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Becoming Pearls: Patterns of Social Reading in Arabian Nights' Entertainments

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BECOMING PEARLS: PATTERNS OF SOCIAL READING IN *ARABIAN NIGHTS'*

ENTERTAINMENTS

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ENTERTAINMENTS

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts in English

By

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ABSTRACT

As soon as the first English texts began to appear, *Arabian Nights' Entertainments*, as translated by Antoine Galland, captivated the imaginations of most of eighteenth century England, bringing the work instantly into demand. Although the *Arabian Nights' Entertainments* is generally recognized among scholars for its influence on other fictional tales and travel narratives and its shaping of the West's perception of the East, further study is needed in ascertaining the effect of the rhetorical device of repetition, which is so prevalent within the tales and which gives the collection both its unique character and its ability to engage readers from the time of its original publication onward.

Bearing in mind that translation practices of the eighteenth century allowed creative additions by the translator, this study hopes to approach the *Arabian Nights' Entertainment* as a collection of fables. Within this framework, I will begin with a close reading of "The Story of the Two Sisters who envied their Younger Sister," which Galland acquired from the storyteller Hanna Diab, to demonstrate that repetition is the defining feature of the tales. Pulling on Judith Butler's concept of performativity, I will then explore what skill Khosrouschah, like Schahriar and the eighteenth century audience, is supposed to be learning through the fables. Examining the purpose of repetition and its effect on both the characters and the audience, I will argue that the repetition within the tales provides the best strategy for unlocking the fables.

This thesis is approved for recommendation
to the Graduate Council.

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DEDICATION

      I wish to dedicate this thesis to my mother, Betty Gould, whose conversations with me developed my love of literature; to my father, Allen Gould, whose red pen taught me how to write; and to my Lord, who gave me the ability and strength to complete this process.

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I. The *Arabian Nights' Entertainments* in Context: An Introduction

Flying carpets, starry nights, perfume, treasure, and genies. A mention of the *Arabian Nights' Entertainments* conjures up such images of Orientalism past that still flavor the West's perception of the East today.[1] Over three hundred years have passed since the *Nights'* introduction to the West, yet since its dawning brought on by the translation of Jean Antoine Galland, it has become arguably one of the most influential literary works within the English cannon, igniting the imagination of adults and children, spawning countless imitations, and encouraging the beginnings of what the later eighteenth and nineteenth centuries would solidify as Orientalism (Mack ix). The work was thoroughly known during these eras, and indeed, its stories, characters, and descriptions would continue to appear in imitations throughout the rest of the eighteenth century and into modern times (Nussbaum and Makdisi 15, Makdisi 65).

Despite its immense popularity and influence on the West, relatively little is known about the history of the *Nights'* text, and consequently, much of the modern scholarship has revolved around discovering the original sources for individual tales and pursuing a pure and original version of the collection, led through the efforts of scholars such as Muhsin Mahdi. The earliest documentation of the *Nights'* resides in a fragment of a ninth-century Arabic text; however, this fragment does not suggest a fixed *Nights'* text as other fuller manuscripts – the Calcutta I, the Breslau, the Bulaq, the Calcutta II, and most recently the Syrian manuscript – all provide different renderings of the *Nights'* (Naddaff 4). The *Nights'*, therefore, is a work marked by its translations, editions, adaptations as well as its consistency in remaining inconstant.[2] One constant structural presence in the collection is the framing tale of Scheherazade, which is believed to come from *Hazar Afsanah,* a lost manuscript of Persian tales; within that frame, stories have been woven and re-woven together in differing patterns, welcoming tales from other

periods, such as some Arab and Indian tales from the Ottoman period along with additions by translators like Galland, while simultaneously allowing some to fade into inexistence (Drabble 35, Irwin, "The Thousand and One Nights" 150). Hence as Daniel Heller-Roazen notes, the *Nights'* are "edited without ever being authored," lacking an original creator and definitive moment of creation so that "the work remains obstinately unsigned," accumulating further stories in "a process closer to sedimentation than creation" (viii). As such, this conglomeration of stories within the *Nights'* contains a wealth of literary genres, ranging from wisdom literature and fables to heroic epics and stories of the lower classes (Irwin, *Companion* 2).

Although evidence suggests a few of the *Nights'* tales crossed the channel to England long before the Restoration period,[3] Galland brought the collection and consequently, the East into the spotlight of the Western cultural stage at the turn of the century. Jorge Borges describes Galland as, "a French Arabist who came back from Istanbul with a diligent collection of coins, a monograph on the spread of coffee, a copy of the *Nights'* in Arabic, and a supplementary Maronite whose memory was no less inspired than Scheherazade's" (409). This poetic description of Galland describes him well, for Galland was an erudite Arabist scholar whose several years spent traveling and living in the East gave him considerable experience and knowledge about the region (Mack xiv). In his younger years as a student at the College Royal, Galland had studied various Oriental languages - Hebrew, Arabic, Turkish, and Persian – as well as Greek and Latin (Nussbaum and Makkisi 29-30, Irwin, *Companion* 14). These language skills earned Galland an appointment as Ambassador M. De Nointel's secretary and translator in 1670; in this role, Galland was entrusted with translating important documents exchanged between the ambassador and the Ottoman Vizier, Küprülu Mehmet Pasha during a strained time between France and the Ottoman empire, thereby requiring precision and care by Galland as he moved

between the languages to produce legal documents (Nussbaum and Makkisi 29-30). During these travels, Galland kept a journal of experiences that, in contrast to the lively travel narratives during the period that were carefully crafted, was rather empty of exotic details; nevertheless, he does provide details about "his amazement at the profusion and length of the various tales that he has just begun to discover…" (Nussbaum and Makkisi 30-31).

Galland was fascinated by the fiction of the East. In Galland's perspective, the literature of the Islamic tradition was beautiful and rich, "a graceful mingling of delight and edification"(Irwin, *Companion* 15, 19). As a result, upon returning from France, Galland became heavily involved in the translation of such texts. During his travels, Galland acquired a copy of what would become the stories of Sinbad in the *Nights'*, which he published originally in 1701 (Irwin, *Companion* 15). In addition to these more literary pursuits, Galland also completed and published Barthélemy d'Herbelot's *Bibliothéque orientale*, an encyclopedia that recorded and described Oriental customs, yet this work did not enjoy the popularity with which the *Nights'* would be endowed, having never even been published into English (Makdisi 63, Mack xiv). Consequently, where knowledge of the East had failed to interest, Orientalist entertainment would entrance.

The *Nights'* (1704-1718) were originally published in a set of twelve volumes between 1704-1718 (Heller-Roazen vii). Working from the Arabic text, *Alf Layla wa Layla,*[4] Galland translated eight volumes before eventually adding four more, supplementing the collection with stories he learned from a Christian Syrian, Hanna Diab, whom Galland met in 1709 (Mack xv, Larzul 259). Hanna related, and reportedly archived thirteen more tales for Galland's use,[5] though not all of these tales made it into the final volumes of the *Nights'* (Larzul 259). Hanna's supplementary tales include some of those that have become the most famous: "The Story of

Aladdin; or, the Wonderful Lamp," "The Adventures of the Caliph Haroun Alraschid," "The Story of the Two Sisters who Envied their Younger Sister," and "The Story of Ali Baba and the forty Thieves destroyed by a Slave" (Gerhardt 13).

Almost as soon as it appeared in French, the *Nights'* appeared in England, published anonymously from Grub Street and sparking a rabid enthusiasm [6] within the British public (Mack xvi). [7] A public clamoring for more encouraged the publication of "Pseudo-translations," which appeared everywhere, as well as searches for further genuine Arabic texts from which authors could draw stories (Ouyang 127). Enthusiasm for didactic literature, multiplying political questions concerning nationhood, and a growing interest in the East produced an eighteenth-century Britain that was advantageously situated for the publication of *Nights'*. As the eighteenth century began, Britain lacked a concept of national identity in the modern sense (Makdisi 62). However, with the relative stability of the Glorious Revolution of 1688 and in light of the War of Succession under Queen Anne and the Act of Union, which joined Scotland to Wales and England, an identity in regards to "self" and "others" was beginning to form (Greenblatt 2057-58, Makdisi 62). As the British political front changed, so too did the cultural one. Public venues such as libraries, coffeehouses, and the theater all became avenues where matters of social and political interest were discussed, and this atmosphere was enhanced by the relaxation of the legal constraints surrounding the printing industry, which resulted in a publishing boom and the growth of professional authors at Grub Street and other publication locations (Greenblatt 2066-67). Consequently, as the professional publishing culture expanded, so too did the literacy among men and women of all social classes (Greenblatt 2057). In addition to the literary influx throughout society, the aristocratic tastes of the time were also shaped by Charles' II admiration of both French literature and style, which he had brought upon his return to England and which

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still influenced the court despite the revolution (Greenblatt 2071). The *Nights',* though, was a product not of Charles' II time but of Queen Anne's, where the print culture was continuing to thrive. Erin Mackie notes that during the eighteen century, papers like *The Tatler* and *The Spectator,* were a both mirror and a window into society, reflecting what society was as well as showing it what it should be, exemplifying a "transitional position" as they prompted a "visible negotiation between older, residual prestigious types and the newer, revised characters" (145). Britain was ripe, therefore, for the timely arrival of Galland's publication, a French translation providing an arena exploration and entertainment.

Since Galland's translation, several other individuals have undertaken translating the *Nights'* as well, spanning the years since its initial impact on Western culture. The most famous among these translations belong to Edward Lane, John Payne, and Richard Burton. Each of these men's translations of the *Nights'* reflects their own interests as well as the literary tastes of their day since each man altered the stories through the deletion of the vulgarity or through the emphasis of the erotic and exotic (Dobie 45, Ouyang 127). Most recently, Husain Haddway published an English translation of *Nights'*, using the Syrian manuscript which Mahdi had restored. Although these other noteworthy translations exist, this study focuses on the tales Galland inserted into the *Nights'* from Hanna, and thus, I have chosen to work from Robert Mack's 1995 publication of the Grub Street rendition of Galland's translation.[8]

Scholars are uncertain as to why Galland chose to insert the additional stories that he gathered from Hanna. Galland had given prior indication of opposing additions of such extraneous material into the *Nights',* as seen when Pétris de la Croix, a fellow Orientalist, translated two Turkish tales that the publisher slipped into the eighth volume of the *Nights'*, much to the chagrin of Galland (Larzul 260). Despite his initial criticism of the practice,

however, Galland himself eventually succumbed to the convention himself, introducing tales that scholars have dubbed the "orphan stories" to his translation, thereby completing the *Nights'* twelve volumes (Larzul 260). Certainly avariciousness might have played a role in Galland's decision as the eighteenth-century market was so receptive to the publication of further Oriental tales (Larzul 259). Perhaps, as Mahdi suggests, Galland was simply bewitched and misled by the title of the collection, believing the 1,001 tales to be literal rather than the metaphorical expression that scholars now believe it to be (126). However, another answer may lie in Galland's belief that the literature of the East capable of imparting knowledge about the East, as seen when he drew on stories to aid in his completion of the *Bibliothéque orientale* (Irwin, *Companion* 15). As Sylvette Larzul notes in her contrast of the language Galland employed in translating Hanna's tales with the earlier volumes in the *Nights'*, the terminology and phraseology Galland chose "marks a transition from adaptation to creation," and Galland had long believed (270). Furthermore, translation practices of the time allowed and even encouraged more of an appropriation than a transliteration of translated texts. Therefore, Galland's goal might not actually have been a pure translation as, through the voice of Scheherazade, Galland is able to intrigue his readers and challenge their thinking, encouraging them to question their understandings of the way the world functions.

Despite the criticism that now surrounds Galland's translations, Galland was a respected eighteenth-century translator and Orientalist scholar, and as such, his translation practices, while questionable to later critics, were not out of line with the standards in his day. Although the Restoration period witnessed the now classic debate between regarding translation purity versus the freedoms accorded to translators, [9] most translations relied heavily on the concept of fluency, arguing this strategy was best for rendering both foreign and ancient texts into a contemporary

document (Venuti 55). This practice was popular both within the French and British academies since, according to Lawrence Venuti, "Translation aimed for a stylistic refinement that usually involved a significant re-writing of the foreign text that at the same time worked to mask this re-writing" (55). Likewise, Robert Irwin notes the translators of the French Renaissance "argued that good taste took precedence over strict accuracy in translation" (*Companion* 18-19). Such a careful re-working of the original text granted the text a greater appeal among its new audience as the translators refined the original through deletions of the offensive and additions of the explanatory and beautiful (Venuti 55).

Adhering to the principle of fluency in translating gave translators not merely aesthetic liberties with the text but also the license to grant a new purpose to that text, and frequently, that purpose was political in nature, commenting on the social and political structures and relationships of the time. John Dryden, for instance, having lost his position as Poet Laureate and Historiographer Royale following the Revolution of 1688, turned to translation as an avenue through which to offer "oblique commentaries" on the time (Hammond 148). Consequently, Galland's changes to the original texts with which he was working corresponded with the accepted practice during his day, resulting in a "powerfully imaginative" text that was confiscated by the West (Moussa-Mahmoud 103). Moreover, the alterations that he did introduce to the text, such as the deletion of the nightly divisions in the stories, he noted, although some critics, such as Muhsin Mahdi believe he did not detail his alterations thoroughly enough (Larzul 260-61, Mahdi 123). Later translators of the *Nights'* censured Galland's technique; nevertheless, these same critics introduced their own alterations to their translations. One such translator, Edward Lane, strictly removed any profane or vulgar reference from his translation, while Richard Burton, playing on his own sexual tastes, emphasized and even expanded on the erotic

and exotic within his translation (Ouyang 127). Like Galland, their translations were influenced by their cultures and the translation practices of their time, thus diminishing their critiques of the purity of Galland's translation.

Galland focused on the didactical nature of the stories both in moral content, emphasizing their abilities as fables, as seen in his attempt to indicate a moral at the end of "The Story of Alladin; or, the Wonderful Lamp" and in his detail, such as in the description of Sodge Valley in "The Story of Prince Ahmed and the Fairy Pari Banou" (Larzul 20, 22). Thus the fable form seen in these tales is capable of both entertaining and presenting knowledge. Fables explore the way life is viewed, transforming the reader's thinking by creating familiar relationships between unfamiliar elements, tempting the readers to enter into the story in search of themselves and their neighbors, or in the case of the eighteenth-century Britain, in search of their government and those of surrounding nations. By placing his knowledge behind Scheherazade's voice, Galland could have molded the fables to influence a needed search for a true understanding of the East and even of eighteenth-century British culture by using the same technique Scheherazade uses to instruct Schahriar: stories.

While Britain had long been party to a trans-continental trade in goods, people, and cultures that stretched from Europe all of the way to Asia, the *Nights'* appearance in Britain provoked an intense curiosity about the East, conceiving a nascent Orientalism. Edward Said has explained the West's intrigue with the East by arguing that the West saw "hidden elements of kinship" with the East as it fluctuated "between the familiar and the alien" (120, 72). Said admits that the educated eighteenth-century reader did approach "the Orient's peculiarities with some detachment and with some attempt at dealing directly with Oriental source material…" (117). Despite attempts at detachment though, the alien aspects of the tales were just as inviting to the

reader of the *Nights'* as the familiar. The stories became an "indulgence" as the reader focused on the exotic background in which the tale exists (Sallis 6, 10). Consequently, the *Nights'* inspired other tales as it infiltrated and came to define eighteenth-century Britain's perceptions of the East, as seen in travel narratives written later during the century, such as Lady Mary Wortley Montagu's *Turkish Embassy Letters* (Nussbaum and Makkisi 15). Unfortunately for these travelers and their readers, as Ruth Yeazell notes in her study of the harem, "Even the most luxuriously appointed of harems was not likely to measure up to the fairy-tale wealth and beauty of *Arabian Nights'…*" (205). Nevertheless, the West's image of the East encouraged readers to delve into the stories in search of delights therein.

Travel narratives and the *Nights'* were not only read for entertainment, however. Later during the century, Samuel Johnson would postulate that a book of travel, though entertaining, ought also to be useful to a nation through its examination of others' cultures and by its revelations about life (Martin 110). Though Johnson's literary influence came later in the century as well, his attitude is indicative of much of the early part of the century. In contrast to modern approaches to literature, eighteenth-century readers were very aware of the performance and structural aspects of stories. Literature was expected to be didactical by nature; therefore, the fable, which could be read for both "edification and enjoyment," achieved its highest status as a literary genre during this period (Noel 6, 2). Thus the most influential of the Oriental fables, Aesop's fables, was gaining in popularity by the end of the seventeenth century.

However, the fable developed not only as a prestigious literary genre but also as "a vehicle for social protest, permeated with the revolutionary spirit of the times" (Noel 25, 11). The beginning of the eighteenth century was still a period of great political uncertainty in Britain, and the fables allowed her people to voice their views on government and empire without

directly stating them. Questions concerning nationhood as well as Britain's relationship with the rest of the world – France, the Ottoman empire, and the Persian empire – grew. Therefore, as Jayne Lewis in her study of the progression of the English fable asserts, "Set in a world where power is never balanced and self-interest decides value, [the fables'] themes mirror the instability of the England in which they were put to use" (20). Consequently, the fabulists "moved Aesop from place to place in order to protest against or welcome the prevailing political wind" (Noel 38). The fables presented a unique vehicle for political commentary due to their ability to provide multiple interpretations through a single story, resulting in their publication everywhere, from renown philosophers like John Locke to the anonymous six-penny pamphlets published on Grub Street, the same place that the English translation of *Nights'* would eventually be published (Lewis 20, 38, Noel 30).

Although the fable genre was developed as a vehicle for political commentary, the fable genre still contained a moral that was discoverable through the structural conventions that "instill socially relevant precepts" (Lewis 9). Therefore, as Lewis states, "Bred by native presses and imported from abroad, fables found their way into every pocket of contest and change" (1). The fables provided a space for readers to enter and explore the relationships that they saw at play in real life, occasionally transforming their opinions based on what they encountered within the space of the fable.

Into this world, then, entered Galland's translation of the *Nights'*. Like in Britain, fables thrived in Galland's home country of France, so much so that they were deemed worthy to be read at the French Academy (Noel 3). Fables were a form of narrative closely associated with the East, and accordingly, eighteenth-century scholars saw them as the place where the East and the West were able to meet (Ballaster 18-19, 7). However, the French Academy's response to such

Oriental fables was complex. Madeline Dobie in an exploration of the translation contact zones that influenced the *Nights'* argues that the French perspective embodied "gradations of opinion about the aesthetic merit and moral function" of Oriental tales; thus, "many French Oriental tales subtly convey the judgment that, though Oriental stories might be vacuous, their French equivalents were replete with meaning" (40-41). French translators, following Galland with their own translations, pastiches, etc., were expected to censor and improve upon the "convoluted compliments and elaborate metaphors" of the stories, as they capitalized on the space such stories provided for philosophical purposes (Dobie 40). Thus, Galland's translation with its uncertain balance between translation and adaptation corresponds with the French expectations in regards to the Oriental tale.

Nevertheless, early critics like James Beattie and William Edward Lane censured Galland, accusing him of gross liberties with the text from which he translated (Mack xvi). Truly Galland did misrepresent his publication by suggesting that he had drawn his material from a single text, concealing his own editorial and creative imprint. However, Galland's journal indicates almost an indifference to the cultural experience he had while traveling, focusing instead on the stories he encountered, which suggests his alterations were not conceived wholly in an effort to make the tales merely more elaborate or exotic (Makkisi and Nussbaum 30). Instead, considering the current literary culture's enthusiasm for fables in both Britain and France, Galland's additions to the original Arabic catalog of stories indicate a creative manipulation of the stories in order to enhance the stories' philosophical space, allowing him to bring together a collection of fables under one overarching frame tale that could both educate and entertain.

In the years between the publication of the *Nights'* beginning volumes and the ending ones, as the demand for information about the East grew, Galland may have realized the tales' ability to impart knowledge in a way that an encyclopedia like the *Bibliothéque orientale* could not. Prior to his publication of the *Nights'*, Galland translated and published several other Arabic fables, such as the *Fables of Bidpai* (Nussbaum and Makkisi 32). These efforts, as well as his work on *Bibliothéque orientale,* paved the way for his adaptation of the *Nights'*. Robert Irwin in his study on the origins and influences of the *Nights'* mentions Galland's reworking of these tales as well; he notes a comparison of Galland's journal entries regarding Hanna's stories to the final rendition of the tales, highlighting Galland's addition of a speech opposing arranged marriages, which were customary in eighteenth-century France, into "The Story of Prince Ahmed and the Fairy Pari Banou" as evidence of Galland's contemporary rendering of the tale (*Companion* 17). Galland would have understood a fable's ability to represent actual relationships in life so that the translating, or creative editing of the fables, gave Galland the ability to shape the stories into a familiar literary form of the period, providing spaces its readers could explore and truths they could gain from the themes encountered there. Consequently, the *Nights'* is an elaborate example of the power of a fable as a rhetorical devise that will simultaneously conceal and reveal knowledge as it pushes the reader to find meaning in it.

The framing story of Scheherazade and the intricate web of tales she weaves for Schahriar have long fascinated scholars, who have closely examined the rhetorical structures in the *Nights'*. Sandra Naddaff argues that nearly every tale within the *Nights'* contains multiple story cycles, creating even further levels of repetition, and this embedding not only generates a mirroring and self-reflecting function within the tale but also speaks to the overarching interest of the *Nights'* in the functions and abilities of stories (41). Similarly, Roland Barthes and Lionel

Duisit in their exploration of the narrative structure of the *Nights'* describe how some elements from one level of a story may reappear and connect with elements on another level since some of the elements can only reach their full potential after switching levels (246). Such appearing and reappearing of elements creates patterns within the tales, which are crucial for the understanding and interpretation of the tales.

David Pinault takes a different approach from that of Naddaff by analyzing common story-telling techniques within the *Nights'* and suggests that the stories frequently contain thematic patterning or "the distinction of recurrent concepts and moralistic motifs…" and formal patterning or "the organization of events, actions, and gestures which constitute a narrative and give shape to as story" (22-23). These different types of patterns allow for the expansion of metaphors seen in the tales, giving them greater rhetorical power.

Other scholars, like Muhsin Mahdi, critically analyze the *Night's* purity as a collection. Mahdi spent considerable time searching for the archetype of the *Nights'*, eventually presenting the Syrian manuscript from which Galland translated as the oldest complete text. In his study, he explores the complex history of the *Nights'*, looking carefully at Galland's own life and influence on the text as well as its path since that time. Ferial Ghazoul pursues the *Nights'* differently by exploring the cohesion of the collection, revealing structural devices and forms and their application in the individual tales and the frame story, before discussing the *Nights'* place within the larger literary community.

These scholars and others have added greatly to the critical scholarship on the *Nights'*, informing my own research. In addition to their helpful insights, in my own reading of *Nights'*, I will employ Judith Butler's concept of performativity, which is particularly helpful in reading these fables as it provides insight into the significance of repetition. Butler argues that gender is a

cultural performance of the repetition of particular skills and patterns, and this repetition is essential to this performance, for "gender is always doing" (34). For Butler, no truth exists beneath the performance as it is just a process of constant creation rather than finding. Fables, likewise, contain the metaphor of performance, and those translated by Galland grapple with the idea of reality and reading reality as a performance both as demonstrated through the characters' performances and through the *Nights'* own performance in the West. These fables rely heavily on repetition of the performance that is created through adhering to continuous patterns. Yet these fables do suggest the existence of truth. Nevertheless, Butler's observations are useful in exploring how the concept of performativity, as seen in the fables, is so radically transformative that truth becomes almost malleable. Therefore, the "truth" suggested in the fables seems to lie not in breaking through the metaphor to find the answer but in following through the repetition to find truth.

While critics agree on the importance of repetition within the *Nights'* as a whole, they have not critically addressed repetition within the boundaries of the Hanna tales. These tales, as crafted by Galland, read as fables that reveal agency as inherent in storytelling, gained from the multiplicities of repetition both of the narratives themselves and the elements in the narrative; these repetitions cause the transformation of those who enter into the space of the fable and correctly read the pattern therein. I will begin in my first chapter with a close reading of "The Story of the Two Sisters who Envied their Younger Sister" in order to demonstrate the transformational power of narrative, which through the performances of its participants has the ability to both reveal and disguise the truth; this power is dependent on the readers' (both inside and outside of the text) ability to correctly read the performances with which they have contact. Within my second chapter, I will extend the idea of transformation through an analysis of "The

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Story of Ali Baba and the forty Thieves defeated by a Slave." I will argue that performance is the thievery of agency, exploring this relationship in both the text and in Galland's manipulation of the *Nights'* in his translation. My final chapter then shall address the necessity of play as a form of performance enabling the correct reading of the repetitive transformation necessitated by binary relationships. To do so, I will analyze binary relationships and the use of play within one of the lesser-known Hanna tales, in "The Story of Ali Cogia, a Merchant of Bagdad."

II. Becoming Pearls: Transforming Perceptions of Reality through Narrative

"The sultan of the Indies could not but admire the prodigious memory of the sultaness his wife, who had entertained and diverted him so many Nights, with such new and agreeable stories that he believed her stock inexhaustible" (Galland 892).

So ends the translation of Antoine Galland's famous *Mille et une Nuit*, and as the praise of the sultan ended, the praise of the eighteen-century reader listening in with Dinarzade to Scheherazade's recitation began and magnified it. As soon as the first English translation of the text appeared, the *Nights'* was instantly in demand. Images of flying carpets, secretive harems, a despotic ruler, and a self-sacrificing heroine captured the imagination of readers. Because this foreignness and because of its stories' inherent ability to both reveal and conceal truth, the *Nights'* became an ideal space in which the readers could focus their curiosity about self and other places as they struggled to make sense of the questions arising in their nation pertaining to government and identity.

Intriguingly, as mentioned in my introduction, the eighteenth-century readers, as well as later generations, came to celebrate and identify the *Nights'* by the final volumes in the collection: those that were composed of the stories Galland heard from Hanna Diab. Following Galland's introduction of them to the West, the *Nights'* became a fixture of the West and its obsessive search for self. Mia Gerhardt in her analysis of the *Nights'* notes that it is "…the curious fate of the book that European readers somehow made the '1001 Nights' their own" (2). Rather than being a literal translation of Arabic stories into English, the stories became "bearers of multiple new meanings" reflective of the culture that embraced them because the spaces within the stories allowed for "concentrated attention of the European self and context for responding to the text" (Ballaster 4, Sallis 65). Galland's translation of the text and then Britain's

acquisition of it, therefore, has refashioned the *Nights'* into a definitively European rather than Arabic text (Ouyang 127).

Perhaps Britain's acquisition of these stories also has to do with Galland's creative translation of these later tales. Little is known in regards to Galland's decision of how to order the tales he obtained from Hanna; he left no explanation or record of why he chose to include only half of the tales, or fables, Hanna imparted in his publication of the later volumes of the *Nights'*. Nevertheless, in placing "The Story of the Two Sisters who Envied their Younger Sister" as the final tale in his translation, Galland thematically closes the tales with a reminder of the performative quality and transformational ability of a story that reveals reality, harkening back to Scheherazade's exchange with her father at the very beginning of the tales. As I mentioned in my opening chapter, Galland is playing off a thriving print culture, so his translation appropriately closes with the same message about language and performance with which it begins. Thus, "The Two Sisters" thematically closes the *Nights'* in the same place that the stories began with a reminder that stories possess the ability to transform their readers as the apparently strange, exotic, or irrelevant reveal the performance of language and its proper interpretation. Through beautiful and repetitive levels and patterns, Galland's translation of fables within the *Nights',* such as that of the "Two Sisters," provides for the eighteenth-century reader a structure for the considering the performative nature of stories where the familiar touches the unfamiliar, transforming the reader through fictional contact with the exotic perceptions of reality as the reader searches for the correct reading of the fable.

Perhaps no other tale recorded by Galland in Scheherazade's voice becomes an arena for transformation to play out as well as that of "The Two Sisters." The story tells of a despotic sultan, Khosrouschah, who rambles the streets one night, which allows him to overhear the

wishes of three sisters. Granting each of the wishes, Khosrouschah marries the youngest, causing envy in the older two sisters, who plot to destroy their sister's happiness by stealing all three of the children she gives birth to and presenting Khosrouschah with a false object as his "child" instead. Infuriated, Khosrouschah locks up his wife. Meanwhile, the children, two princes and a princess, had been put into baskets and let to float in a river when the chief gardener finds them, and not knowing who they are, adopts them. Upon his death, the princess learns from an old woman of three objects which their garden is missing, and she requests her brothers retrieve these objects. Both brothers attempt to do so, but they fail to follow the instructions of a dervise on how to obtain these objects. The princess, therefore, goes herself, creating a clever way to follow the instructions, thereby capturing the objects and rescuing her brothers. Life does not return to normal, though, for shortly after their return, Khosrouschah happens to meet the two princes who invite the sultan to their home. During this visit, the children's true identities are revealed due to a dish of pearls, resulting in the restoration of Khosrouschah's wife and the unification of the family.

"The Two Sisters" then begins in a form already familiar to the *Nights'* readers. As the story opens, Scheherazade describes what, at this point in the *Nights'* is a familiar image to the reader: the disguised sultan eavesdropping on his subjects. Earlier within several of the *Nights'* stories, this image appears and is made famous by Caliph Haroun Al-Raschid. Al-Raschid is established in his stories as an almost playful ruler who is simultaneously very just, and these qualities are due to his nightly adventures when he departs from the palace in disguise, becoming a character within a character in the story. Likewise, Khosrouschah has left his palace disguised, yet his experience and actions stray from Al-Raschid in a fashion that highlights the fables' attention to social reading.

As Khosrouschah rambles through the city, the reader is immediately plunged into conflicting images of reality. Secluded in his palace, Khosrouschah's experience of life is far different from that of his subjects, so through his disguised exit from the palace, he is attempting to discover the life of the majority in the kingdom. However, Khosrouschah creates a false identity through which he can obtain knowledge of the world outside his own when he dons a disguise: he is playing a part on a stage, creating an untrue reality even as he attempts to enter what the majority of his kingdom view as reality.

As Khosrouschah eavesdrops on the three sisters sharing wishes, narrative's ability to transform reality becomes immediately apparent. The wishes on the part of the sisters are grand as each sister outdoes the wish of that which came before hers. For the sisters, the wishes are fanciful, having no bearing on the real world: they are simply narratives of how each believes she wants life to be. However, Khosrouschah grants the wishes of all three girls, creating a new reality where before were only idle words.

The older sisters quickly understand the transformational ability of words, for as the tale progresses to the pregnancy of their youngest sister, the elder sisters, who play the midwives during the birth, hide the baby and present the sultan with the lie that his wife has given birth to a little dead dog. The sisters' ability to "name" the baby with a false identity enables them to transform a joyful reality into a false, ugly one. This manipulation of the truth through renaming repeats itself twice more, as the sisters again lie to the sultan about the nature of the children the youngest sister is bearing, suggesting the second time that she gives birth to a cat. The third time though, the deception is taken even further, adding a new level to the false reality created as "To this inhumanity the two sisters added a lie, and used the same cheat as before. They produced a piece of wood, and affirmed it to be a mole, which the sultaness was delivered of" (Galland 864).

By "naming" non-human objects as the sultaness's children, the sisters are able to cover up the literality of the exposed object. Khosrouschah follows this pattern as well after the third birth when he declares of his wife, the third sister, "…she is a monster herself, and I will rid the world of her" (Galland 865). By naming the false reality presented to him, Khosrouschah is refusing to search for knowledge about what really happened, choosing instead to take the performance of the two sisters at face value.

Such naming brings to mind Louis Althusser's the concept of identity gained through repetition seen in his principle of interpellation and Ideological State Apparatuses (ISAs). Althusser posits that texts reinforce the fundamental ideas of ideology and culture, primarily through what he terms ISAs (1484, 1489). These ISAs, which Althusser describes as churches, schools, and other cultural venues like the arts and literature, subtly interpellate or mold the identity of individuals through society by forming the individual as "always already" subjects (Booker 481, Althusser 1503). Through interaction with the ISAs, the ISAs "hail" the always already subjects; consequently, this "hailing of the subject" results in the audience being formed more by its attitudes than in forming its own attitudes: " The communications apparatus by cramming every 'citizen' with daily doses of nationalism, chauvinism, liberalism, moralism, etc., by means of the press, the radio, and television. The same goes for the cultural apparatus…" (Althusser 1504, 1494). Literature, therefore, is merely one of the ISAs that helps to confirm an individual's identity within a predetermined ideology rather than encouraging questioning and eventual transformation in the individual.

For Althusser, different interpretations and endings would not be possible. In fact, his theory does have some correlation with the concept seen in much of Arabic culture that individuals are a part of a greater pattern that they must decipher. However, Althusser believes

the individual cannot break from the identity into which the ideology of the culture molds the individuals so that they never question their situation. The patterns seen throughout Arabic culture, however, are designed to cause individuals to question their place in society, enabling to them to become a better version of themselves through a clearer understanding of the reality that they inhabit. Althusser's theory is a modern position, for as Sandra Naddaff points out, the *Nights'* stories pursue "the ability of a word to transfer its name and meaning to an object other than the one with which it is commonly affiliated, and to engender thereby a new meaning, a new object, and, correspondingly, a new reality" (15). Galland and others of the eighteenth century would have viewed Althusser's theory unfavorably as they saw texts as challenging the readers who approached them. Rather than reinforcing identity, the texts, particularly the fables, were expected to cause more questioning and exploration of self after the readers emerged from the text than before. By exploring the way life is viewed, stories transformed the reader's thinking by creating familiar relationships between unfamiliar elements, such as the relationship between the Ottoman empire and the fledgling one of Britain. According to Rebecca Johnson, Richard Maxwell, and Katie Trumpener in their exploration of the literary structural consequences through the contact of the East and the West, "…*Nights'* narrative repetitions, reversals, imbrications, and interruptions dislodged moral certainties: literature became an arena in which different perspectives could be played out, sometimes simultaneously" (247). The stories were, therefore, performances of patterns life could take.

This view of stories invites Judith Butler's questioning on what constitutes reality in consideration of performance and repetition. Butler, while analyzing the confines of gender, suggests that truth and falseness are tied up in a power structure where individuals are expected to "conform to unspoken normative requirements" (8). Furthermore, Butler purports that all

actions are performative, as actions that are supposed to result from the identity actually shape it (34). Much like Althusser, Butler does not believe anyone can leave the stage of performance to find a true identity beyond it, suggesting instead that truth is revealed through repetition. Thus Khosrouschah, while slipping into an assumed identity, is merely repeating the expected performance of a commoner and even of a "good" ruler attempting to connect to his subjects.

As the first level in the story closes and Scheherazade begins to move into a new story cycle, the narrative device of embedding one tale within another becomes immediately evident. Nearly every tale within the *Nights'* contains multiple story cycles, creating even further distance between the reader and the message, and this embedding not only generates a mirroring and self-reflecting function within the tale but also speaks to the overarching interest of the *Nights'* in the functions and abilities of stories (Naddaff 41). As the readers descend from the level of the three sisters to the level of the three children, some elements from one level reappear and connect with elements on another level since some of the elements only reach their full potential after switching levels (Barthes and Duisit 246).

Such appearing and reappearing of elements creates patterns within the tale. David Pinault analyzed common story-telling techniques within the *Nights'* and suggested that the stories frequently contain thematic patterning or "the distinction of recurrent concepts and moralistic motifs…" and formal patterning or "the organization of events, actions, and gestures which constitute a narrative and give shape to as story" (22-23). As the first story cycle focusing on the three sisters comes to a close, the formal pattern of threes – three sisters and three births – has already become prevalent, which helps to give structure to the tale. Thematic patterning can also be seen in the naming executed by both the sultan and the sisters.

The second story cycle follows the lives of the three children born to the Sultaness. In order to proceed with their deception, the elder sisters had placed each baby into a basket and abandoned the basket in the canal from whence it floated through the gardens to be found by the chief gardener of the garden. The chief gardener took all three of the children into his home, and following the thematic pattern previously established, he "names" them his children:

> Wife, said he, as we have no children of our own, God has sent us a boy here: I recommend him to you; provide him a nurse presently, and take as much care of him as if he were our own son; for, from this moment, I acknowledge him as such. (Galland 864)

The princes, Bahman and Pervis, and the princess, Parizade, regard the chief gardener as their father; therefore, being unaware of the truth of their situation, and under the care of the chief gardener, they excel in academic and pleasurable pursuits, and as such, they perform the roles that they are expected to play.

The chief gardener eventually chooses to retire from the service of the sultan, at which time he and the princes and princess move into his country seat. This house he had made to be beautiful and large, taking particular care with the gardens. The house was only a small distance from town, but following his death, the princes and princess did not stray far from it. " They were content with the plentiful fortune he left them, and they lived together in a perfect union, free from ambition of distinguishing themselves at court, in places of great honour, which they might easily have compassed" (Galland 867). Consequently, the house and life that the chief gardener had provided for the princes and princess was a separate and false reality from the way life actually was.

This false reality might have continued in peace had not a religious woman come to the house one day and been invited in by Parizade. From this woman, Parizade learned of beautiful objects whose presence, according to the religious woman, would make the house

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"incomparable" (Galland 868). Following the formal pattern set at the beginning of the fable, the religious woman mentions three items: the Talking Bird, the Singing Tree, and the Yellow Golden Water. These three objects the religious woman, and because of her, Parizade, believe will complete the garden, as seen in Parizade's statement to her brothers:

> You think and always believed so too, that this house, which our father has built, was complete in every thing; but this day I have learned that it wants three things, which would render it so perfect, that no country-seat could be compared with it. (Galland 870)

Parizade understands something she has believed to be complete is actually incomplete. This moment within the fable is significant because her desire for a complete garden signifies the movement toward pursuing a true knowledge of reality. Roland Barthes and Lionel Duisit suggest that elements derived from functions within a narrative will "come to maturity, on the same level, or elsewhere on another level" (244). Such is the case with the three objects, which at first appearance in the fable only create a discontent in Parizade but which in the continuation of the tale play a significant role not only in completing Parizade's understanding of reality, transforming hers and her brothers' lives, but which also elaborate on the *Nights'* interest in storytelling.

Because of Parizade's desire for these three objects, both Bahman and Perviz attempt to retrieve them for her. Bahman, venturing forth first, meets a dervise on his way who was "frightful" because "His eyebrows were as white as snow, and so was the hair of his head; his mustachoes turned up to his nose, and, with his beard, which reached down to his waist, hid his mouth" (Galland 871). So much hair rendered the dervise's speech unintelligible, prompting Bahman to trim the man's hair for him, which reveals a much younger man than Bahman had believed the dervise to be. Through the trimming, Bahman gains knowledge of what the man is

truly like, transforming the dervise from something inarticulate and frightful to an informative, younger man.

The dervise warns the prince of the dangers in the journey he's attempting, explaining how as the prince climbs the mountain to the Talking Bird, he will see all around him black stones and hear voices coming from behind him that are issuing threats. However, the warning did not help Bahman escape the power of the words he heard because "He forgot the dervise's advice, turned about to run down the hill, and was that instant changed into a black stone, which metamorphosis had happened to many more besides him, who had attempted the same thing" (Galland 875).

Following Bahman's failure, Perviz also is unsuccessful, leaving Parizade to follow the pattern of threes and make the journey herself. Parizade thus disguises her true self twice: first by hiding her grief at the passing of her brother, Perviz, and second by dressing as a man to partake in the journey, assuming a new performative role in order to achieve her goal. Parizade had decided prior to her brother's death how she would behave if Perviz did not succeed in his mission, so although her actions might appear to be somewhat cold, her character is simply following in the pattern of threes as exactly as possible: three "men" have now departed on this mission as quickly as possible. However, the pattern is not the same, for as Naddaff indicates, the power of the metaphor lies in its repetition, but without the differences between the repetitions "the first term could never be metaphorically extended but would exist within its immediately referential parameters" (54). To borrow a phrase from Butler, Parizade presents the "subversive repetition" that can begin to undo the false reality that has been created, revealing the performance for all (44). Most obviously, Parizade is not a man but rather has chosen to adopt a second layer of false identity, even though the first layer, her parentage, is unknown to her at the

time. Furthermore, unlike her brothers, Parizade chooses to ignore the false reality that

frightened the princes and transformed them to stone through a decision that amazes the devise:

> And what is that management you would make use of, said the dervise? To stop
> my ears so hard with cotton, answered the princess, that I may not hear the voices,
> and by that means prevent the impression they may make upon my mind, and that
> I may not loose the use of my reason" (Galland 878).

Parizade's decision allows her to ignore the lying and threatening voices of a false reality as she

climbs the mountain – only the Talking Bird is actually present - so that she becomes mistress of

all three objects.

A final moment of words transforming reality comes at the end of the tale when the

Talking Bird is able to reveal the identity of the princes and princess to the sultan. The sultan

happens to meet the princes one day when they are out hunting in the woods, and following in

the formal pattern of threes, Khosrouschah requests three times to visit the brothers' home and

meet their sister before they remember to tell Parizade of their meeting with the sultan. When

Khosrouschah comes to visit the siblings' home, he is, like they, unaware of whom the princes

and princess actually are.

To prepare for the Sultan's arrival, Parizade, following the counsel of the Talking Bird on

how she should welcome Khosrouschah to their home, has the cook prepare a dish of cucumbers

stuffed with pearls. At first glance the choice of pearls in the cucumbers seems peculiar.

However, this mention of pearls is not the first in the story. Pinault argues that the *Nights'* is full

of what he terms "repetitive designation," when an object of seemingly little importance is

alluded to early in the tale and which then later plays a significant role near the conclusion of the

tale (16). Such is the case with the pearls, which originally appear in the first story cycle when

the youngest sister as part of her wish hopes to bear a prince whose tears are pearls. The pearls

appear again as Perviz departs on his journey, leaving a strand with Parizade that, depending on

how they lie, will indicate whether or not he is still alive or has failed in his mission. Thus, each time they appear, the pearls take on a greater significance. Furthermore, this precious gem works well within the parameters of the fable since a pearl is created through transformation.

The pearl dish is surprising to the sultan, who questions their taste. The Talking Bird, however, has anticipated Khosrouschah's response, and it informs the sultan of the elder sisters' deception, explaining that Bahman, Pervis, and Parizade are in fact his own children. Khosrouschah, having become aware of the reality of his children and the falseness of the sisters' performance, exclaims:

> Bird…I easily believe the truth which thou discoverest to me. The inclination and tenderness I have always had for them tell me but too plainly they are my own blood. Come then, my children, embrace me, and let me give you the first marks of a fatherly tenderness." (Galland 890)

Khosrouschah calls the prince and princess by their rightful identity, naming them as his children and exposing, rather than concealing, the truth of the situation. Because of the Talking Bird's proclamation of the truth, both Khosrouschah and his children's knowledge of reality is completed, destroying the false images – pleasant or unpleasant as they might have been – and replacing them with the truth.

This moment of truth centers less on the correct identification of the children, though, and more on the Sultan, for what is revealed to the sultan is his failure to correctly read the performances of his wife or her sisters. Khosrouschah witnessed the elder sisters' lies and the forgetfulness of the two princes three times, choosing the first time not to engage with the repetition as he did the second. This repetition is not, therefore, simply a characteristic or aesthetic but rather the very heartbeat of the *Nights'*, for as Scheherazade demonstrates in her stories to Schahriar, the lesson is learned through entering into the stories, into the very repetition so that with each repetition and alteration therein, the truth becomes more apparent.

As the fable comes to a close, therefore, the princes, princess, sultan, and sultaness of whom the sultan has begged forgiveness for his deeds towards her have each been transformed from their previously false identity so that they can participate in a true reality. Yet this transformation might not have ever occurred without the stories. The importance of language, demonstrated first by the evil sisters, is seen throughout the fable; nevertheless, the power possessed by stories is most clearly seen in the three objects that Parizade so greatly desires. Each corresponds accordingly with an attribute that an eighteenth-century reader would expect a story to possess. Though the fable does contain moments where words hide reality through "naming" and lies, the louder message seen in the Talking Bird is that stories reveal truth about reality. Likewise, though the Singing Tree does not speak, it too speaks of stories, suggesting that they should be beautiful, attracting listeners and prompting curiosity to search further for the knowledge contained within them. The Golden Yellow Water with its ever-flowing but never-spilling cycle indicates the regenerative power of a story's performance, exemplified in Scheherazade herself, that allows stories to be transformational since, as indicated earlier, each repetition, however similar it may be, demands some sort of change, transforming the original into something new since the original can never truly be repeated.

This reading of the fable was not how everyone in the eighteenth century interpreted it. The reactions of those who read this tale were varied. Horace Walpole in a letter that was later published saw the fable as a condemnation of the pursuit of material objects; "The whole fashionable world are so many Parizade… having been termed charming by some fashionable leaders of modern taste, are now become so necessary that nobody can do without them" (109). He goes on to link the fable to a warning for the nation about the excesses of other empires:

> Madame Montspan's coach and six mice was not a more idle, though it was a less mischievous folly, than the armies of her lover, Lewis the fourteenth. The

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ambition of the monarch to emulate conquerors of antiquity; of Caesar to rival Alexander; of Alexander to resemble the hero of his darling poem, the *Iliad*; the designs of Pyrrhus and the projects of Xerxes, what were they but counterparts to a passion for the Talking Bird, the Singing Tree, and the Yellow Water? (110)

As this quote indicates, Walpole's reading of the fable is reminiscent of the questions many in Britain were raising at the time about England's position in regards to the rest of the world and as an empire. Later, Sir Richard Burton in the supplement he published for the *Nights'* focuses heavily on the intertextual ties between the fable and other works stating, "Legends of castaway infants are common to the folklore of almost all countries and date back into antiquity" and he points to examples such as the stories of Moses and Perseus, which were also both Oriental in origin (617). As different at Walpole's reading is from Burton's, both are able to work within the parameters of the fable, for as Lewis, states " As obvious as it covert, a fable hotly pursues a single, highly interested perspective at the same time that it invites appropriation by competing interests (3).

However, this fable does seem to indicate that audiences needed to be aware of how they are approaching their texts, for it seems to echo the admonishment that Scheherazade offers her father at the very beginning of *Nights'.* In an effort to prevent Scheherazade from what he believes will be certain death if he grants her request to marry the sultan, her father tells her "The Fable of the Ass, the Ox, and the Labourer." The grand vizier explains to his daughter that her request will only lead to her death: "Daughter, you do just like the ass; you will expose yourself to destruction by your false prudence" (Galland 13). Yet as the grand vizier ends his interpretation of his fable, Scheherazade's reply is, "I beg you would not take it ill that I persist in my opinion. I am nothing moved by the story of that woman. I can tell you abundance of other [stories], to persuade you that you ought not to oppose my design" (Galland 15). Her response is a commentary on the fable: the grand visier's story did not work on Scheherazade because she

understands the power of interpretation and knows other stories that will change the meaning of the one with which her father has presented her. The grand vizier is not interpreting his fable correctly in Scheherazade's view. He does not have a true understanding of reality, so his interpretation is faulty.

In choosing to end his translation of Nights' with the fable of "The Two Sisters," Galland reinforces the theme of patterns seen throughout the text, demonstrating again and again the transformational ability of the stories. Transformation cannot come, however, without contact with the exotic, which always challenges contemporary expectations. The eighteenth-century reader may have delighted in the exotic, but the narrative also contained the search for the reality that language reveals. In entering the text, the readers discovered an order that did not match the pattern of the world that they understood, which both delighted and irritated the readers. Consequently, the readers who went plunging into the fables of *Nights'* in search for the pearls within the cucumber, in much the same way that Schahriar does, come out transformed into the pearls themselves through their exploration of the fables and the truths concerning reality they discover there.

Galland skillfully chooses to end the translation of *The Arabian Nights' Entertainments* with "The Story of the Two Sisters who Envied their Younger Sister." By completing the theme that stories influence and reveal truth only through a correct interpretation of them which was established at the beginning of the *Nights'*, Galland presents a final fable that demonstrates clearly the beauty and repetition in the sophisticated structure of a fable, allowing the familiar to encounter the alien, transforming its perception of both reality and its use of language.

III. Manipulating Narratives: An Examination of Agency and Performativity in "The Story of Ali Baba and the forty Thieves defeated by a Slave"

"At the end of my stories, sir, replied the sultaness! I am so far from that, that I cannot tell your majesty well how many I have left; but am more afraid you will be sooner tired with hearing, than I with telling them" (Galland 726).

This statement made by Scheherazade the morning following her completion of "The Story of Aladdin; or, the Wonderful Lamp" came as a delight to both the sultan to whom she was speaking and to the eighteenth-century readers listening in. The publication of the first volume of Antoine Galland's *Mille et une Nuit* in 1704, brought a frenzied demand for the Oriental tale in western Europe. The Hanna tales, particularly "Aladdin" and "The Story of Ali Baba and the forty Thieves defeated by a Slave," became long-standing classics in the West, whose images define the *Nights'* even in current times, as many children have watched the Disney Aladdin fly over the streets of Agrabah on his magic carpet or have uttered the magic words of "Open Sesame," while standing before an elevator door. Although far removed from their original settings, the *Nights'* stories and their alterations still provide entertainment and enjoyment in the West.

However, Galland's purpose in publishing the final stories of the *Nights'* may have been more educational than entertaining. As discussed in the previous chapter, Sylvette Larzul suggests that Galland spent more time authoring these final tales, such as "Ali Baba," than simply transliterating them (258). The tone and language of Galland's final two volumes, Larzul notes, reflect a desire both to further information concerning the traditions and practices of the East, while also emphasizing the stories moralistic knowledge, accentuating the tales' fabulistic qualities.

Perhaps no other tale in the *Nights'* presented an opportunity to comment on aristocracy's performative pursuit of an image and of the ability to read the image of others as well as "Ali Baba." Full of the classic images that would come to be associated with the East, this tale's depiction of a slave girl outwitting an entire band of thieves would have been both inviting but also thought-provoking for those reading, as it presents the act of narration as resulting in a surplus that must be controlled to maintain agency. Within "The Story of Ali Baba and the forty Thieves destroyed by a Slave," Galland's depiction of Ali Baba and Morgiana suggests that performance is a thievery of agency for those with the cleverness to interpret and manipulate the narrative's expanding repetitions.

Perhaps because of its clever protagonist who reflects so much of Scheherazade or because of its continued popularity, scholars have tirelessly searched for the origins of "Ali Baba." Yet even with Galland's records of some of the changes he made in his translation of the *Nights'*, the extent of Galland's liberalities with the original text of "Ali Baba" are unknown because the origin of the tale is still a mystery for scholars. Having exhausted the original *Alf Layla wa Layla* text, Galland pulled material from various sources and "Ali Baba" entered through the collection of Hanna tales. The stories that Hanna related Galland recorded in more of an outline form than as an actual narrative. Thus, while Galland provided brief references in his journal entries to "Ali Baba" that are enlightening to scholars, as Duncan MacDonald points out, these references lack several details that Galland used, creating uncertainty as to how detailed Hanna's story was and opening the possibility for more creation than translation (331).

MacDonald conducted extensive research in hopes of discovering the original text from which Hanna's story might have come, and he did locate the Bodleian manuscript in Oxford, which he believed to be an Arabic text pre-dating Galland (Irwin, *Companion* 52).[10] However,

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MacDonald's discovery did not stand as further research by Mahdi revealed the text to be a translation of Galland's text into Arabic by Jean Warsy (Irwin, *Companion* 58). "Ali Baba," therefore, continues to remain an enigma as to its origin.

Despite the authorial issues surrounding it, "Ali Baba" is one of the most famous tales from the *Nights'*. Some scholars suggest the appeal of this story comes from its social-economic commentary about a young man who undergoes social change, taking him from a life of poverty to one of wealth. Although this aspect of the tale may have appealed to many, as Ros Ballaster discusses in her study on the function of narrative within the *Nights',* these stories are not simple imports from the East into the West but rather a melding where the fiction of one is stolen away and infused with new readings by the other (4). If indeed Galland did attempt to re-cast some of the stories as fables rather than literal translations, the tale's resonance with an European audience is less peculiar for behind the trimmings of magical caves, polygamy, and ingenious servants lays questions with which eighteenth-century Britain wrestling.

The *Nights'* appeared in England on the cusp of the Restoration into a scene of political and social uncertainty. The English Civil War (1642-1651) and the Glorious Revolution (1688) left in its wake questions of power, authority, and identity as people adjusted from Charles I to the Commonwealth to Charles II and then finally to William of Orange, leaving the aristocracy in particular struggling to interpret and to manipulate the social and political spheres they inhabited (Doody 58). Britain lacked the political sense of "self" and was in the midst of establishing a national identity in the modern understanding. Consequently, the British did not see themselves in opposition to the East with as great a clarity as they would later in the century (Makdisi 62, 66). Despite a growing curiosity concerning the East, most of the British were more concerned with the internal affairs of their own nation. The value of correctly reading a situation

was further increased with the re-opening of the theater by Charles II. Although many plays of varying genres graced the stage during this time, the comedies' political allegories and clever wit became the focus, encouraging audience members to read a multiplicity of meanings into the performances they observed on the stage (Canfield XIII). Possessing the wit to manipulate language and, therefore, the narratives became a skill sought after as people attempted to shape their own narratives as well as that of others.

This manipulation could also be witnessed in the literature of fables as well. The close of the seventeenth century witnessed a fashion for fables, as Aesop's fables came to be of great interest because of their ability to be read as political allegories. Accordingly, eighteenth-century British readers were well prepared to search the stories of the *Nights'* for multiple levels and interpretations. Western Europe generally recognized fables as being Oriental, providing what Ballaster terms as a "place not only where two spaces meet (western culture renarrates the oral fables of the East) but also two temporalities: the ancient and the modern" (19, 7). Prior to Galland's publication of the last few volumes of *Nights'*, Addison and Steele were responsible for the publication of some didactic Oriental stories in 1711; however, although Britons living at the end of the century would not stoop to learn from the East, readers living at the turn of the century had not yet developed this prejudice, making the Oriental fable a space that captured the imagination of the British reader through its unfamiliarity, while sustaining interest through the familiarity of the relationships therein. Galland's molding of Hanna's stories into fables would have allowed him to present a disguised truth, one that the British audience would have to actively enter into, following through the repetitions and patterns in order to read the whole picture, and the story of "Ali Baba" presented a structure through which Galland could instruct his audience about this ability.

"Ali Baba" opens with a scene of poverty: a lone man cutting wood in the forest to support his family. Although no particular item appears to hold significant value in the tale's somewhat generic beginning, one specific detail is mention. As Ali Baba cuts the wood, the text describes him as "bringing it upon three asses" (Galland 764). The number three is the only specific detail mentioned in this opening section, and its specificity lends it significance for patterning within the rest of the fable. As discussed in my opening chapter, David Pinault argues that the tales are constructed around two main forms of patterning: thematic and formal (22-23). The specification of three begins a formal pattern that will be built upon throughout the rest of the fable, as frequently actions come in sets of three within the tale.

As the formal pattern of threes has been established, the fable transforms this ordinary scene of a working peasant into a narrative that needs to be told. Ali Baba's work is interrupted by the approach of a large band of thieves. Unwittingly, Ali Baba has stumbled upon their lair, and in order to protect himself, he disguises himself by hiding in a nearby tree. Rather than simply allowing a narrative of the thieves discovering and killing him run its course, Ali Baba manipulates the situation for his favor by concealing himself in the tree, which allows him to "see all without being seen" by the unsuspecting thieves (Galland 765). The thieves never suspect Ali Baba's presence, and their ignorance carries with it a caution for Galland's readers that the tale they are reading contains hidden parts only to be seen if the readers have the eyes to see them.

Ali Baba's concealment in the tree enables him to identify the thieves and to observe their actions. Unlike the thieves who are unable to read the story of the moment, Galland notes that "Ali Baba counted forty of them, and, by their mien and equipment, never doubted by they were thieves, and was not mistaken in his opinion" (Galland 765). The thieves do not call

themselves thieves, nor has anyone told Ali Baba who they are. Rather, Ali Baba identifies them as thieves based on their performance. This scene invokes a peculiar cause and effect relationship that Tzvetan Todorov argues in his essay describing narrative-men is crucial to the *Nights'* constitution. According to Todorov, "A character trait is not simply the cause of an action, nor simply its effect: it is both at once; just as an action is. X kills his wife because he is cruel; but he is cruel because he kills his wife" (*Companion* 228). Consequently, the characters in *Nights'* frequently can only be known by their performances (Irwin *Companion* 226).

This process of identity through performance evokes Butler's argument that gender, and identity likewise, is a series of repetitive actions that become a performance rather than an actual signifier. Consequently, "identity is performatively constituted by the very 'expressions that are said to be its result" (Butler 34). Such appears to the case within "Ali Baba" as well. Ali Baba maintains a position apart from the thieves, much like the readers of the story. Having been "removed" from the performance temporarily, he is able to watch the thieves' descent on the cave, an act that is repeated forty times. Through the repetition of this performance then, Ali Baba identifies the thieves, who are performing as those identified as "thieves" would be expected to perform. Ali Baba's ability to read the thieves is, therefore, dependent on his ability to observe the pattern.

It is at this moment that the captain of the thieves utters arguably the most renowned words of the entire *Nights'* series: "Sesame…open" (Galland 765). By manipulating these two words in the correct order, the captain has gained access into the cave where the thieves stow their treasure. In a set order, the captain pronounces the words, the thieves enter the cave, the captain enters the cave, and the cave shuts; this order is then reversed exactly as the thieves exit the cave even down to the reversal of the closing words. Ali Baba, then, faces a choice, and he

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chooses to repeat the action of the thieves and enter into the cave himself, cementing this moment as a metaphor significant throughout the rest of the fable.

In repeating the actions of the thieves and their words as his own, Ali Baba is claiming their narrative for his purposes so that the narrative takes a course beneficial to him. Sandra Naddaff explains that repetitions such as this are where the power of a metaphor lies. Repetition, which creates patterning, is essential for the continuation of a metaphor; however, no repetition can ever be exact because "its repetition necessitates its occurring at a different moment and, consequently, its having a different status" (Naddaff 51). Ali Baba's repetition of the thieves' actions extends the metaphor, giving life to a narrative that Ali Baba has now made his own. For Galland's readers, this moment brings understanding that "narrative becomes a constant process of never completed becoming, a becoming that fends off death" (Ballaster 10).

The power of the metaphor in this moment extends beyond Ali Baba's choice to enter the cave to Galland's readers themselves. Naddaff points out that:

> Metaphor thus imbues language with a powerful aspect that lets us forget the already established world, and carries us over into a realm in which words speak of things that are not accessible to ordinary human view… where the transformational power of the word can be fully effected" (36).

In the same way that Ali Baba enters into the cave to explore it so Galland likewise extends an invitation to his readers to enter into the *Nights'.* The collection of stories amassed there over the generations promise to transform them, just as the treasure the thieves have amassed in the cave over ages from untold locations promises to transform Ali Baba.

As Ali Baba returns to his home, his asses loaded down with gold, he repeats his story for his wife, and in so doing, solidifies his ability to manipulate the narrative, sustaining, according to Todorov, his own life. Todorov argues that the continuation of narrative gives life to the characters that are part of the narrative, and once that narrative is removed, their lives are

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removed with them. He states, "…what is character? The *Arabian Nights* gives us a very clear answer…a character is a potential story that is the story of his life. Every new character signifies a new plot" (229). Consequently, each new character within a narrative introduces another narrative into the story, creating an embedding of one tale within another, a signature of the *Nights'* (Todorov 230, 232). Consequently, in the words of Naddaff, " the 1001 Nights is essentially a story about telling stories, a work that is initially generated and ultimately sustained by the narrative act" (14). Life within the *Nights'* is equivalent, therefore, to the ability to repeat and manipulate a narrative into being one's own. Therefore, Ali Baba's repetition of the story in the forest to his wife is absolutely necessary, for his narrative must become a part of her own, and she must become a part of his.

Interestingly, this moment in the tale also calls Ali Baba's identity into question. When Ali Baba arrives home, he uncovers his bounty for his wife's observation. "His wife, handled the bags, and finding them full of money, suspected that her husband had been robbing…" (Galland 766). If, as Butler contends, the identity of a person comes through repetitive performances that are labeled, then Ali Baba has repeated the actions of a thief; nevertheless, his wife choose not to label his performance as robbery. Unable to say what he is instead, Ali Baba simply tells his wife that he is not a robber, manipulating the narrative of his performance, "inventing the self rather than finding it" (Siebers 22). [11]

However, not all repetitions of the narrative are successful, as is seen through Ali Baba's greedy brother Cassim. Upon discovering the good fortune of his brother through his wife, Cassim orders Ali Baba to share the secret with him. Upon learning the secret, Cassim, like the thieves and his brother, enters the cave. However, instead of repeating the actions of the narratives before his and then expanding upon them in the tradition of the metaphor, Cassim fails

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to repeat all of the actions: "He…instead of Sesame, said, Open Barley, and was very much amazed to find that the door did not open, but remained fast shut. Afterwards he named several sorts of grain, but all to no purpose" (Galland 768). As Galland's readers would have been aware, good storytellers understand the power of certain words or phrases and use them to their advantage. Consequently, Ali Baba, who manipulated the words to the benefit of his narrative, emerged unharmed and transformed from pauper to rich from the cave; Cassim, however, does not (Irwin *Companion* 178). Unable to continue his narrative without the proper language to do so, Cassim's story ends, and he dies.

In contrast to Cassim, the fable's primary protagonist, the slave, Morgiana, is able to manipulate the narrative even more artfully than Ali Baba due to her wits. Her character and to some degree her narrative, therefore, follows in the footsteps of her story's teller, Scheherazade. Both ability Scheherazade and Morgiana use their wits to see the whole story, allowing them to manipulate the narrative surrounding them. Morgiana's ability becomes increasingly clear as she wages war with the thieves, stealing their narratives from them for her own purposes.

As the thieves have discovered that Cassim's body has been rescued by Ali Baba, the embedding of their narrative takes the forefront. The thieves understand the need for careful reading of the situation in order to determine their own narratives, as indicated by the captain's statement that they need to take care to "prevent our being deceived" (Galland 773). To aid in this cause, the thief who volunteers to go in search of the story of what happened to Cassim's body "disguised himself so that nobody would take him for what he was" (Galland 774). However, the thief's disguise is also a revelation of who he really is because as a thief, he is accustomed to disguising himself for his work. He is simply repeating a performance he has repeated many times before, which in turn solidifies his identity. The thief unknowingly admits

this when he declares to his captain, "I submit myself to this law, and think it an honour to *expose* my life by taking such a commission upon me" (Galland 774). The thief is indeed exposing his identity, which reveals his story rather than concealing it so that he can manipulate it as the need arises. Consequently, the thief will be no match for Morgiana's ability to read and manipulate the narrative.

Reverting back to the formal pattern of threes established at the beginning of the fable, the structure of the fable now proceeds in a series of repeated threes. The first thief approaches Baba Mustapha in search of a story, and upon discovering that Mustapha's story is that of another story, he believes himself to have succeeded in his mission. However, this first thief falls prey to the same error as Cassim. The thief approaches Mustapha and gives him gold to obtain the narrative he wishes, in a pattern very similar to the original set by Morgiana as she seeks to shape the narrative of Cassim's death. But Morgiana gives Mustapha three pieces of gold for his service, while the thief only presents Mustapha with two. The missing third piece of gold indicates for the readers that this thief will fail because he has failed to repeat the pattern completely, and indeed he does fail. Consequently, when the captain joins the thief to see what he has accomplished in marking Ali Baba's house, the thief no longer has a narrative because Morgiana has stolen it from him. "Narrative," according to Naddaff, "cannot be static" (46). Therefore, in not repeating the narrative and manipulating it to become his own, the thief is left with no story to tell, no narrative to use. His story has become static, and as such, it and his life ends, for as Todorov points out, "The man is merely a narrative; once the narrative is no longer necessary, he can die" (234).

Continuing in the pattern of threes, the second thief makes the same errors as the first, and his narrative also comes to an end, forcing a third repetition. This repetition is slightly

different though, for the captain himself goes in the place of his men, and this slight change

indicates that the narrative will this time proceed. The captain, following in the steps of

Morgiana is able to manipulate the narrative, succeeding where his men had failed so that he is

able to introduce a new story into the narrative. Upon discovering where Ali Baba's residence is

located, the captain gathers his men into oil jars and disguises himself as an oil merchant.

Nevertheless, his plan is destroyed when one of his men fails to repeat the orders the captain left

for him. The captain had pre-arranged a signal of throwing stones down to indicate when it was

time for the thieves to emerge from their jars, yet when one thief hears Morgiana moving about

the oil jars, he speaks to her rather than performing the actions set for him, breaking with the

narrative set in place by the captain. Morgiana, ever the master of her wits, reads the danger in

the situation immediately and manipulates the narrative to become her own:

> [Morgiana] made what haste she could to fill her oil-pot, and returned to
> her kitchen, where, as soon as she had lighted her lamp, she took a great
> kettle, and went again to the oil-jar, filled it full, and set it on the fire to
> boil, and as soon as it boiled, went and poured enough into every jar to
> stifle and destroy the thief within. When this action, worthy of the courage
> of Morgiana was executed, without any noise…she returned into the
> kitchen, and shut the door; and having put out the great fire…put out also
> the lamp…." (Galland 779)

This description of Morgiana leaves no doubt as to her ability to manipulate the narrative. The

thieves who were left inside of the oil jars found themselves without a story, just as their

comrades had earlier, and so they each died without a sound because no sound was left to make;

their stories were over with no words left to perform. Furthermore, in mentioning Morgiana's

putting out the fire, Galland symbolizes her ability to put out the narrative of the captain as well,

which she does at the end of the story, when the captain returns to Ali Baba a second time, once

again in disguise. Morgiana, though, "knew him at first sight to be the captain of the thieves,

notwithstanding his disguise" (Galland 784). Like the first thief to meet death in the fable, the

captain's disguise is also his undoing, for this performance identifies him to the observant

Morgiana, who is able to read the danger in the situation and save the life of Ali Baba. For

Morgiana, this ability to interpret the performances of others and manipulate the narrative ends

with the continuation of her narrative and the rise of her societal value as Ali Baba gives his son

to her for her to wed.

Morgiana and Ali Baba rise through the social sphere because of their ability to read the

social situations surrounding them and to usurp the narratives of others, bending those

performances to their own through the correct repetition of the original narrative and expanding

upon it. This agency through performance is reflective of the *Nights'* own heroine as well. The

stories Scheherazade tells are not her own. She is not creating the stories with which she lures

Schahriar but instead is repeating the stories of others and in many respects, repeating the same

stories over and over again. In so doing, Scheherazade is able to wrestle their meanings to her

purpose, gaining power over Schahriar.

In a striking repetition of what happens inside the text, Galland manipulates the narratives

of others through his repetition. As indicated in my first chapter, contemporary translation styles

of the time allowed for a more of an appropriation than transliteration as the translator twisted

the meanings and images slightly to fit both audience and current style. Galland is no exception,

and his actions of exemplary of the actions seen in Morgiana and Ali Baba. In many respects,

Galland stole the *Nights'* from the East, repeating story after story and yet producing the

necessary alteration through translating them into French. Like Scheherazade and Morgiana

before him, Galland did not create the stories, but he did make them his own. Therefore, he too,

as a translator, gained agency through performance, through what previously existed, and

through him, the West did the same so that the folk tales of the classical Arabic world became a

text exemplifying the West's ability to gain agency over those that would become Other in relation to Britain.

Throughout "Ali Baba," images of the ability to correctly interpret the social sphere and manipulate it as narrative have appeared. By crafting "Ali Baba" as a fable, Galland is able to use the characters of Ali Baba and Morgiana to demonstrate how narrative not only gives identity but also transforms individuals through a series of repetitions. For the eighteenth-century and contemporary reader alike, "Ali Baba" presents a crucial lesson on the use of social reading to understand the performance of identity.

IV. Completing the Binary: The Transformative Agency of Binary Relationships in "The Story of Ali Cogia, a Merchant of Bagdad"

"This is no jesting matter; it is your majesty that must condemn him to death, and not me, though I did it yesterday in my play" (Galland 796).

For those awaiting judgment from Caliph Haroun Al-Raschid, these words spoken by a child, expose the raw tension underpinning an almost playful moment in "The Story of Ali Cogia, a Merchant of Bagdad." This tension multiplies throughout the *Arabian Nights' Entertainments,* as Scheherazade herself gambles with the childish act of telling bedtime stories in order to teach Schahriar about justice and social reading. Such a juxtaposition of the playful with the threatening heightens rather than disguises the severity of the moment, both for Scheherazade and for Ali Cogia, On a milder scale, Galland himself was familiar with this dynamic as his translations blurred the boundary of East and West. As discussed previously, the tales he crafted indicate a powerful agency, gained through the telling of stories, that is transformational for those who acquire this ability. Like its peers, "Ali Cogia" exemplifies these themes. Galland's translation of "Ali Cogia" demonstrates how binary relationships necessitate a repetitive and transformative motion that only those who enter into the pattern through the performative act of play can read correctly by first reading their own performances and thereby gaining agency to administer justice.

Although elements of a few of Hanna's tales are well known to contemporary readers, "Ali Cogia" is a lesser-known tale than some of its peers. At the beginning of the story, the reader is introduced to a merchant named Ali Cogia who is being reprimanded in a dream for not making the pilgrimage to Mecca. Putting his affairs in order, he entrusts a portion of his wealth

to a friend; yet choosing not to reveal this fact to his friend, Ali Cogia places his gold in a jar, covering the gold with olives.

Ali Cogia's pilgrimage spans seven years as following his departure from Mecca, he extends his journey to include Cairo, Jerusalem, and Damascus. Because of his continued absences, the merchant takes the olives to eat, only to discover the gold hidden beneath, which he then proceeds to steal. Consequently, Ali Cogia, upon returning and discovering the absence of his gold, accuses the merchant, resulting in a loud fight between the two men as a crowd gathers to watch. Because of the merchant's continued denial of wrong behavior, Ali Cogia takes the matter to the cady, or judge of the city, who dismisses the case, forcing Ali Cogia to appeal to Al-Raschid. Prior to the hearing, Al-Raschid oversees the entire tale being acted out by a group of children. The child playing the cady alters the original cady's decision on the matter, though, as he wisely notes, the olives would have been spoilt after seven years. Impressed by the child's insight, Al-Raschid invites the child to judge the real case the next day, which ultimately results in the death of the merchant, the return of Ali Cogia's wealth, and a reward for the child. The tale of "Ali Cogia," therefore, is built around the constant repetition of the main story in different contexts in the pairing of Ali Cogia with the merchant and Al-Raschid with the child.

As "Ali Cogia" opens, the story's title character, Ali Cogia, is introduced and described as a prosperous merchant, "master of his own actions…very well content with the profit he made of his trading" (Galland 787). Yet, this notion of Ali Cogia controlling his own actions is one that the text immediately contradicts, for Ali Cogia's life is interrupted when "for three nights together…a venerable old man came to him, and, with a severe look, reprimanded him for not having made a pilgrimage to Mecca…" (Galland 787). This dream troubles Ali Cogia because he recognizes its condemnation of his failure to abide within the patterns established by his religion.

As the venerable old man manifests, religion is built upon prescribed patterns that adherents of that particular religion are expected to repeat within the boundaries of their own lives. This structure is evident in both Islam, the religion seen within the fable, and in Christianity, the religion that many of Galland's Western readers would claim. Such repetition in the *Nights'*, according to Sandra Naddaff, ought "to be treated as one complex pattern and read globally" (39). Thus the small and perhaps seemingly insignificant repetitions by those of faith create through the combined force of all the repetitions an all-encompassing image of the religion. Thus, Ali Cogia, as a Muslim, both extends and maintains the arabesque of Islam by his repetition of religious performances. However, neglecting to perform these repetitions played out by so many who have come before automatically places the individual, in this case Ali Cogia, outside of the pattern, and thus outside of the religion.

As the fable begins therefore, a binary form (inside/ outside) becomes immediately apparent. Ferial Ghazoul describes three separate binary categories: pairing, where "each reinforces the other but is completely independent;" coupling, where the two sides are complementary "parts of a split union;" and ambivalence, where "the signifier replaces the signified…[so that] unlimited discourses become possible" (22-24). Although the formal pattern of three's has been prevalent within the tales I have examined thus far, when people, actions, and objects do not appear in three's, they appear in pairs. These pairs are best approached as binaries because of the performances they contain. As seen in this moment with Ali Cogia, the binary is constant; however, as the tale progresses, the ability of play to realign the binary becomes clear.

In this moment, the binary of good and evil indicates a "pairing" binary, where a positive and negative exist, reinforcing each other like "a voice and an echo" (22). This pairing becomes apparent through the description of Ali Cogia following the dream: " As a good mussulman, [Ali

Cogia] knew he was obliged to undertake a pilgrimage; but as he had a house, shop, and goods, he always believed that they might stand for sufficient reason…to atone for that neglect" (Galland 787).

Though Ali Cogia would like to consider himself to be a good Muslim, his failure to adhere to one of the pillars of Islam places him in opposition to that. To be a good Muslim, he must make the pilgrimage; to be a good Muslim, he must follow the pattern, repeating the performances expected of him. However, as revealed to him by his dream, Ali Cogia's negligence in repeating the pattern leaves him on the negative side of the binary. Accordingly, Ali Cogia makes preparations and undertakes this pilgrimage, and through this process, Ali Cogia is transformed. He adheres to the pattern, changing his position in the binary to become the good Muslim he desires to be.

This binary structure is a frequent presence within not only "Ali Cogia" and the other Hanna tales but throughout the *Nights',* seen repetitively through the dynamics of male or female, rich or poor, good or evil, and child or adult. Ghazoul argues that these binary relationships are a driving force throughout the *Nights'* stories, beginning with the binary coupling of Scheherazade and Schahriar, who demonstrate "opposed and complementary polarity" resulting from being "parts of a split union" (23). This "coupling" binary cannot exist without both halves or even be fully understood "without its complementary contrast" (Ghazoul 23). Consequently, without the negative side of the religious binary, Ali Cogia cannot understand what being a good Muslim is. For one side of the binary to be present and acknowledged, its antithesis must also exist; therefore, both the negative and the positive must exist or the concept of faithfulness in religion – the performance of expected patterns – cannot. At the beginning of the tale, only one side of the binary – the negative – exists in the form of the disobedient Ali

Cogia. The result is a void of the positive element of the binary that necessitates Ali Cogia's transformation in order to be filled. As Ghazoul argues, "The interlocking of these two poles produces a totality and generate a process" (23). Thus the binary is generative, transforming elements to fill the void of a missing opposite, which in turn results in a new void. The binary form remains constant, therefore, through a continual striving for balance between the two sides of a binary, dictating that, for the binary to continue, the original performance must be replicated through a transformation resulting in an inversion of the form to complete the pattern.

Judith Butler has scrutinized this concept of binary in regards to gender by seeking to expose and eliminate the binary through performance. Butler notes that the binary of man or woman dictates "regulatory practices of gender coherence" so that "gender proves to be performative," (34). Consequently, the continuance of the gender binary is dependent on these repetitive performances that adhere to a pre-determined pattern. For Butler, the performances necessitated to maintain the binary indicate "an on-going discursive practice…open to intervention and resignification" (45). Butler notes that the performance of gender is "a becoming, a constructing that cannot be said to originate or to end," yet she does believe the transgressions with the repetitions of the binary will dissolve the binary (45). However, this tale reintroduces the binary structure again and again, even as the exact pairing continually shifts. Thus, though change in the binary may occur, the binary form is still perpetuated as these alterations, while allowing change to the actual performances, do not counter act the structural balance of the binary.[12] Thus, Ali Cogia's transformation, which has altered his performance, does not eliminate the binary.

Ali Cogia's transformation within the binary structure through the repetition of performances before him is just the first of several binaries found within "Ali Cogia." As Ali

Cogia prepares to leave on his journey, he attempts to secure a portion of his wealth by leaving it with a merchant who is his friend. Despite naming the man as friend, Ali Cogia does not place full confidence in that title fully entrusting his wealth to the merchant, choosing instead to disguise his wealth "as he put the thousand pieces of gold into [a jar], and covered them over with olives" (Galland 788). Though they have no physical connection, the combination of the olives and gold in the jar operates symbolically throughout the fable to alert readers to the importance of interpreting its pairing (Ghazoul 25). Ali Cogia's action joins the two together into a binary relationship that exists only within the confines of the jar but which transforms both elements. The olives disguise the truth of the gold from the merchant, whose assumption is that the olives extend all the way to the bottom of the jar in an endless repetition, and this assumption enables the olives to conceal and protect the gold. The gold, in turn, though unable to protect itself gives a value to the olives that the olives do not have alone. Hence, within the structure of the jar, the olives and gold are both dependent on and define each other.

For Galland's and his readers, this relationship is of particular interest as it closely mirrors the relationship between language and meaning. Naddaff notes that in language, the metaphor and its meaning only have significance within the confines of the story when she states, "Metaphor thus imbues language with a powerful aspect that lets us forget the already established world, and carries us over into a realm in which words speak of things that are not accessible to ordinary human view" (36). Thus, the story may initially hide both the metaphor and its meaning just as the jar does with the gold and olives, but it also provides the structure that permits both the existence of the relationship and the significance therein. For an eighteenth-century audience, the ability to extract knowledge of both the metaphor and its meaning from within the context of the situation was crucial to social and even political survival just as

knowledge of the gold and olives were to securing Ali Cogia's financial survival when he returned from his pilgrimage. More than simply a hiding of the gold, Ali Cogia's actions serve as a reminder of the transformation that occurs with the transfer of value within a binary relationship.

As the narrative shifts away from Ali Cogia to his friend, the merchant, the necessity of reading the whole story correctly, comes into play. Ali Cogia has been gone for seven years when the merchant's wife voices a desire for olives. Wishing to accommodate his wife, the merchant offers those left to his care by Ali Cogia. This action dismays the merchant's wife who refuses to eat them. Despite his wife's objections, the merchant states, "Certainly [Ali Cogia] must be dead, since he has not returned in all this time; and we may eat the olives, if they prove good" (Galland 789). The merchant, observing seven years of Ali Cogia's repeated absence, assumes this pattern indicates Ali Cogia's death. However, aside from his intent to filch the olives, the merchant has no evidence to support his interpretation of Ali Cogia's continued absence, and his willful desire to read the situation to his advantage blinds him to all of the details of the pattern, as his wife points out:

> Do you think that [the olives] can be good after they have been kept so long? They must all be mouldy, and spoilt and if Ali Cogia should return, as I have a great fancy he will, and should find they have been opened, what will he think of your honour? (Galland 790)

Despite his wife's plea, the merchant chooses to not hear the alternative reading, as his "ears were deaf to the remonstrances of his wife" (Galland 790). Being both deaf to her pleas and blind to anything but his desire, therefore, the merchant undertakes a journey akin to that of Ali Cogia's, although rather than traveling literally through new lands, he traverses the distance to his warehouse, and in so doing through the metaphorical new lands of betraying his friend's confidence. The wife's words have paralleled those of the old man in Ali Cogia's dream,

dictating the path the merchant will take. Consequently, the merchant's actions position him as the negative to Ali Cogia: one side of a paired binary (Ghazoul 22). When Ali Cogia left on his pilgrimage, he claimed the positive side of that binary, leaving its paired position vacant. This became the void that the merchant filled.

The merchant's transformation from the positive position within the binary into the negative is complete with his discovery of the gold: "When he came into the warehouse, he opened the jar and found the olives all mouldy; but to see if they were all so at the bottom, he turned the jar topsy-turvy upon the plate; and by shaking the jar, some of the gold tumbled out" (Galland 790). The merchant does not enter into the boundary of the jar in any manner to seek what is inside; rather, he flips the entire container, pouring out both the remaining olives and the gold, indicating his personal inversion into the negative of the binary relationship is complete. The merchant, accordingly, has been moved through his reading of the narrative of Ali Cogia's absence, for, as Ballaster suggests, narrative "'moves' in the sense that it causes things and places to shift," changing relationships both in and outside of the text by transferring objects and denoting boundaries between the objects (6). The merchant, through a failure to correctly read the narrative, has been shifted, turned topsy-turvy as he becomes the inversion of Ali Cogia.

As the first level within "Ali Cogia" concludes, the narrative function of "leveling," referred to earlier in my analysis of the "The Story of the Two Sisters who Envied their Younger Sister," comes into play. Naddaff observes that the leveling within the *Nights'* allows the narrative to "talk about itself, to reflect back upon itself, and in so doing to reproduce itself" (41). Such is the case with "Ali Cogia." The initial narrative of the actions and interactions between Ali Cogia and the merchant is repeated a total of five times after the initial performance: Ali Cogia confronts the merchant on his return when both men tell their stories to the other; the mob

listens to both men's stories; the cady listens to both men's stories; Caliph Haroun Al-Raschid observes children, who have heard the story from the adults, acting out the stories; and the child listens to both men's stories. As the reader descends through these levels, the repeated performance strengthens the transformative agency of the binary. Characters are added, exemplifying a binary of right and wrong that flips back and forth as the characters slip into each other's places. In a discussion of repetition within the *Nights'*, Etsuko Aoyagi contends that through "the repetition, [elements of the story] become more outstanding, while loosing their uniqueness. That is to say, things, characters, events, expressions and even tales establish themselves by shifting their centre into the connection with others" (87). For "Ali Cogia," this center focuses on a search for justice, which has yet to be achieved. As the cady fails to read correctly the opposing sides of the tale presented to him by Ali Cogia and the merchant, which prevents the administration of justice, Ali Cogia appeals to Al-Raschid, shifting the interest of the story from Ali Cogia to Al-Raschid.

At this moment, the text uses the structural devise of dramatic visualization to highlight Al-Raschid's performance. In his analysis of the story-telling techniques present in the *Nights'*, Pinault describes the structure of dramatic visualization as the "rendering of gestures and dialogue in such a way as to make the given scene 'visual' or imaginatively present to the audience" (25). Dramatic visualization, through its careful attention to detail, creates a zooming affect on the overall story, accentuating the significance and increasing the intensity of certain scenes by furnishing specific and detailed descriptions of the moment. Thus at the beginning of the tale, dramatic visualization accentuates Ali Cogia's dream and the binary relationship of the gold and olives, focusing the readers' attention on the transformative agency of the binary relationship before zooming back out, as the fable only briefly records Ali Cogia's actual

pilgrimage and time in Mecca. As the tale progresses on, dramatic visualization focuses on Al-Raschid's performance as he slips into a role other than that of the sultan, emphasizing Al-Raschid's skill both as a performer and as a reader, revealing an intertwining between the two.

Al-Raschid is a familiar figure in the *Nights'* cycle, having played both lead and framing roles in other tales; thus, his entrance into the text follows a pattern familiar to the *Nights'* reader: "The same evening, the caliph, the grand vizier Giafar, and Mesrour, the chief of the eunuchs, went all disguised through the town…" (Galland 793). As seen in my earlier discussion of Khosrouschah, this image of Al-Raschid in disguise positions him as a compassionate and curious ruler with a "keen sense of justice" (Marzolph and van Leeuwen 586). Al-Raschid has assumed an identity that is meant to disguise him, to hide his value, just as Ali Cogia attempted to disguise the gold from sight. Nevertheless, Al-Raschid's disguise is as much a marker of his true identity as a mask, for the other tales reveal that he is known to embark upon adventures throughout the city by playing the part of a peasant. Unlike Ali Cogia whose performance is the mandatory obedience to fill a lack in the established pattern, Al-Raschid's performance is a choice to enter into an almost playful position. In making the decision to leave the palace and to pretend a role, Al-Raschid is consciously entering into a new repetition of the pattern of which he is already a part, for only by entering into the space can Al-Raschid hope to know it, reading his own narrative within the global pattern. His entrance is made possible by his playful performance. In contrast to the merchant who upon being accused, attempts to assume permanently a false position, Al-Raschid's performance is pretend; Al-Raschid is temporarily transforming himself through the childish game of make believe, and because he is choosing this transformation, he is aware of both his own performance as well as the performances of those around him. Al-Raschid is a skilled performer and, therefore, a skilled reader because his life is a

conglomeration of performances, from the obvious peasant frock he dons at night to the to the

royal garment that identifies him on the throne. Al-Raschid, therefore, is a "becoming," in

Butler's terms, always performing, whether playfully or not, and maintaining his power through

his self-aware performances (45).

Al-Raschid's reliance on play harkens back to the heart of the frame story of the *Nights'*.

Scheherazade, like Al-Raschid, engages in play in an immediate and dangerous manner, relating

bedtime stories for her life. Thus, Scheherazade's own dramatic performance disguises her

desperate bid for not only her life but also those of all the virgins under Schahriar blends

beautifully with the stories she tells. As seen with Scheherazade, play, though a repetition of

patterns from within life, provides entertainment for those participating as it propels those

engaged into another performance not routinely enacted. Consequently, this diversion through a

new level of repetition, rather than providing a release from "reality," actually draws those

involved further into the pattern. Play, therefore, can allow the reader a greater understanding of

the spaces and intersections within the pattern, and this understanding leads to justice as those

engaging willfully in the play have the acquired the skills to read the performances of the pattern

correctly, the very outcome for which both Scheherazade and Al-Raschid search (Mack ix).

Ballaster explains this process by asserting that narrative "transforms its readers' emotional

states – less though patterns of identification and recognition of 'selfhood', than through

pleasurable abandonment of the sense of self to an other in a space in which such activity is

virtually free of risk." (14). Play encourages the exploration of the binary, through the deliberate

transformation of oneself through a known performance, so that, unlike the expected

performance Ali Cogia was required to fill, those engaging in play can move easily between the

two sides of the dynamic because they know their own position within it, granting them a transformative agency both in their lives and others.

The story continues to emphasize play as Al-Raschid discovers a courtyard of children playing out the cady's court. The children's court is hypothetical, a play court where the stakes are much less apparent, and as such, the children each assume a pretend identity of an adult, repeating the story as it has already been repeated several times, modifying the original slightly yet as they see fit. The introduction of children emphasizes the devise of repetition see throughout the fable as children are the physical repetition of an adult bloodline and the societal repetition of adult mannerisms and behaviors, occurring over and over, although frequently in a more playful manner that lacks the solemnity of adulthood. Consequently, they were viewed during Galland's time as symbols of adult concerns, particularly in regards to lower social classes since children were perceived as lacking "calculated (that is, socialized) responses…" (Dean 25). [13] The child, therefore, completes a binary determined by age, for a child is the opposite of an adult. Yet this binary is ever shifting since a child is in a liminal state, eventually transforming into an adult through the repetition of adult patterns, creating a void that a new child must fill so that the binary can continue. In "Ali Cogia," the children, having observed the adults' performances and social concerns, act out the context of the adults, positioning the children as "adults" while also granting them the authority to read and respond to the patterns that they perceive. By contrast, positioned outside of the hypothetical court, Al-Raschid assumes the role of the child and is transformed into a position of no societal power, mirroring the children. Like the earlier image of the merchant turning the jar of olives and gold "topsy-turvy," the expected binary of adult or child and of ruler or follower is flipped. The binary is maintained, with the child filling the void left by Al-Raschid's transformation, but the binary relationship is

awry of the expected pattern. However, this flip is necessary to reveal the value inherent in the child, in the same manner that the upside down jar discloses the gold.

As Al-Raschid, watching from his seat on the bench, observes the children's play, the "briskest and liveliest" child takes on the role of the cady (Galland 793). In assuming the identity of the cady, the child directs the narrative that he and the other children are performing, so the child in a fashion similar to that which Ghazoul observes in Scheherazade "is potentially powerful though technically helpless" (24). Here in the confines of childish play, the child playing the cady takes control of the narrative through repeating the pattern correctly while also manipulating it to his will in asking to see the olives in question. As the pretend olives are presented, the child states," I cannot think that olives will keep seven years, and be so good" (Galland 794). Since the repetition is merely play for him, the child indulges in extending the narrative to further the game, reading the patterns within the play to generate the extension, which results in the pretend cady's administration of justice.

For Al-Raschid, the pattern is now clear, as he indicates to those around him: "And do you think, continued he, that I can judge better" (Galland 794)? By taking the child's expansion for his own, Al-Raschid reclaims his authority as the caliph, transforming back to his role of both the adult and the ruler. Al-Raschid executes this power immediately, dictating for his vizier to "bring the boy to me to-morrow, that he may judge of this affair in my presence," shifting back the child back to the position of a subject (Galland 794-95). However, the child or adult binary remains unbalanced, for although Al-Raschid reclaims his adult persona, he also imbues the child with authority to judge the opposing stories of Ali Cogia and the merchant when they come before Al-Raschid's court the next day. This continues the child's performance of the adult and leaves a void where the child should be in the binary relationship.

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Although Al-Raschid is elevating the child to a position of authority, both Al-Raschid and the child are conscious that the child's performance as judge is yet another performance – the child is still playing the cady – and, consequently, they each understand that they are still within the boundaries of their place within the pattern. As in the children's court before, Al-Raschid is positioned on the outside, observing the child's actions, yet in contrast to the previous night, he has not relinquished his authority in the moment. Rather, availing himself of the child's wisdom, Al-Raschid places the child as the judge, stating, "Plead both of you your causes before this child, who shall do you both justice, and if he be at any loss, I will rectify it" (Galland 795). Justice, which gained entrance into the repetition in an intentional and playful performance, resulting in a flipped binary, can now be administered through a continued play.

Justice can only be reached, though, because both the child and Al-Raschid, through the act of play, are able to correctly read their own performances within the repeating pattern. Ballaster explains that this ability to read one's own performance or narrative "might also be figured as a kind of transmigration…which requires a constant shifting of consciousness and perspective that transforms the reading self in the process" (22). This transmigration enables both Al-Raschid and the child to experience the pattern from different points within the pattern, enabling them to read the global pattern and interpret relationships therein correctly adding to the narrative through the administration of justice. Consequently, as noted by Robert Mack in his introduction to the *Nights'*, the act of narrating is 'nothing less than an art form which offers both its practitioners and its listeners an opportunity to order, comprehend, define, and delimit…an otherwise chaotic and incomprehensible world of experience" (ix).

Interestingly, this art form was one with which Galland was quite familiar, and in fact, Galland's experience with the *Nights'* almost parallel's Al-Raschid's position within "Ali

Cogia." Like Al-Raschid, Galland left his home and embarked on a journey. During his travels, Galland spent considerable time in and about Constantinople, where he became entranced by the literary wealth stored in libraries and bookstores (Mahdi 13). Engaged thus in a literary eavesdropping, Galland scoured the East originally for beautiful tales and later for the completion of the *Nights'.* The tales he uncovered through this process are neither history nor fact, and indeed, they were most likely intended for pleasure, as they are just playing at life, allowing their audiences to see their own lives more clearly through the stories' expansion.

Consequently, the tales garnered Galland's attention as he was amazed at the "ingenuity" of its creator (Mahdi 20), in much the same way that Al-Raschid found the child's wisdom to be remarkable. Both the storyteller and the child engage in play, but it is play that self-consciously engages with its binary opposite (the "work" of judgment) to shift outcomes. Thus, according to Mahdi, Galland "had no difficulty appreciating what is perhaps the main virtue of the *Nights*…the communication of moral and political lessons through playful narrative appearing as though meant merely to be amusing and entertaining…" (21). More than merely stories for children or women[14], as many would come to view them later in the century, Galland recognized the hidden value within the boundaries of the *Nights'*, and he sought to utilize that value through his translation. Dobie argues that Galland did not view the tales as just "ethnographic gold mines, but as creative production with significant social and historical dimension" and that rather than focusing *Nights'* on the polarities between the cultures, he used these tales to "write across" the differences (34). Thus, Galland's efforts as a translator reveal his desire to allow the "'Orientals' to speak for themselves" through their own words as he believed the language capable of "rehabilitating the Islamic Orient in the eyes of learned Europeans" (Dobie 34, Mahdi 16). Just as Al-Raschid grants authority to the child but still maintains power in the moment

through the agency gained in his confiscation of the children's playful repetition, so Galland, though attempting to permit the *Nights'* to speak its stories, actually maintains control as well through his acquisition and manipulation of the tales sent to him from Syria.

As the tale of "Ali Cogia" comes to a close, the pattern of the original stories is repeated a final time in the court before both the Al-Raschid and the child who is presiding. As the binary of child and adult is still lacking completeness, the child's admission that "it is your majesty that must condemn him to death" comes as no surprise (Galland 796). The child is aware of the dangerous implication of a moment where play and "reality" overlap; consequently, he removes the cloak of adulthood, transforming back again to the position of child, filling the binary's lack.

Throughout "Ali Cogia," the ability of play to repeat and alter the repetition becomes apparent through the interactions of binary relationships. In contrast to Ali Cogia and the merchant who perform the patterns expected of them, Al-Raschid and the child demonstrate that entering into the play, in the same manner as does Scheherazade, permits them to read their own narrative within the pattern they inhabit and so empowers them to read the other performances therein correctly as well. Thus, play grants a transformative agency for all who intentionally engage therein through which truth can be gained.

Notes

[1] For the purposes of this discussion, I will adhere to the traditional division of the East and West which was beginning to gain shape during the Restoration era. However, as Saree Makdisi and Felicity Nussbaum note in their introduction to *The Arabian Nights in Historical Context: Between East and West,* "…the European and Arabic worlds are not easily separable, but overlap and intersect culturally and intellectually" (12).

[2] The instability of the *Nights'* text is likely due to the lack of regard it held in the minds of Arab intellectuals (Irwin, *Companion* 4).

[3] Scholars agree that "The Story of the Enchanted Horse" was inspiration for Chaucer's writing (Caracciolo 5).

[4] Galland worked from a Syrian manuscript that Muhsin Mahdi demonstrated to be the oldest codex extant (Naddaff 4).

[5] Although Galland indicates Hanna gave him these additional stories in both oral and written forms, no manuscripts from Hanna have been discovered so that the only record of most of these tales lies in Galland's journal (Larzul 259).

[6] Although the *Night's* enthralled most of Europe, some were notably opposed to them, such as Bishop Atterbury, who, in a letter to Alexander Pope after receiving a gift of the *Nights'* tales from him, described the *Nights'* as "dull" and the product of a "woman's imagination" (Caracciolo 3).

[7] Robert Mack in his introduction indicates that Galland's *Mille et une Nuit* translated immediately from French into English (xvi). However, Saree Makdisi in "Literature, National Identity, and Empire" states that the Galland's text appeared in English in 1708 (63).

[8] All references and quotes from the *Nights'* will be taken from Robert Mack's edition.

[9] Paul Hammond explains the wide range of translation techniques that were used: " Some translators… used metaphrase, a close word-by-word rendering which was liable to result in stilted idiomatic English. Others…used paraphrase, translating with some latitude; while a third group practiced imitation, a transposition of the original not only into the English language but into the contemporary social world, peopling the text with modern references" (148).

[10] MacDonald does question in his article, ""Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves" in Arabic from a Bodleian MS," whether the name on the text could be that of a European "masquerading" as Arabic. But his ultimate conclusion is the text is a precursor to Galland's (328).

[11] For further information theoretical discussion of the way morals work within stories see Tobin Siebers, *Moral and Stories.*

[12] This understanding of changes altering but not eliminating the binary is akin to the image produced by a spirograph. This childish toy produces the same image over and over in a slightly altered position, so that the opposite poles of the image remain intact, even while the direction of the image is changing.

[13] Dean is primarily interested in the symbolism of children in Europe's approach to America as seen in art. However, her observations on the understanding of children in the late seventeenth century are applicable not only for Europe's interactions with the "natural" in America but also for the "Oriental."

[14] Mahdi notes "Earlier critics and historians thought the work was perhaps useful for learning about the manners and customs of the Orientals, but otherwise worthless except as pleasant entertainment for women and children" (35).

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