
- Levantines 271–272
- Lhéritier, Marie-Jeanne 93, 94
- liberation theme 26, 34
- libraries
 in Morocco 40–45, 46
See also under specific libraries
- Lièvre de mer* (frères Grimm) 248–249
- 'Lion and the Carpenter' 287
- littérature arabe 8–10
- littérature française
 influence de *Mille et une nuits* 127–129, 249, 250
 parallélisme aux *Mille et une nuits* 129
Logiques métisses (Amselle) 70
- Louis v, of France 78
- Louis XIV, of France 78
- love
 and benches 124–126
 as theme in *ġazal* 165
- Lucas, Paul 97
- Lundell, Michael James 142–160
- MacDonald, Duncan B. 60, 96, 102, 103
- Macnaghten edition 58, 151
- 'Madness and Cure in the 1001 Nights' (Clinton) 284
- maghrébin 48–54, 53, 54
- Maḥāsīn al-Šudaf* ('The Merits of Coincidence') (Wāšif) 183, 185
- Mahdi, Muhsin 7, 48–54, 58–59, 84, 151
- Mahfouz, Naguib 288, 318n68, 320n77
- Maillet, Benoit de 17
- Maingueneau, Dominique 240
- Al-Maktaba al-Waṭaniyya (Bibliothèque Nationale, Rabat), manuscrits de *Mille et une nuits* 41–42, 46
- Maktabat Kulliyat al-Ādāb (Bibliothèque de la Faculté des Lettres, Rabat), manuscrits de *Mille et une nuits* 43, 46
- Makuszyński, Kornel 218
- mal 134–135, 136
- 'The Malice of Women' cycle 147
- Malti-Douglas, Fedwa 285
- Mamluk version
 dating of 25–26
 epilogue of frame story in 27
 liberation theme 26, 34
 prologue of frame story in 25–26, 34
- Manchester Turkish 75 35
- Mangogoul 78
- Mannoni, Laurent 243
- manuscripts of *Nuits/Nights*
 arabes pour compilation 3, 4–7, 10–14
 al-Azhar sād 9483 & 'ayn 133413 adab (Cairo) 28

- BNF Arabe 3619 (Paris) 28
 Kayseri Manuscript. *See* Kayseri Manuscript
 Mamluk version. *See* Mamluk version
 Manchester Turkish 75 35
 au Maroc 39–55
 SB We. 662 (Berlin) 28
Manuscrit trouvé à Saragosse (The
 Manuscript Found in Saragossa)
 (Potocki) 217–218
 Mardrus, Joseph Charles
 life of 304
 work of
Les Mille et une nuits. *See* *Les Mille et une
 nuits* (Mardrus)
 margins 272–273
 Marie-Adélaïde of Savoy 105, 110
*al-Markaz al-Qawmī li-l-Masrah wa-l-Mūsīqā
 wa-l-Funūn al-Ša'bīya* (National
 Centre for Theatre, Music, and
 Popular Arts) 176, 180
 marketplaces 307
 Maroc
 aperçu des manuscrits de *Mille et une nuits*
 39–40, 54–55
 comparaison entre trois éditions de *Mille et
 une nuits* 48, 49–53, 53, 55
 concordance entre trois textes 53–54
Ḥātam (sceau/cachet) 47–53, 47, 48, 52
 histoires de *Mille et une nuits* dans les
 extraits 44
 inventaire et référencement des manuscrits
 de *Mille et une nuits* dans les
 bibliothèques 40–45, 46, 54
 marques de possession (ex-libris) 45–47,
 47, 48
 réception de *Mille et une nuits* par les
 Marocains 40
 sources manuscrites de *Mille et une
 nuits* 39–40
 textes et extraits de *Mille et une nuits* 40,
 44, 46
 marques de possession (ex-libris) de *Mille et
 une nuits* 45–47, 47, 48
 Ma'rūf 207–208
 Marx, Karl 290, 297, 305–306, 307
 Marzolph, Ulrich 3–18, 184, 245, 299
masrah al-turāt (heritage theatre) 199
 'Masrūr and Zayn al-Mawāšif' 24
 master/servant couplings 210
 al-Mas'ūdī 23
 Matalon, Ronit 272, 277, 278
Matka Makryna (Mother Makryna) (Dehnel)
 221
 Maxwell, Richard 70, 76
 Mayer, Charles-Joseph 74, 77*t*
me-mizrah shemesh (Kahanoff) 270, 272,
 273–278
Menagiana (ed. Galland) 97
 'The Merchant Ayyūb and his Son Ġānim and
 his Daughter Fitna' 191
 merchants 302, 314
Mercure de France (magazine) 74, 76*t*
mérisage 69–70
 'Les merveilles de l'Inde' ('*Aġā'ib al-Hind*) 15
Messageries Maritimes 304
 Mestyan, Adam 175–195
 'Metamorphoses of Scheherazade in
 literature and film' (Ouyang) 282
 metatextuality 156
 Mickiewicz, Adam 218
 Middle Arabic 206
La mille et deuxième nuit (Gautier) 129
Mille et un contes, récits et légendes arabes
 (Basset) 7
Les Mille et un jours, contes persans (Pétis de
 la Croix) 71, 72, 100–101, 103, 249
Mille et un quart d'heures, contes tartares
 (Gueulette) 72, 73
Mille et une fadaïses (Cazotte) 72, 74*t*
Les Mille et une nuits
 classification des contes 18
 discontinuité et fragmentation des récits
 139
 fragment d'Inde. *See* fragment de *Mille et
 une nuits* acheté en Inde
 Garland's translation of. *See* *Les Mille et une
 nuits* (Galland)
 influence de. *See* influence of *Nuits/Nights*
 manuscrits arabes pour compilation 3,
 4–7, 10–14
 manuscrits au Maroc 39–55
 mécanisme poétique 139–140
 noyau fondateur du texte 3–4, 7
 récit-cadre 57, 133
 réécriture filmique 240–241, 244
 sources et versions différentes 3–4
 table des matières 57
See also *The Thousand and One Nights*

- Les Mille et une nuits* (Galland)
 in general 3, 17
 approbation of 94, 96, 110–111
 delays in printing of 110
 Diyāb's contribution to 97, 108, 109, 112,
 303n31
 frame story in
 prologue of 35
 reintroduction of 108–109
 removal of 106–108
 and Galland's authorship 83, 97, 98,
 108–109, 111, 112, 151
 influence of
 in general 69, 70–71
 on fairy tales 85–86, 94
 on French oriental tales 71–80, 72, 74*t*,
 75*t*, 77*t*
 Lesage's contribution to 100, 104
 Pétis de la Croix's contributions to 99–100,
 104, 105
privileges for 83, 94–95, 96, 98–99, 103, 109,
 112
 publication history of 95–98, 106–111
 reissues of 112
 reviews of 84–85, 95
 sequels to 100
 sources for 151, 301
 stories in 179
 Tome VIII 99–111
 and publisher-as-editor 105–106
 publisher's role in production of 101–103
 stories in 99
 mention of 296
*Les Mille et une nuits : Histoire du texte et
 Classification des contes* (Chraïbi) 18
Les Mille et une nuits (Mardrus)
 enhancements to 281–282, 285, 304
 Shahriyar in 280
 sources for 300n18, 304n34
 mention of 272, 297
 Miquel-Ravenel, Janine 99
 mirroring
 in epilogue of frame story 28–29, 31, 33
 in prologue of frame story 34
 mirrors for princes 282
 Mirzoza 78
 mise en abyme 28–29, 31
 The Miser (*al-Baḥīl*) (Naqqāš) 178, 181
Mongrels or Marvels (Kahanoff) 270n1
 Montesquieu, Charles-Louis de Secondat,
 Baron de La Brède et de 73, 74*t*, 75,
 77–78, 79
 morale et moralité 128–129, 128n3
 Moroccan language 48–54, 53, 54
 Morocco. *See* Maroc
La Mort du sultan Osman (Galland) 90
 Mother Goose tales 87
 Mother Makryna (*Matka Makryna*) (Dehnel)
 221
 motifs, of *dramatis personae* 23–24
 Mubārak, Zakī 173
 Muḥammad, Ḥāḡḡ 185–186
 al-Muḥtār al-Sūsī, Muḥammad 39
 al-Muʿīn (vizier of Ibn Sulaymān) 190
 Muʿīn Ibn Sāwī 168–170
 Murphy, Steve 139
al-Murūʾa wa-l-Wafāʾ maʿ al-Ḥalīyayn
al-Wafīyayn ('Chivalry and Loyalty
 between Two Trustworthy Free Men')
 (Wāṣif) 183
Murūḡ al-dahab (al-Masʿūdī) 23
 music 171
 musical plays
 from stories of *Nights*
 in general 175
 and Ottoman ideas 177
 political themes in 176, 188
See also under specific plays
The Mysteries of Paris (Sue) 281, 289–293
 Naddaff, Sandra 154, 282
 Naḡm, Muḥammad Yūsuf 184, 188, 189, 190,
 192
al-Nāʾim wa-l-Yaqzān 179
 Naithani, Sadhana 284, 292–293
 names, of *dramatis personae* 26
 Nance, Susan 256–257, 258, 264
 Napels, Revolt of (1947) 221–222
Naqd al-šīʿ (Qudāma Ibn Ġaʿfar) 165
 al-Naqqāš, Mārūn
 Beirut city council on 182
 and choice of stories 179
 works of
 'Abū al-Ḥasan the Fool or Hārūn
 al-Rašīd.' *see* 'Abū al-Ḥasan the Fool or
 Hārūn al-Rašīd'
 The Miser 178, 181

- Naqqāš, Salīm 178, 180
 narrative mode, in Faraġ's plays 203–204, 205–206, 210, 211
 al-Nasser, Gamal Abd 202–203, 210
 National Centre for Theatre, Music, and Popular Arts (*al-Markaz al-Qawmī li-l-Masrah wa-l-Mūsiqā wa-l-Funūn al-Ša'biya*) 176, 180
 nation-building 261, 265–266
nawādir 186–187
 New England print culture 259, 265–266
New York Times (newspaper) 258
 'La Noblesse du Barmécide Ġa'far contre le marchand de fèves' (Ishāqī) 6
Noc tysiączna druga (The Thousandth and Second Night) (Norwid) 222–223
Nocturnal Poetics (Ghazoul) 282–283
 Nodot, François 87
 Norwid, Cyprian Kamil 222–223, 224
Nourritures terrestres (Gide) 230
 Nouveau, Germain 130–131
Nouveaux contes orientaux (Caylus) 73, 74f
Nouvelle Revue Française (magazine) 227, 228
 novels, serialized 127–128
 noyau fondateur 3–4, 7
 Nūr al-Dīn (seller) 211–212
 Nūr al-Dīn 'Alī Ibn Bakkār 166–168
 Nūr al-Dīn 'Alī Ibn Ḥaqān 168–171
 Nurse, Paul 142, 144, 151
- O, Marquise d' 105, 110
 Ocelot, Michel
 conteur 242–243
 héritage de *Mille et une nuits* 240, 242, 244–250
 réécriture filmique de *Mille et une nuits* 240–241, 244
 technique et silhouettes animées 241–242, 243–244, 250
- ombres, et théâtre 243–244
 'One Thousand and One Nights in the work of Polish writers' (Rudnicka) 217–218
 One Thousand and One Nights with Scheherazade (*Tysiąc i jedna noc z Szeherezadą*) (Kalinowski & Stiller) 221
- 'L'Or filé dans le conseil des rois' (*al-Tibr al-masbūk fi naṣīhat al-mulūk*) (Ġazzālī) 4
 orality 237
 Orient, et dualité de Rimbaud 130
The Oriental Collections (Ouseley) 57
 oriental romances. See French oriental tales
 Orientalia 260–261
 Orientalism
 in Europe 216
 in France 160
 in Poland 217, 218
 in USA 256–257, 258, 259, 260–261, 262, 264–265
Orientalism, Empire and National Culture: India 1770–1880 (Dodson) 153
 origin stories 273
 'Origins of Genre' 173
 Ostrowski, Eryk 224
 Ott, Claudia 221
 Ouseley, William 57, 60
 Ouyang, Wen-Chin 282
 ownership 133–134
 Özveren, Eyüp 296–321
- Paino, Marina 227–239
 palimpsests 152
Palimpsests: Literature in the Second Degree (Genette) 152, 155–156
Panchatantra fables 293
 parallélisme 129
 paratexts 157
 Pasolini, Pier Paolo
 works of
The Canterbury Tales 235
Decameron 235
 frame stories in 233–235
 homosexuality in 234
 salvation in 235
 theme of body in 238–239
A Thousand and One Nights 232–235
 'Passover in Egypt' (Kahanoff) 278–279
 Payne, John
 on Burton 151
 on Lane-Poole 149–150
 and work of Ishāqī 5
 works of

- Payne, John (cont.)
The Book of the Thousand Nights and One Night. See *The Book of the Thousand Nights and One Night*
The Quatrains of Omar Kheyyam 151
- Penzer, Norman Mosley 142
- performance history
of 'Abū al-Ḥasan the Fool or Hārūn al-Rašīd' (al-Naqqāš) 180–181
of 'The Fisherman Ḥalifa with Qūt al-Qulūb and Hārūn al-Rašīd' (Wāšif) 184–185
of 'The Story of Hārūn al-Rašīd with the Nobleman Ġānim Ibn Ayyūb and Qūt al-Qulūb' (al-Qabbānī) 193
- Perrault, Charles 74, 87, 93, 301
- Perrin, Jean-François 250
- personification (*tašhīṣ*) 194
- Pétis de la Croix, François
and Galland 110
stories of, in Galland's *Nuits* 99–100, 104, 105
works of
Contes turcs 71
Histoire de la sultane de Perse et des visirs 100
Histoire du grand Genghizcan 100n83
Les Mille et un jours 71, 72, 100–101, 103, 249
Sindabad le marin 86, 103n97
- petitions 176
- Petrelli, Fortunat 222
- Pharaoh's rod 276
- Pinault, David 30
- pirate copies, of Galland's *Nuits* 96
- 'Le plus fin de chacun des plus beaux arts' (al-*Mustaṭraf fi kull fann mustaṭraf*) (al-Ibšīhī) 8
- Poe, Edgar Allen 232
- poetry
influence of *Nights* on 219–220
as preferred mode of narration 170–171
al-Qabbānī's use of 191
in *1001 Nights* 143–146
See also desert (*badawī*) poetry; *ġazal* poetry; urban (*'udrī*) poetry
- Poland
Orientalism in 217, 218
See also Polish literature and art
- Polish literature and art
influence of *Nights* on
in general 217–218, 225
on drama 222–223
on poetry 219–221
on prose 221–222
influence of Turkish culture on 222n16
political themes in 223
political themes
in Faraġ's plays 202–203, 205–206, 210, 212, 213
in 'The Fisherman Ḥalifa with Qūt al-Qulūb and Hārūn al-Rašīd' (Wāšif) 176, 188
in musical plays 176, 188
in Polish plays 223
Political Theology (Teologia Politycna) (journal) 69
'Political Thought in the *1001 Nights*' (Irwin) 282, 283
political/therapeutic readings 282–285
Polo, Marco 300
Pont du petit cordonnier (Ocelot) 247, 248
pornographie. See sexualité
'The Porter and What Strange Things Happened to Him and What Occurred to Hārūn al-Rašīd when He Met Him' ('Abd al-Fattāh) 187
possession, dans 'Conte' de Rimbaud 133–134
postdating, of publications 96
Potenza, Daniela 198–214
Potocki, Jan 217–218
power, and knowledge 78–79
Pratt, Mary Louise 70
prayer 288n29
Prince des joyaux (Ocelot) 245–246
prince-in-disguise theme 290
'la Princesse de Deryabar' 99
printing licences. See *privilèges*
prison/prisoners 289–293
'Privilège du Roy' (royal printing licences). See *privilèges*
privilèges (printing licences)
in general 103–104, 112
for Galland's *Nuits* 83, 94–95, 96, 98–99, 103, 109, 112
for Nodot's *Histoire de Mélusine* 87
for Pétis de la Croix's *Jours* 103, 112

- production 308
 profane (*al-ibāḥī*) 163, 174
 'La promenade des lettrés' (*Nuzhat al-udabā'*) 10
 prose, retelling in 170, 172
Proses en marge de l'Evangile (Rimbaud) 130
Przygody Sindbada Żeglarza (Adventures of Sindbad the Sailor; Leśmian) 218
 psychoanalysis 284
 publication history
 of Galland's *Nuits* 95–98, 106–111
 of *Nights* in US 266–268t
 publisher-as-editor 89, 105–106
Putnam's Monthly (magazine) 262
- al-Qabbānī, Abū Ḥalīl
 in general 189
 theatre troupe of 184, 193
 use of poetry by 191–192
 works of
 'The Story of Hārūn al-Rašīd with the Nobleman Ġānim Ibn Ayyūb and Qūt al-Qulūb.' *see* 'The Story of Hārūn al-Rašīd with the Nobleman Ġānim Ibn Ayyūb and Qūt al-Qulūb'
 'The Story of Hārūn al-Rašīd with Uns al-Ġalīs.' *see* 'The Story of Hārūn al-Rašīd with Uns al-Ġalīs'
- al-Qalyūbī 186–187
 Qardāḥī, Sulaymān (Cardahi, Soliman) 185
qaṣaṣ ġazīr (storytelling) 171–172, 173
qaṣīda 163
The Quatrains of Omar Kheyyam (Payne) 151
 Qudāma Ibn Ġa'far 165
 Quffa 208–209, 211
 Qūt al-Qulūb 183, 190
- Racconti di Canterbury* (*The Canterbury Tales*) (Pasolini) 235
Rasā'il Qāḍī Iṣbīlyya (The Letters of the Judge of Seville) (Faraġ)
 in general 198
 foreword to 212
 frame story in 211
 sources for 212–213
 al-Rašīd, Hārūn 10, 14
 Razzaque, Arafat Abdur 82–113
 récit-cadre de *Mille et une nuits* 57, 133
 réécriture, et films d'Ocelot 240–241, 244
 Reed, Gervais 87, 89, 91, 102
 'Le règne du prince trop-bon dans le royaume des fols, conte oriental ou plutôt histoire occidentale' 74, 75t
La reine cruelle et le montreur de fabulo (Ocelot) 248, 249
 Reiniger, Lotte 242
 reissues, of Galland's *Nuits* 96
 religion, et Orient 130
 repetitions 210, 317n65, 318–319
 representation (*tamṭil*) 194
 reproductions, of Galland's *Nuits* 96
 'Le Rêve du trésor' 247–248
 'Le Rêve du trésor sur le pont' (essai de Basset) 6, 11
 'Le Rêve du trésor sur le pont' (Iṣḥāqī)
 comparaison entre *Mille et une nuits* et *Kitāb Laṭā'if aḥbār al-uwal* 13–14
 dans *Mille et une nuits* 5–6, 11–12, 13, 14–15
 'Le Rêve du trésor sur le pont' (al-Tanūḥī) 14–15
 rêveur de Bagdad (ou deux rêveurs) (histoire) 123, 124
 revival (*nahda*), of Arabic heritage 192, 198, 210–211, 213
Revue des traditions populaires 6
 rewriting, and films of Ocelot 240–241, 244
 Reynolds, Dwight 151
 Ricœur, Jean II 102
 Rimbaud, Arthur
 et Gautier 129
 et génies 131–132, 135–137, 140
 influence de *Mille et une nuits* 129, 130–138, 140
 et mécanisme poétique de *Mille et une nuits* 139–140
 rapport avec *Mille et une nuits* et l'Orient 129–131
 Ritter, Hellmut 22, 27
Robinson Crusoe (Defoe) 228
 roman feuilleton 127–128
Romeo and Juliet (Shakespeare) 202
 Rosetti, Carlo 57
 Royal Geographical Society of England 149
 Rudnicka, Jadwiga 217–218, 222
 The Runt (Gringalet) 290, 292
 Rushdie, Salman 282
 Ryszard 223

- sacred (*al-'udrī*) 163, 174
 Sa'd, Muḥammad Efendi 187
 'Šād Baḥt' cycle 27–29, 34
 Šafiqa 201, 203
 Šāhzamān 32, 35
 Said, Edward 305
 Saidy, Ahmed 39–55
 Saint-George, Guillet de 91
Saison en enfer (Rimbaud) 130, 136, 137
Salaria (magazine) 227, 228
 salvation 235
 Šams al-Nahār 166–168, 170
 Saroyan, William 231–232
 al-Šāṭir Muḥammad 185–186
 Šawāb 208, 211
 'Sayf al-Mulūk' 28
 SB We. 662 (Berlin) 28
 scatologie, dans les récits arabes 10, 12
 sceau. *See* *Ḥātām*
 Schahriar
 dans 'Conte' de Rimbaud 133–136, 140
 et femmes dans le récit-cadre 128, 133,
 134, 135
 moralité 128, 129
 See also Shahriyar/Shahryar
 Schéhérazade 128, 129, 135, 136, 140
 See also Scheherazade
 Scheherazade
 as archetype 274
 capabilities of 31–32, 35–36
 as entrepreneur 298, 321
 and Ḥammām scene 32–33
 Kahanoff on 274, 275–277
 motherhood of 27, 35
 in Polish literature 218–221
 in Polish poetry 219–220
 and role of Dinarzād 23–24, 25, 26
 as storyteller 313–314, 317–321
 See Schéhérazade
 'Scheherazade' (*Szheherzada*)
 (Dzienis) 219–220
 'Scheherazade' (*Szheherzada*) (Zychla) 220
 Scherezade à la polonaise, or disco-polo live!
 (*Szheherzada po polsku czyli disco-polo*
 live!) (Jaworski) 223
 Schumpeter, Joseph A. 297–298, 306–307,
 313, 319, 321
 Schwab, Raymond 83, 102
 Scott, Jonathan 57, 58, 265
Se una notte d'inverno un viaggiatore (If On a
 Winter's Night a Traveller)
 (Calvino) 236–238
 seal. *See* *Ḥātām*
 'Les Sept vizirs' (*Story of the King, his Son,*
 Concubine, and Seven Viziers) 57
 sequels, to Galland's *Nuits* 100
 serialized novels 127–128
 Sermain, Jean-Paul 106, 282
 servants 23–24
 Sesame Tales (*Klechdy sezamowe*)
 (Leśmian) 218
 'The Seventh Voyage of Es-Sindbad of the
 Sea' (Lane) 146–147
 sexual relationships, between women 30
 sexualité
 dans les récits arabes 10, 15–16
 et moralité 128n3
 sexuality 79
 See also sexualité
 shadow theatre 243–244
 Shahriyar/Shahryar
 Kahanoff on 273–274, 275–277
 and pedagogical framework 280–281, 284
 in Polish poetry 219–220
 response to hermit/animal stories 287,
 288
 See also Schahriar
 Shakespeare, William 202, 222, 263
 Shultz, Warren 25–26
 Sicily 229
 Šihāb, Muḥammad Ḥusayn 177, 189, 191,
 192–193
 Silhouette, Étienne de 243
 silhouettes animées 241–242, 243–244, 250
 Sinbad. *See* 'Sindbad the Sailor'
Sindabad le marin (Pétis de la Croix) 103n97
 Sindbad le marin et le porteur (histoire) 123
 'Sindbad the Sailor'
 Galland's insertion of 107
 Galland's translations of 86–87
 publication of 259, 266–268t
 mention of 28, 303n31
Sirat 'Umar al-Nu'mān cycle 99
 Sironval, Margaret 108
 sisters 24–25, 26
 Slasher (Chourineur) 291, 292
Slave of Desire (Beaumont) 284
 'The Sleeper and the Waker' 222

- Słonimski, Antoni 218
- Smith, Adam 297, 307
- Smyrne ancienne et moderne* (Galland) 90
- Le Sofa* (Crébillon) 72, 73, 74*t*
- Solfatarata* (Hen) 221–222
- Somekh, Sasson 270*n*1
- Spitta, Wilhelm 185–186
- Spon, Jacob 89
- Stalin, Joseph 297
- Staples, Amy Joan 78
- Starr, Deborah A. 270*n*1
- Stead, Évanghélia 111, 247, 248
- Stearns, Peter N. 259
- ‘The Story of Abu Kir the Dyer and Abu Sir the Barber’ 297, 309–312
- ‘The Story of Hārūn al-Rašid with the Nobleman Ġānim Ibn Ayyūb and Qūt al-Qulūb’ (al-Qabbānī)
- in general 175, 190
- performance history of 193
- poetry in 191–192
- political themes in 193–194
- source of 191, 192
- ‘The Story of Hārūn al-Rašid with Uns al-Ġālis’ (al-Qabbānī)
- in general 175, 189–190
- political themes in 192–193
- source of 190–191
- ‘The Story of Ḥasan of Basra’ 297, 308–309
- ‘The Story of Nūr al-Dīn ‘Alī ibn Bakkār and the Slave-Girl Šams al-Nahār’
- in general 164, 172–173
- difference between ‘The Story of the Slave-Girl’ and 170–171
- and *ġazal* poetry 173–174
- summary of 166–168
- ‘The Story of the Slave-Girl Anīs al-Ġālis and Nūr al-Dīn ‘Alī ibn Ḥāqān’
- in general 164, 172–173
- difference between ‘The Story of Nūr al-Dīn’ and 170–171
- and *ġazal* poetry 171, 173–174
- good vs. evil theme in 170
- summary of 168–170
- ‘Story of the Waterfowl and the Tortoise’ 288
- storytellers 313–314
- storytelling (*qaṣaṣ ġazīr*)
- economics of 313–321
- and *ġazal* poetry 171–172, 173
- and orality 237
- techniques used in 318–321
- Stranger Magic* (Warner) 284
- Sue, Eugène 281, 289–293
- Sukkar, Muḥammad 185
- Supplemental Nights* (Burton) 142, 143, 149
- Szeherazada* (‘Scheherazade’)
- (Dzienis) 219–220
- Szeherazada* (‘Scheherazade’) (Zychla) 220
- Szeherazada po polsku czyli disco-polo live!* (Scherezade à la polonaise, or disco-polo live!) (Jaworski) 223
- table des matières 57
- table of contents 57
- ‘Tale of Kamar al-Zaman’ 145–146, 146
- ‘The Tale of Ma’rūf the Cobbler’ 207–208, 209
- ‘Tale of the Barber of Baghdad’ 200–201
- ‘The Tale of the Birds and Beasts and the Carpenter’ 286
- ‘The Tale of the Husband and the Parrot’ 147
- ‘The Tale of the Imaginary Table’ 206–207
- ‘Tale of the Sack’ 207
- ‘The Tale of the Two Viziers In Which Uns al-Ġālis Is Mentioned’ 190
- ‘The Tale of the Wazīr and the Sage Duban’ cycle 147
- Tales, Anecdotes and Letters* (Scott) 57
- Tamarāt al-awraq* (‘Les fruits des parchemins’) (al-Ḥamawī) 6
- tamṭīl* (representation) 194
- al-Tanūḥī, al-Muḥassin 6, 14–15
- tašḥīṣ* (personification) 194
- ‘The Teacher and the Taught: Structures and Meaning in the *Arabian Nights* and the Panchatantra’ (Naithani) 284, 292–293
- Teologia Politycna (Political Theology)* (journal) 69
- Tevfik Pasha, khedive of Egypt 185, 188, 193
- theatre. *See* Arabic theatre; shadow theatre
- théâtre d’ombre 243–244
- theatre troupes 184–185, 193
- theatrical adaptations 198–199
- See also* Arabic theatre; *under specific names of plays*

- The Theory of Economic Development*
(Schumpeter) 297, 306
- Thierry, Denis 89, 93n48
- Thomann, Johannes 22–36
- The Thousand and One Nights*
et déguisement 245
dramatis personae in. *See dramatis personae*
economist reading of 302–303, 309–312
fables in 286
feminist readings of 284–285
film adaptations of 247
See also under specific names of films
fragments of. *See* fragment of ‘A Book with
a tale of thousand nights’
frame story of. *See under* frame stories
geography of 300–301
influence of
in general 70, 296–297, 300
in France. *See* French oriental tales;
littérature française
in Italy. *See* Italian literature and art
in Poland. *See* Polish literature and art
in United States. *See* American print
culture; United States
influences on, Greek 265
Kahanoff’s essay on 271, 272, 273–277
manuscripts of. *See* manuscripts of *Nuits/*
Nights
oral traditions of 299–300
political/therapeutic readings of 282–285
publication history of, in US 266–268t
repetition in 317n65, 318–319
storytelling techniques used in 318–321
superiority of 301
theatrical adaptations of 198–199
See also under specific names of plays
translations of
in English. *See under specific works*
in French. *See under specific works*
in Polish 216–217, 221
in Turkish 35, 300–301
See also under specific translations
- A Thousand and One Nights (Il fiore delle Mille
e una notte)* (Pasolini) 232–235
- 1001 *Nights* (Burton)
contemporary views on 152
negative reactions to 159
poetry in 143–146
printed in USA 260n19
quote from *Decameron* in 289
relationship with Lane’s *Nights*
in general 142, 144, 159–160
Burton on 149
of poetry in 144–146
of stories in 146–148
relationship with Payne’s *Night*
in general 142–144
Burton on 149
of poetry in 145, 146
of stories in 147
sources for 160
studying of
in general 152–155
transtextuality in 156–158
use of fables in 285–287
‘Thousand Stories’ (*Alf ħurāfa*) 23
‘the thousandth and second night’ 224
The Thousandth and Second Night (*Noc
tysiącza druga*; Norwid) 222–223
- Todorov, Tzvetan 173
- Torrens, Henry 150
- La Tour ténébreuse* (Lhéritier) 93, 94
- trade 259–260
trade secrets 308
- The Translation Studies Reader* 151
- transtextuality
categories of 155–156
definition of 155
and *Edinburgh Review* article 159
and 1001 *Nights* 156–158
- Les trois inventeurs* (Ocelot) 241
- ‘Le troisième vieillard’ 62–65
- Trumpener, Katie 70, 76
- Tughil Beg 33
- Tugi, Hüseyin 90
- Turgenev, Ivan 274
- Tuwim, Julian 218, 224
- Tysiąc i jedna noc z Scheherazadę* (One
Thousand and One Nights with
Scheherazade) (Kalinowski & Stiller)
221
- al-‘udrī* (sacred) 163, 174
‘*udrī* (urban) poetry 164–166
‘Umar Ibn Abī Rabī‘a 165
‘*Umar al-Nu‘mān* 108
- Das Unbehagen in der Kultur (Civilization and
Its Discontents)* (Freud) 273

- United States
 advertising in 261
 colour printing 261
 consumerism in 259–260, 261–263, 265
Nights in
 in general 256–258
 and nation-building 261, 265–266
 publication history of 266–268t
 See also American print culture
 Orientalism in 256–257, 258, 259,
 260–261, 262, 264–265
- Université Yale 60–61
- Uns al-Ġalis 189–190
- Uomini e no* (Vittorini) 231
- urban ('*uḍrī*) poetry 164–166
- Urqūb 178–179
- Urquhart, David 180, 181–182
- Usbek 73, 77–78
- 'Vagabonds' (Rimbaud) 137–138
- Vaubreuil, M. de 104
- Vax, Louisa 218
- Velay-Vallantin, Catherina 112
- veuves
 in general 112
 veuve Barbin. *See* Cochart, Marie
 veuve Jombert 100n83, 102n93, 103n97
 veuve Ricœur. *See* Gontier, Anne
- Victorian era 153, 159
- vide 139
- 'Un vieil homme redevient jeune' (*Ruḡū'*
al-šayḥ ilā šabāh) 16
- Villedieu, Madame de 89
- violence 287–288
- Vitali, Ilaria 240–250
- Vittorini, Elio
 as reader of *Nights* 228
 works of
 Conversazione in Sicilia 229–230, 238
 Il garofano rosso 230–231, 238
 real vs. fabulous in 231–232
 theme of body in 238
 Uomini e no 231–232
- void 139
- Voltaire, François-Marie 76, 78
- Walther, Wiebke 176, 179
- Warner, Marina 284
- Wāṣif, Maḥmūd
 in general 183
 works of
 '*Aḡā'ib al-Aqdār*' 183
 '*Ḥalifa al-Šayyād ma' Qūt al-Qulūb*
 wa-Hārūn al-Rašid'. *See* 'The
 Fisherman Ḥalifa with Qūt al-Qulūb
 and Hārūn al-Rašid'
 '*Maḥāsin al-Sudaḡ*' 183, 185
 '*al-Murū'a wa-l-Wafā' ma' al-Ḥalīyayn*
 al-Wafīyayn' 183
 '*Wątki arabskie w literaturze polskiej XX wieku*
 (*Arabic Themes in Twentieth Century*
 Polish Literature)' 217
- Weber, Carl 179
- widows. *See* veuves
- women
 in Arab societies 275, 277–278
 et exécutions de Schahriar 128, 133, 134,
 135
 influence on culture of 171
 in Kahanoff's non-fiction 274–275
 in 'Šād Baḥt' cycle 29–31
 sexual relationships between 30
 as theme in *ḡazal* 165
 See also veuves
- Wright, Thomas 149, 150–151
- Wyznanie Kalifa, czyli o mocy baśni* ('Caliph's
 Confession, or the Power of a Tale')
 (Kaczmarecki) 219
- Yale University 60–61
- 'Yasamin la Favorite du sultan et les syndic
 des tailleurs' 298
- Yāsmīna 201–202
- Yémen 60
- Yūsuf 201–202, 203–204
- Zadig* (Voltaire) 76, 78
- Žaneta 223
- Zayn al-Aṣnām. *See* 'Histoire du Prince Zeyn
 Alasnam'
- Zboray, Ronald J. 262
- Zinat al-Nisā' 202
- Zionism 277, 278
- Zobeida 230
- Zotenberg, Hermann 17, 58, 101
- Zubayda 183
- Zychla, Andrzej 220