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Losing Shahrazad: A Distant Reading of 1001 Nights

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by
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Introduction

In its beginnings, *One Thousand and One Nights* (*The Arabian Nights*, *The Arabian Nights' Entertainments,* or in Arabic, *Alf Layla Wa Layla)* was an oral story cycle, told by storytellers to audiences who whiled away their nights and days hearing the astonishing stories therein. The oral tale slowly spread from its[1] likely beginnings in India to Persia, through the Middle East and into Arabic language. In 1704, a manuscript of the medieval story cycle was picked up and translated into French by Antoine Galland, a French Orientalist and contractor of the French East India Company, who added in stories and reworked much of the story cycle. Galland's translation began a period of Western obsession with the *Nights,* from the 18th through to the 21st century, and within each version and translation there is a stunning variety in how the *Nights* can manifest. Critic Ferial Ghazoul speaks of the story cycle's many versions in her study:

> The two french translations of Galland and Mardrus play havoc with the "original" Arabic text, and yet *The Arabian Nights* is not compromised by such "unfaithfulness"... Adding, dropping, and reshuffling stories seems to be a temptation to any transmitter of *The Arabian Nights*... If the text has been handled frequently in this promiscuous fashion, it is indicative that the text allows itself to be 'mishandled.' One cannot blame a Lane or a Galland for taking liberties with the text; after all, texts get the treatment they deserve... there are many editors and translators who have been tempted to revise the text... something in the text makes it subject to manipulation. It is constructed so as to accommodate and incorporate different material, as in an anthology (Ghazoul, 4)

Ghazoul attends to many aspects of the *Nights* in the above quotation, most importantly ideas of an "original," perceived "unfaithfulness" in translation or transmission, and the aspect of the story cycle's "construction" which opens it to "mishandling." All of the terms Ghazoul uses

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[1] Throughout this project singular pronouns and verb conjugation will be used to refer to the *Nights*. This choice is not to be taken as a reflection of accepted singularity of the *Nights,* but rather as synecdoche: referring to a public collection of individuals as "the people" singular or to a collection of trees as "the forest" singular.

in reference to imprecise translation in the *Nights* (specifically 'mishandling,' 'promiscuous,' unfaithfulness,' and 'manipulation') are used often in discussions surrounding the *Nights* that critique translations that do not faithfully[2] represent their source text. This type of language, as Ghazoul argues and as this work will maintain, is not applicable to the *Nights*, which has no original to be "mishandled" and which opens itself up to variation. Language concerned with fidelity in translation cannot be applied to the *Nights* as a whole, and further, such language occludes the generative value that creates the "mishandling" of the *Nights*.

The thing generating variation in the *Nights* is the same aspect that secures the *Nights*' 'construction': the frame tale. The narrative engine that drives the *Nights* and holds its generative power to proliferate and narrate exists and is held in the frame tale throughout the story cycle. The frame tale also expresses how representation works within the narrative of the *Nights*, and this self-representation resists the story cycle being used (as it was used by several translators) as a means of representing and creating the Orient. The seven English translators in this project were published in the 19th and 20th centuries and will be placed into three groups: the Retainers (who make full use of the frame tale), the Partial Removers (who retain the frame as an initial frame but remove it as soon as the enframed tales begin) and the Removers (whose texts contain no frame). In removing the frame tale, the Partial Removers and Removers lose Ghazoul's "something" in the text's construction that makes it malleable and allows it to run on its internal functioning, and they also remove that piece of the text which allows it to represent itself, further repurposing it into an Orientalist object and means of constructing the Orient.

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2 Walter Benjamin in his "The Task of the Translator" writes: "The traditional concepts in any discussion of translation are fidelity and license—the freedom to give a faithful reproduction of the sense and, in its service, fidelity to the word." He argues, as do I, that these terms are "no longer serviceable to a theory that strives to find, in a translation, something other than reproduction of a meaning" (Benjamin, 259).

The frame tale is the piece of the story that speaks to the *Nights'* self-representation, or the way the *Nights* articulates its conception of representation within its narrative. It begins with two brother kings, named Shahzaman and Shahriyar. They find each of their wives cheating on them, and they decide that if even they (two sovereigns of two kingdoms) could not keep their women faithful, then "all women were as wicked as the [queen], if you could only find them out, and that the fewer the world contained the better" (Lang). Shahriyar, the brother on which the frame tale focuses, decides to marry a new woman each day, consummate the marriage, and have her put to death the following morning. Slowly the women in his kingdom are becoming fewer and farther between when the vizier's daughter, Shahrazad, offers herself to the king in an attempt to save the innocent lives of other women by staving off her own execution for as long as possible. So begin the thousand nights (although almost all of the versions contain fewer than 1001 nights, and most are somewhere between 200 and 300), in which Shahrazad tells Shahriyar a story each night and leaves him on a cliffhanger each morning, incentivising him to keep her alive to hear the rest of the story.

The *Nights* was long an oral story cycle, likely with a combination of exact origins which spanned through India, Persia, and eventually Iraq and Egypt, with possible influences spanning Asia and Europe.[3] It was told orally by storytellers for the majority of its history and was memorized in its entirety or in part for these recitations. The first written evidence of the story cycle dates back to the 8th and 9th centuries, first as a translation into Arabic (called *Alf Khurāfāt*) from the Persian *Hazār Afsāna*. Between the 9th and 16th centuries (from earliest known reference to the Arabic story cycle to Galland's involvement) several references were made to the *Nights* by thinkers like medieval historian al-Mas'ūdī in his *Murūj al-Dhahab* and

[3] For more information about origins of the *Nights* and possible antecedents of specific stories within, consult Robert Irwin, and specifically his chapters 2 & 3, "A Book Without Authors" and "Oceans of Stories"

Ibn al-Nadīm in his *Kitāb al-Fihrist*, both in the tenth century. The image gathered by such references is of a fairly inappropriate and lowly collection of *khurāfat* (entertaining tales), deemed by Nadīm as "a worthless book of silly tales" (Abbott, 56). It has come to be known since as a powerfully creative and fundamental piece of literature by many writers and thinkers, as the likes of Jorge Luis Borges, Salman Rushdie, Pushkin, Flaubert, Tolstoy, Naguib Mahfouz, Goethe, W.B. Yeats, Voltaire, and Edgar Allan Poe[4] have worked with and through ideas of the *Nights* in their own work. (Irwin, 290) The extent to which the *Nights* has proliferated, been retold, and called upon, speaks to Ghazoul's claim that the story cycle "is constructed so as to accommodate and incorporate different material" (Ghazoul, 4).

Another contributing factor to the *Nights*' infamy and widespread proliferation is its historical exoticization during its early circulation in Europe. Colonial interest in and control of the Orient was occurring alongside the publication of all of the major versions of this project, which span in publication from 1704 to 1909. The connection between the texts and the colonial climate of the time is not coincidental, but mutually and simultaneously causative. The two were produced by and productive of one another: the publication of and public obsession with Oriental Tales[5] took place in Western countries as they were taking political, colonial, and financial control of the places they considered the 'Orient,' and the work of the translators in this project contributed to this colonization. Likewise, colonization contributed to the work of these

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4 This is a tiny and elite fraction of the descendants that the *Nights* has proliferated in the West today, which spans from Romantic era poets (Wordsworth and Tennyson) to Stephen King (who references Shahrazad in his *Misery*) to Bard College's own Neil Gaiman, to the comic series Green Lantern (which had an issue *1001 Emerald Nights*) to the recent Young Adult Fiction novel *The Wrath & the Dawn* by Renee Ahdieh, in which "Shahrzad" actually falls in love with the king (named Khalid) and they have a somewhat forbidden romance. The Goodreads.com synopsis of the final example ends in the line "Can their love survive this world of stories and secrets?" ("The Wrath and the Dawn")

5 Oriental Tales were stories like those in the *Nights* that spread around Europe in translation during this period. The furor for such stories is well encapsulated in Andrew Lang's preface to his own version of the *Nights*, where "Young men… made a noise at Monsieur Galland's windows in the dead of night, and asked him to tell them one of his marvellous tales."

translators, and their translations in turn. Men like Galland, Edward William Lane, and Richard Burton attempted to represent the Orient by use of the *Nights* as their representative, to claim it as typically Oriental through use of its stories and events as a means of describing Oriental 'culture' or 'customs,' a process which was largely carried out through their footnote usage. In doing so, they took dominance over the story cycle and contributing to the system of power and dominance which defined the very center of Orientalism. This domination was deeply entrenched in power structures of the period and up to the present: colonialism, economic and political institutions, academic structures, as well as artistic institutions and literary circles.[6]

Slowly through the Enlightenment and the colonial and "post" colonial periods, a field called Orientalism was created in the West. Orientalism is defined by Edward Said, the author of the foremost text on the subject, as "a style of thought based upon ontological and epistemological distinction made between 'the Orient' and (most of the time) 'the Occident.'" the *Nights* was used by several translators as a means of anthropological and Orientalist edification, notably Galland (*Les Mille et Une Nuits* 1704-1717), Edward William Lane (*The Thousand and One Nights*[7] 1838-1840), and Richard Burton (*The Book of the Thousand Nights and a Night*[8] 1885-1888). Said argues that Orientalism was a system entrenched in how academic pursuit of an "Orient" (combined with working power structures in economic, social, cultural, and political sectors of society) actually worked to create said "place" and define the people therein. Orientalists like Burton, Lane and Galland worked in their translations with

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6 Such materials can often act as soft power in such cross-cultural relationships of domination, as is true of the *Nights*.

7 Lane published his translation with extensive footnotes, which describe in detail various customs and relay experiences he had while living in Egypt, using many of the stories and the happenings in the story cycle as a means of describing the Orient to his readers.

8 Burton's translation had the express purpose (Burton, Preface) of relaying the uncensored version of the *Nights* to a desiring public, and he often describes the customs of 'the Arabs' in his notes as well, digressing into descriptions of sexual practices and especially focusing on the Oriental woman. For example, in his seventh footnote, he describes the reason why "debauched women" prefer the penis of a black man over a white man.

political, military, and economic actions of the time to do violence to the people it defined. As Said stated: "The Orient was Orientalized not only because it was discovered to be 'Oriental'... but because it could be… submitted to being made Oriental" (Said 6). Versions of the *Nights* work to represent what the Orient "is" and how its cultures and peoples act. In doing so they work in the greater socio-political system of Orientalism in order to *create* the Orient they claim exists. Hence, the *Nights* and its publications and translations in Europe became a central facet of the creation of the Orient.

The main seven texts that make up the object of study in this work—English versions of the *Nights* from the 19th and 20th centuries—are contained in this chart by date of publication[9]:

Name	**Title of Version**	**Date of Pub.**	**Place of Publication**
Jonathan Scott	*The Arabian Nights Entertainments*	1811-1890	Pickering and Chatto, London
Edward William Lane	*The Thousand and One Nights; The Arabian Nights' Entertainments*	1838- 1840	Chatto & Windus, London
John Payne	*The Book of the Thousand Nights and a Night*	1882- 1884	Villon Society, London
Sir Richard Burton	*The Book of The Thousand Nights and a Night*	1885- 1888	Kama Shastra Society, London
Andrew Lang	*The Arabian Nights Entertainments*	1898	Longmans, Green and Co, London
Laurence Housman	*Stories from the Arabian Nights*	1907	Hodder and Stoughton, London
Kate Wiggin and Nora Smith	*The Arabian Nights*	1909	Charles Scribner's Sons, New York

9 The texts analyzed are the first volume of the *Nights* if multiple volumes of the same translation were available, and the full text for those which were published in one volume.

This project also makes use of Galland's French version *Les Mille et Une Nuits*, Muhsin Mahdi's critical Arabic edition *Alf Layla Wa Layla*, and Husain Haddawy's English translation of Mahdi's text, *The Arabian Nights*. These texts were chosen in light of their accessibility and in order to reflect diversity—in ways of approaching and representing the *Nights*, in the background and purposes of the translator(s), as well as in style and circulation—while still containing as much directly comparable material as possible. Choosing to work with multiple versions in chorus is choosing to work with the *Nights* as a landscape rather than as a set of wordings and literary choices particular to one version. One version cannot represent the whole without compromising the structure and style of the *Nights*–namely, its openness to variation and variability.

It is a frame story which authorizes enframed tales. These enframed stories do not always share themes or style with the frame, and they follow very few rules in terms of length, composition, topic, or type. Their purpose is to deliver enough intrigue to keep the king engaged: until the end of each story, until Shahrazad's death, until the nights reach 1001 in number. There must also be many of them, for only one story could not possibly provide enough content to keep the king captivated for the conceivable future, or the rest of Shahrazad's natural life. As Ghazoul describes it, the story is something of an accordion, which can be extended or condensed to fit the needs of the storyteller, and because of its malleability leaves itself open to variation in recitation.[10] All of these attributes of the *Nights* tie it directly to its history of orality, but they also make discussions of fidelity fraught by design, as Ghazoul's quote established: "*The Arabian Nights* is not compromised by such 'unfaithfulness'" (Ghazoul, 4). An accordion is both structured and flexible, changeable in exact form from version to version. Having a definitive

[10] Of the storytelling prose form: "It made use of expandable containers that functioned like verbal accordions. In The Arabian Nights, the complex narrative structure allow for the maximum capacities of enfolding, while permitting and even encouraging stylistic liberty and license" (Ghazoul, 153).

text of the *Nights* would be antithetical—the *Nights* exists only in many. Each retelling or performance is different, as each has to be in some sense, because the realm of the storyteller exists exactly as it is only in a moment. In Walter Benjamin's "The Storyteller," oral storytelling is defined as an art form which permits "slow piling one on top of the other of thin, transparent layers" and allows "narrative [to be] revealed through the layers of a variety of retellings" (Benjamin, 368). If we could grasp at an Urtext[11] of the *Nights*, it would be to look at those transparent layers one on top of the other and see the narrative revealed. We then need a light of some kind, a tool that allows us to see all of the layers at once and see what shines through. In the case of this project, that tool is Natural Language Processing, used to look for differences between the individual texts and to analyze them in context of one another. This is once again a way of looking at the *Nights* as a landscape, choosing to privilege multiplicity rather than disregard it.

Natural Language Processing (NLP) allows me to access the broad landscape of the *Nights* and as such applies programming languages and techniques to text—or *natural language*. NLP can be as quotidien as the Ctrl + F[12] function on your computer. For the aims of this project, Natural Language Processing by way of the programming language Python is applied to seven English translations of *Alf Layla Wa Layla* from the early 19th century to the early 20th, as well as Galland's French 1704 version.[13] Much of the NLP used in this project is simply a basic

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11 Urtext is a term which comes from biblical studies and classical music which refers to an original whose descendants can be studied but which is often not available for study in itself. It is a more befitting term in this case due to its lack of inherent emphasis on time: the term "original" often refers to the *first* of something, whereas Urtext is meant to evoke an originality in terms of ancestry, in terms of its influence on the available versions. In classical music, an Urtext is an edition which is meant to best reflect the piece as played by the composer, but it often includes available variations and it created long after the piece itself.

12 The Find function, often Ctrl + F or ⌘+ F, searches text for the input the user types into a box

13 Throughout the project NLP is used on the English versions whenever the words themselves are being worked on, but Galland is added when things like text length, paragraph length, and other orthographic items are being looked into. Galland can't be compared lexically to the other texts due to the different language, but his text is still used.

means of discussing aspects of the texts that would be extremely difficult to compile by hand, from how long the paragraphs are to how lexically diverse each text is. NLP is the means of discovery in this work, and it allows more information about the centrality of the frame story than would have been possible reading each of the texts. The findings of the NLP functions I use are then further elucidated by close reading and examination of the texts. Through the application of NLP, the project makes use of Franco Moretti's theory of distant reading:

> where distance… is a condition of knowledge: it allows you to focus on units that are much smaller or much larger than the text: devices, themes, tropes—or genres and systems. And if, between the very small and the very large, the text itself disappears… If we want to understand the system in its entirety, we must accept losing something. We always pay a price for theoretical knowledge: reality is infinitely rich; concepts are abstract, are poor. But it's precisely this 'poverty' that makes it possible to handle them, and therefore to know. (Moretti 57-58)

The project will remain at a distance from many of the texts in order to allow the wider angle that NLP offers to be of use, but will often put the information gleaned from NLP to work in order to further investigate assumptions and reasoning through close readings of specific texts. The frame tale of the *Nights* becomes clear through a wider angle, and then it can be observed and complicated in looking closely once again.

This project's major preoccupation is with the effects and uses of the frame tale, and mapping how its removal from some English texts like those of Lane, Payne, Scott, Lang, Housman, and Wiggin-Smith, corresponds to the removal of the internal logic of the story. Various aspects of the frame tale will be explored through context and history of the translators and the text, largely in the first chapter, which is concerned with representation and the multiplicity of the text. Specifically, the first chapter examines the concept of synecdoche (taking a part to represent a whole, or a whole to represent a part) in regards to the *Nights* and how it was used to represent the Orient. NLP results showing the words most important to each text will be

used to exemplify how removing the frame reveals a clear correlation to both less academic content, as well as more entertaining and fantastic conceptions of the Orient. The second chapter deals with the *Nights*' narrative engine, which is made up of several aspects of the frame tale and which holds the integrity of the *Nights* as a whole across variations in retelling. The Partial Removers and Removers, who all take out some or all of the frame and therefore the narrative engine of the *Nights* to some extent, compromise the generative force which resides in the *Nights* and therefore deeply alter how their versions enact themselves. Without the driving force of a narrative engine, as is present in the Retainer texts, the Remover and Partial Remover texts somewhat deactivate their texts. Natural Language Processing will be used throughout to support and complicate these arguments.[14]

This project hopes to glimpse the clarity that a retention of variety can bring to such a rich story cycle. To look at the versions of the *Nights* in chorus allows for a reading which has not been heard before, and a new vantage point in terms of understanding how the story cycle is enacted across forms. The use of NLP is a choice of distance, yes, but also a choice of vantage point: where close reading would allow one to look at only a few layers in conjunction and in their complete forms, NLP allows a view of all of them. After all, working with the *Nights* as a landscape while delving into its structure, its decoration, and its scope *is* the treatment it deserves.

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14 In context of the discussion of power, domination, and representation, the following project is certainly somewhere within the tracks set by the translators of the *Nights* discussed therein. The use of decontextualized and extremely subjective tools leads to the preferrencing of the understandings of the author, or in this case, programmer. Given that the functions performed in order to make use of NLP were designed directly by myself, their results can only reflect as much as I direct them to. Given that distant reading and Natural Language Processing make use of quantitative measures, they sometimes leave the impression of objectivity. This is a false impression. While measures offered by the tools of this project can be just as weighted and useful as the findings of close reading and analysis, they should not be taken to be more so. As Moretti put it, "We always pay a price for theoretical knowledge: reality is infinitely rich; concepts are abstract, are poor" (Moretti, 58).

Chapter One

Synecdoche

Over the course of the 19th and 20th centuries, translators of the *Nights* each treat the frame story differently: some remove it entirely, some retain it entirely, and some keep the initial frame tale (which introduces the king Shahriyar and Shahrazad and begins the narration) but remove the part of the tale where Shahrazad stops narrating each morning and then begins again each night, facets of the tale that will henceforth be termed dawn segments. After close examination of the prologues and introductions of each text, which speak to how each translator conceives of the *Nights* as well as why and how they chose to represent the story cycle, it becomes clear that the *Nights* was an instrument of Orientalism, used by each translator as a means of synecdoche[15] for all aspects of the Orient.

Tools of the digital humanities, including functions called TF and TF-IDF,[16] can be used to identify the appearances and composition of the frame tale across versions, as well as index the *Nights*' journey into Western society as an imagined representation of the Orient. Retainer and Partial Retainer texts index edification in their TF and TF-IDF results, whereas Remover texts index stories that have grown popular separate from the frame tale (such as Aladdin and Ali Baba) in their TF and TF-IDF results. Considering how translators use the *Nights* to represent the Orient in terms of how their texts reflect the frame or do not, it becomes clear that the power of representation and definition of the Orient through the *Nights*—and therefore, power over the

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15 Synecdoche, again, is using a part as a means of referencing a whole or a whole as a means of referencing a part (i.e. forest to mean tree, deck to mean boat)

16 In natural language processing, TF and TF-IDF are used to look at the significance of words to a text within itself, or to look at what words are unique to that text against a group of other texts, respectively. These functions are useful in this piece as a means of examining the differences between the texts and noticing trends in content in terms of the frame.

Orient—rests with those who control the frame, both in its retention and in its removal from text to text.

Orientalism is the scholarly system of study surrounding the "Orient," which is not a place based in geographical understandings of the world,[17] but is instead an expression of a system of power and domination over peoples, areas, cultures, religions, and languages which were *made* Oriental through the process of Orientalism. Edward Said states in the introduction of his book *Orientalism*:

> The Orient was Orientalized not only because it was discovered to be "Oriental" in all those ways considered common-place by an average nineteenth-century European, but also because it could be–that is, submitted to being–made Oriental. There is very little consent to be found, for example, in the fact that Flaubert's encounter with an Egyptian courtesan produced a widely influential model of the Oriental woman; she never spoke of herself, she never represented her emotions, presence, or history. He spoke for and represented her. He was foreign, comparatively wealthy, male, and these were historical facts of domination that allowed him not only to possess Kuchuk Hanem physically but to speak for her and tell his readers in what way she was "typically Oriental." My argument is that Flaubert's situation of strength in relation to Kuchuk Hanem was not an isolated instance. It fairly stands for the pattern of relative strength between East and West, and the discourse about the Orient that it enabled. (Said 5-6)

Said's description of Kuchuk Hanem and Flaubert demonstrates the "pattern of relative strength between East and West," which can also be examined in the translation and proliferation of the *Nights* as a means of representation of Arab culture and history: of the Middle East and North Africa, of Islam, of Islamic men and women, and of various peoples and cultures delineated therein. The way Flaubert "represented" Kuchuk Hanem is comparable to the way many of these translators attempted to represent the Orient by use of the *Nights* as their representative, to claim it as "typically Oriental" and therefore define for their readers the typical Oriental by way of the *Nights*.

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[17] Despite generally being considered somewhere either in the Middle East and North Africa (amongst European audiences) or Asia (amongst American audiences).

All of the translators discussed in this chapter use the *Nights* as synecdoche for the Orient. The idea of synecdoche applies to many aspects of this discussion: from woman as synecdoche for women within the narrative of the *Nights*, to the *Nights* as synecdoche for cultural materials from the Middle East and North Africa, to any given translation of the *Nights* as synecdoche for the story cycle as a whole. Synecdoche is a useful concept in describing the system of power and domination surrounding the story cycle and its usage by authors. A full grasp of synecdoche in the *Nights* must begin with the frame, the portion of the story which is most fraught across versions.

Ending each night (and beginning each morning) in the *Nights* are the dawn segments, in which Shahrazad "perceive[s] the light of day" and "cease[s] saying her permitted say" (Burton),[18] or "morning over[takes]" her and she "lapse[s] into silence" (Haddawy). The king decides to allow her to live through the day, because he wants to hear the end of the story which the dawn has just interrupted. The next night falls, and Shahrazad begins narrating the story where she left off that morning. These are aspects of the frame that continue throughout the story,[19] and make up one of two main parts of the frame throughout the *Nights*. The first part is the initial frame, which introduces the king Shahriyar and Shahrazad and begins the narration. The second part are these morning interruptions in the story, the dawn segments. Ghazoul says of the frame:

> This is the indispensable part of the narrative; it covers but a few pages at the beginning and the end. This is called the frame story. The stories related by Shahrazad… can be omitted from the discourse without infringing on the narrative thread. On the other hand,

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18 All quotes from the versions of the *Nights* used in this project will not contain a page number. This is because the texts I used are from Project Gutenberg and were downloaded in .txt format, which means that they had no page delineation, and if I were to use another printed version to reference page number the edition might have been different and not contained the exact same wordage. Wherever possible I cite the part of the text where the quote can be found, such as "preface" or "chapter two."

19 As opposed to the frame just beginning the enframed stories and then ending, as it does in the Partial Removers

> if the frame story were omitted, the result would simply be unconnected stories. In the first case, we have a necklace without beads; in the latter, beads without a necklace. (Ghazoul, 18)

Ghazoul claims the frame as central to the "narrative thread" of the *Nights*, and states that without it the "result would simply be unconnected stories." Given this understanding of the story cycle, it is difficult to reconcile the actual versions of the *Nights* available, some of which remove the frame and provide "beads without a necklace." The most extreme departure from the frame takes place in texts like Housman's and Wiggin & Smith's, our Removers, in which there is no frame tale but only a collection of stories. Texts translated by Burton and Galland (and, later, Haddawy), in contrast, retain both the frame opening and the dawn segments, and make up the Retainers. Translators Lane, Scott, Payne, and Lang all use the frame opening but stop repeating the dawn segments soon after the first night, occasionally using the frame to transition between stories (not nights) throughout but largely foregoing the frame after the beginning. These final four texts make up the Partial Removers, not fully retaining the frame but not removing it either. The instability between these three categories, in how the *Nights* is reflected in terms of the frame, can be an issue in conceiving of the *Nights* as a landscape, connected by more than just a title across versions. The organization of the translators by frame treatment can be seen in Fig. 1.

Retainers	Partial Removers	Removers
Galland, 1704-1717, Paris[20]	Scott, 1811-1890, London	Housman, 1907, London
Burton, 1885-1888, London	Lane, 1838-1840, London	Wiggin-Smith, 1909, New York
Haddawy, 1990, New York	Payne, 1882-1884, London	
	Lang, 1898, London	

Figure 1 Each text sorted into category in terms of how the frame tale is represented in each. Bolded text is due to the fact that *The Arabian Nights* by Haddawy will not be examined using NLP, as it is still within copyright.

Robert Irwin, scholar and historian of the *Nights*, writes that "people who have never sat down to read the *Nights* may know, or at least know of, the stories of Ali Baba, Aladdin, and Sinbad… 'It is a book so vast that it is not necessary to have read it'" (Irwin, 237). So the beads, or several particular beads, are known in and by themselves. These are stories known in spite of the *Nights*: they are the "known" of the *Nights* when the whole itself is "unknown" or "unread." The same texts that provide a frameless *Nights*, the Removers, show a greater emphasis in their texts on the particular stories of Aladdin, Ali Baba, and Sinbad—the "known" pieces of the *Nights*. The progression of the story cycle from known as whole to known in pieces correlates to the progression of removing the frame tale, as can be shown by looking into TF and TF-IDF results of the Retainers, Partial Removers, and Removers.

TF[20] functions are a way of defining common words within a text by counting how many times each word appears and dividing it by the total number of words—each word is given a high number if it appears often and a low number if it appears rarely. Where TF values words which appear often in a single text, TF-IDF[21] values words which appear often in one text and are comparatively rare across other texts.[22] If we were to imagine a corpus (or collection of texts) made up of *Dracula*, *Moby Dick*, and *Paradise Lost*, each would likely have the highest TF results with words like: he, the, so, said, a, and is; as would most English texts.[23] In contrast, the TF-IDF results of *Dracula* within that corpus would likely contain 'vampire,' just as the TF-IDF results of *Moby Dick* would contain 'whale' and 'ship.' TF results demonstrate commonness of words, and TF-IDF results demonstrate words important to one text in particular.

The TF-IDF results of translations of the *Nights* by the Retainers, Partial Retainers, and Removers are shown in Figure 2.

All of the TF-IDF lists contain transliterated Arabic terms[24]—titles like vizier (wazir, wezeer), or sheikh (sheykh, scheih) or names like Jaafar, Hasan, and Bedreddin, or other cultural referents like currency and religious terms. This is likely because these words are used often in each text but are uncommon across all of them, due to them being spelled differently or different stories being contained in different texts. For example, the word "wazir" (Burton) is the same Arabic word as Lane's "wezeer" and Lang's "vizir," but a computer program would have no way of recognizing these as the same word without express data on different spellings of vizier.

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20 Short for Term Frequency

21 Short for Term Frequency – Inverse Document Frequency (the hyphen indicating "by" in that the term frequency is multiplied "by" the inverse document frequency)

22 It does so by multiplying the term frequency by the inverse of the term frequency of the same term across documents. Again, the biggest numbers signify that a word is more important (important being a combination of common and unique to that text to a text, and a smaller number signifies less importance.

23 These are examples of stopwords, or words which are extremely common in a language.

24 Transliterated terms are Arabic words spelled in the Latin alphabet.

However, also apparent in the TF-IDF scores is a bent of the frameless texts towards stories which have become "known," such as those of Aladdin and Sinbad. These results demonstrate the frame being removed, alongside a greater appearance of names from within the tales which, as Irwin has put it, are "known" despite being unread; in Fig. 2 below Burton's "shahrazad" on the left becomes Wiggin-Smith's "aladdin" on the right.

	Retainers		Partial removers								Removers			
Rank	Burton		Scott		Lane		Payne		Lang		Housman		Wiggin-Smith	
1	fn	278	deen	152	khaleefeh	129	khalif	108	camaralzaman	69	baba	81	aladdin	189
2	wazir	138	ad	79	wezeer	123	noureddin	92	aladdin	67	codadad	66	afterward	60
3	aldin	96	abou	58	sheykh	84	jaafer	86	vizir	67	illustration	60	aladdins	54
4	quoth	80	alla	58	nooreddeen	69	bedreddin	68	grandvizir	66	morgiana	57	sheikh	51
5	ifrit	74	noor	50	sulṭán	66	quoth	67	noureddin	60	pirouz	51	emeer	47
6	hasan	71	mazin	39	ḳurán	58	dinars	59	amina	36	firouz	43	moosa	45
7	badr	56	zobeide	39	tájelmulook	55	fn	48	zobeida	32	schah	43	baba	33
8	jaafar	39	buddir	37	jaạfar	52	afrit	48	cogia	31	harran	37	magician	31
9	shahrazad	36	ebn	35	note	41	ghanim	45	scheih	27	cogia	34	sinbad	31
10	etc	33	schemselnihar	32	bedreddeen	38	folk	37	balsora	25	sesam	23	codadad	31

Figure 2 Results are the words with the top ten TF-IDF score for each text, organized into Retainers, Partial Removers, and Removers. The scores are displayed alongside the word to which they correspond, and while these are the top ten for each text, it is important to note that there is considerable difference in value amongst the results (i.e., Burton's #7 result is close in number to Lang's #1)

Alongside a clear correlation between the frame's loss and these "known" stories, the removal of the frame also corresponds to less academic explanation of the text. Words that appear across the Retainers and Partial Removers index scholarship or formatting—Burton's 'fn' is used in text each time a footnote appears, Lane's footnotes are each numbered as 'Note x', hence why 'note' is so high on his list. Contrastingly in Housman, a Remover, the word 'illustration' appears as number 3 on his list, indexing the fact that he has illustrations on almost every page of the text. As can be seen in Figure 2, removing the frame in the *Nights* corresponds to less academic explanation of the text ('fn' is Burton's first term, 'note' is Lane's ninth) and a

higher use of names and terms which are related to the stories which have come to represent the *Nights* in themselves, as well as more words with a somewhat more entertaining bent than scholarly bent (Housman and Wiggin-Smith have more words like 'illustration,' 'magician,' and 'sesam'—as in "open sesame" from Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves). As the frame is removed, less of it is present in the TF-IDF results: Shahrazad's name is only in the Retainer text (Burton), and words like "quoth" (a common way of indicating Shahrazad's narrations, i.e. "so quoth Shahrazad") disappear by the time we reach the Remover texts. Simultaneously more terms of the "known" story cycle—in its circulation through stories like Aladdin—are present.

This analysis can be further elucidated by sending the TF-IDF results of each author through an English language filter, removing transliterated names and titles and showing the common English terms unique to each author. These results are shown in Figure 3.

	Retainers		Partial removers								Removers			
Rank	Burton		Scott		Lane		Payne		Lang		Housman		Wiggin-Smith	
1	etc	33	ad	79	note	41	folk	37	quite	13	illustration	60	emperor	12
2	folk	28	al	23	muslims	36	baghdad	34	genius	12	surgeon	23	african	12
3	edit	28	fairy	12	c	29	el	28	monkey	10	diverse	14	surgeon	9
4	baghdad	21	ought	10	ch	28	ben	27	anyone	10	recently	12	ought	9
5	ie	19	shaw	9	illustration	27	whilst	15	everyone	9	conspiracy	9	toward	9
6	ii	11	yourself	8	commonly	25	broker	10	screw	7	conflict	9	concert	5
7	al	10	tube	6	muslim	21	er	9	yourself	6	instantly	8	yourself	5
8	richardson	10	nurse	4	v	20	despite	8	officials	6	toward	8	idol	5
9	lit	10	warehouse	4	edition	19	controller	8	directly	6	event	7	cave	5
10	m	10	commander	4	vol	16	commander	6	baby	6	cave	7	exposed	4

Figure 3 Results are the words with the top ten TF-IDF score for each text, looped through a list of common English words to filter out transliteration.[25] Significance once again varies across texts, with the numbers being much higher among Burton and Lane, for example, than Wiggin-Smith and Scott. This is likely due to the fact that many of Burton and Lane's results in this study come from their notes, which use words like 'etc' or 'vol' with a much higher frequency than most words can be found in these texts. Some of the other authors do not use notes as much or to the same effect, so their terms must come from the body of the text and hence are less repetitive.

[25] List I used of 1,000 most common English words can be found here, cited under Deekayen

Once again, a clear correlation can be seen in Fig. 3 between frame removal and words that are used for description or academic discourse. Texts that retain the frame use more scholarly terms or referents, whereas in Remover texts these terms are not as common. Burton and Lane are the clearest examples of TF-IDF results which reflect their notes and therefore their attempt at using the *Nights* as an educational text. Look for instance at 'note,' 'ch,' and 'edition' in Lane's TF-IDF results, or at 'edit,' 'ie' and 'etc'[26] in Burton's. These terms all serve to reference other scholarly works that they are using in their notes,[27] either to support their statements or refute the comments of others. For instance, Lane often uses "edition" in his notes to reference which manuscript he translated into a specific portion of the text, something likely only relevant to Arabic speakers, scholars, and other Orientalists. Burton uses the term "etc" 65 times in his text, and each one is in his notes (often used elaborating the meaning of an Arabic word [28] or to reference the source he's using for his information on "Orientals"[29]).

These terms appearing in Lane and Burton's top ten TF-IDF scores reflect the importance of scholarship to their translations. Examples of attempts to explain the Orient to their readers can be found often within their notes, using some part of the story as a point of reference for describing an anthropological facet of their observations. For example, Lane's first note is attached to the initial phrase of the text "In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful" (بِسْمِ اللهِ الرَّحْمنِ الرَّحِيْم the first words of the Qur'an). He uses the first words of the text to launch

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26 'etc' also appears in Lane's list as 'c' because he writes it as '&c.'

27 Also in this list of terms which refer to scholarly work of *the Nights*: Burton's 'richardson'–which is in reference to John Richardson, an Orientalist who wrote a dictionary of Persian, Arabic, and English which Burton often refers to in his notes.

28 For example, "'Káhin' … a diviner, soothsayer, etc." is from Burton's Note 46

29 For example, Burton references "tribe Ad" as "Prehistoric Arabs who measured from 60 to 100 cubits high: Koran, chaps. xxvi., etc." in Note 108

into a note which is over 2,000 words long and describes the requirements and practices of Islam, stating:

> The exordium of the present work, showing the duty imposed upon a Muslim by his religion, even on the occasion of his commencing the composition or compilation of a series of fictions, suggests to me the necessity of inserting a brief prefatory notice of the fundamental points of his faith, and the principal laws of the ritual and moral, the civil, and the criminal code; leaving more full explanations of particular points to be given when occasions shall require such illustrations. (Lane, note 1, chapter 1)

To underscore his terms: he found it "necessary" to insert a "brief prefatory" note—of over two pages—to discuss all of the "fundamental points" of Islam, in order to explain a sentence which dedicates the text in the name of God. This type of cultural explanation continues throughout Lane's text has notes on everything from the lifespan of Orientals (note 39, ch 1), to one describing common Egyptian fountain decoration and tile color (note 21, ch 8), to another describing the manner of waking a person by rubbing their feet, a practice which "the Arabs are very fond of" (note 55, ch 2).[30] His text is concerned with describing the Orient, which is reflected in some of the words in his TF-IDF list[31] in Fig. 3: the terms 'muslim,' 'commonly,' and 'muslims.'[32] Lane's nephew Stanley Lane-Poole states in the preface of the text "no oriental[ist] student can afford to be without [Lane's text]" (Lane, preface) highlighting the centrality of describing the Orient within the text.

This choice made by translators like Lane and Burton—to use the *Nights*, a literary story-cycle, as a means of educating an English-speaking Western audience about those things which are "common" amongst Orientals—turns their texts into attempts at synecdoche. They use stories as a means of defining religious tenets, cultural practices, and historical events. Further, they

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30 These notes are not Lane's most notable or his most egregious, by far, but were somewhat randomly picked to offer an overview of his concerns.

31 Note that most of Lane's TF-IDF results are directly related to notes: v and vol, ch and c (of etc.),

32 These words have all been made lower case by my code, but they are capitalized in the text (specifically I refer to "muslim" and "muslims" which appear in Lane as "Muslim(s)" but in my code's results lowercased.)

(along with other translators like Scott and Payne) both generalize and exaggerate in their descriptions of "orientals," a fact of which many examples can be found.[33] Said states of generalizations and Orientalism:

> The closeness between politics and Orientalism, or to put it more circumspectly, the great likelihood that ideas about the Orient drawn from Orientalism can be put to political use, is an important yet extremely sensitive truth… It necessarily provokes unrest in one's conscience about cultural, racial, or historical generalizations, their uses, value, degree of objectivity, and fundamental intent. (Said, 96)

In the above quotation Said is speaking to how generalizations made in Orientalism (by people like Lane and Burton) came to be considered truth, and said truth came to affect the political actions of many in the West as they interacted with the East. Later in *Orientalism* Said once again speaks to this process: "we readily observe the way cultural generalization had begun to acquire the armor of scientific statement" (Said, 149). These texts and the attempt they make at education via generalization helped to build the Orientalist system and cement harmful stereotypes as scientific and political fact.

Many of the translators take the *Nights* and use it as a representative of the Orient; offering it to readers as an exact depiction of how "orientals" behave or what they believe. Galland, the translator who first brought the *Nights* to Europe through his French translation in 1704, states of his text:

> All of the Orientals, Persians, Tartars and Indians can be distinguished here, and ***appear as they truly are***, from monarchs down to people of the poorest condition. Thus, without having to experience the fatigue of travelling and seeking out these people in their own

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[33] Most notable, perhaps, is Burton's seventh note, which states in its entirety: "Debauched women prefer negroes on account of the size of their parts. I measured one man in Somali-land who, when quiescent, numbered nearly six inches. This is a characteristic of the negro race and of African animals; e.g. the horse; whereas the pure Arab, man and beast, is below the average of Europe; one of the best proofs by the by, that the Egyptian is not an Asiatic, but a negro partially white-washed. Moreover, these imposing parts do not increase proportionally during erection; consequently, the "deed of kind" takes a much longer time and adds greatly to the woman's enjoyment. In my time no honest Hindi Moslem would take his women-folk to Zanzibar on account of the huge attractions and enormous temptations there and thereby offered to them. Upon the subject of Imsák = retention of semen and 'prolongation of pleasure,' I shall find it necessary to say more." (Burton, note 7)

> countries, the reader will here have ***the pleasure of seeing them act and hearing them speak***. (Galland, Épître, emphasis added)

The Removers, Housman and Wiggin-Smith, also connect to the history of the *Nights* as an Orientalist object, as a means of defining and creating the Orient as it has circulated and is still known. Within the period of publication from late 19th and early 20th centuries, the frame tale becomes less central to the story-cycle and less common as time passes. Galland starts the European translations strong with the frame, which is then partially removed in Scott, Lane, and Payne, returns briefly in Burton, and is then lost partially in Lang and completely removed in Housman and Wiggin-Smith. Look back at Fig 2 to see the Removers use terms like Aladdin (spelled in the way it is often spelled in English now) or Baba (of Ali Baba) or Sinbad—all of which are characters of the most famous stories from within the *Nights* which were added into the story cycle in European versions beginning with Galland. The appearance of 'aladdin' and 'sinbad' so high in TF-IDF results marks the complete separation of the frame from the *Nights* in these two versions, and likewise its complete journey into western culture and literature, where these stories now circulate free from the story cycle into which they are embedded. How these stories were separated from the frame, or how the frame was taken out of the *Nights* amongst Partial Removers and Removers, is central to understanding synecdoche and its relationship to power and domination in and of the *Nights*.

Partial Removers
Scott, 1811-1890, London
Lane, 1838-1840, London
Payne, 1882-1884, London
Lang, 1898, London

Figure 4

The Partial Remover group, replicated again in Figure 4, contains works which take a middle approach to the frame tale: they don't remove it entirely, but they also don't retain it

entirely. Lane, whose text *The Thousand and One Nights* was published in 1838, uses the frame tale to open his version but removes it after one night, stating in a note:

> On the second and each succeeding night, Shahrazád continued so to interest King Shahriyár by her stories as to induce him to defer putting her to death, in expectation that her fund of amusing tales would soon be exhausted; and this is expressed in the original work in nearly the same words at the close of every night, such repetitions will in the present translation be omitted. (Lane, Chapter 1)

Lane uses Shahrazad as an opener for the rest of the tales, but omits her existence past the beginning of the text. Doing so separates the background suspense which would grow with the reader as they, like Shahriyar, expect Shahrazad's "fund of amusing tales" to be exhausted and her death no longer deferred. Separating Shahrazad from the unfolding of the story contributes greatly to the experience of the text, as will be discussed throughout the second chapter.

One major characteristic of the Partial Removers is where they remove the frame, specifically after the first night or first few nights, concluding the frame tale as if it were an introduction to the text. Translators Payne and Lang remove Shahrazad and the dawn segments from their texts just as Lane does; Lang after the first night and Payne after the fourth night. Lang explains the frame tale which would usually proceed after the first night with two sentences: "This happened every morning. The Sultana told a story, and the Sultan let her live to finish it" (Lang, "The Story of the Merchant and the Genie"). Just as Lane does with his note, this explanation leaves readers with an overview of the rest of the story but removes them entirely from the drama of its unfolding. It takes Shahrazad's continued survival as a given, as if every morning she is pardoned as a matter of routine, when in the Retainer texts her death is at least a possibility.

The fact that all of the Partial Removers are removers of the dawn segments specifically suggests that the dawn segments are a contributing factor to the severing of the frame tale from

the *Nights* writ large, since they are the first things to go. Many of the translators cite the dawn segments in their introductions or prologues to their text, across texts that retain the frame and those that remove it. Of the second category, Lang puts his issue with the dawn segments most saliently:

> At last some storyteller thought of writing down the tales, and fixing them into a kind of framework, as if they had all been narrated to a cruel Sultan by his wife. Probably the tales were written down about the time when Edward I was fighting Robert Bruce. But changes were made in them at different times, and a great deal that is very dull and stupid was put in, and plenty of verses. Neither the verses nor the dull pieces are given in this book. (Lang, Preface)

Upon reading the above passage, the terms "dull" and "stupid" are the most striking, and they stand in stark contrast to the rest of Lang's vocabulary surrounding *One Thousand and One Nights*– the text he has translated and is here, in his Preface, introducing. He clearly finds the dawn segments frustrating to behold, they being the fragments he terms "dull and stupid" above (given that they are a portion he removed and that they are not "verses," the only other thing he admits to removing). However, elsewhere in the Preface, he describes the childlike wonder of "Fairy Books," told from generation to generation everywhere in the world, each without known origin. For Lang, the dawn segments infect a marvelous book of childlike wonderment with dull stupidity.[34]

Burton on the other hand, a Retainer of the frame, writes of the dawn segments in his Introduction:

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[34] Another important facet of how Lang references the past of the *Nights* is that he states that the stories were fitted together using the frame tale as a connector, but that the frame tale came after the stories: "At last some storyteller thought of writing down the tales, and fixing them into a kind of framework, as if they had all been narrated to a cruel Sultan by his wife" (Lang, Preface) There is no evidence to support this theory, and in fact much of the scholarship surrounding early versions of the *Nights* was done by equating the frame and its characters with the assumed existence of the rest of the text.

> My work claims to be a faithful copy of the great Eastern Saga book, by preserving intact, not only the spirit, but even the mécanique, the manner and the matter. Hence, however prosy and long drawn out be the formula, it retains the scheme of *The Nights* because they are a prime feature in the original. (Burton, Introduction)

An apology for the dawn segments is impressed upon the reader here: they are not only unnecessary but in fact impedimental, "prosy and long drawn out" and expressing of "formula." He understands the qualm of the other translators, or the temptation to remove the dawn segments. Despite this temptation, he terms them a "prime feature," acknowledging their centrality to the text. His text is a representation of the nonexistent "original," a work which is just as wordy, long, and repetitive as the one he provides. His text can be seen as a form of labor—in terms of working to retain "the scheme of *The Nights*"—but for Burton it is worthwhile work. Burton's definition paints the dawn segments as laborious, but also asserts their centrality.

Lawrence Housman, who published his *Stories from the Arabian Nights* in 1907, belongs in the Removers along with Kate Wiggin and Nora Smith, who published their *The Arabian Nights* in 1909. Both texts contain no frame tale whatsoever, not even at the beginning to introduce Shahrazad as narrator of enframed tales. Housman surprisingly—given that he removes the frame entirely in his version—praises Shahrazad as character and textual effect in his preface:

> The idea which binds the stories together is greater and more romantic than the stories themselves; and though, both in the original and in translation, the diurnal interruption of their flow is more and more taken for granted, we are never quite robbed of the sense that it is Scheherazad who is speaking—Scheherazad, loquacious and self-possessed, sitting up in bed at the renewed call of dawn to save her neck for the round of another day. Here is a figure of romance worth a dozen of the prolix stories to which it has been made sponsor; and often we may have followed the fortunes of some shoddy hero and heroine chiefly to determine at what possible point of interest the narrator could have left hanging that frail thread on which for another twenty-four hours her life was to depend. (Housman, Preface)

Much of his introduction can be taken as explanation for removal of the frame; he justifies removal by recognizing the centrality and importance of the frame, but claiming it need not be present to be central. In saying "the idea which binds the stories together is greater and more romantic than the stories themselves," and "[Shahrazad] is a figure of romance worth a dozen of the prolix stories to which [she] has been made sponsor," Housman makes clear his admiration for the frame and his seeming understanding of it. He describes a reader who keeps Shahrazad, "left hanging [on] that frail thread on which for another twenty-four hours her life was to depend," in mind while reading about others in an enframed story, temporarily engaged but only insofar as it allows them to reach the realm of the frame once more. He states of the dawn segments: "both in the original and in translation, the diurnal interruption of their flow is more and more taken for granted," meaning throughout reading the text the reader is aware that the frame exists and days are passing in the realm of the frame, even if they are not brought back to the frame as often or as extensively. This is reflected in the texts which retain the dawn segments: Burton, Haddawy and Galland all make use of shorter and further apart dawn segments through to the end of their texts.

But Housman implicates himself in assuming that the almost subconscious presence of the frame is enough to remove it from a text formally. He states of his own version, "we are never quite robbed of the sense that it is Scheherazad who is speaking--Scheherazad, loquacious and self-possessed, sitting up in bed at the renewed call of dawn to save her neck for the round of another day" (Housman, Prologue). This is an assumption on his part that his audience will sense Shahrazad's presence as narrator even when it is entirely removed; an absence is an absence, even if it offers the possibility to be sensed.

Housman states his purpose for removing the frame in terms of economy: the text as a means to ends.

> No one can read the majority of the tales in their accepted versions without perceiving that, as regards construction and the piecing of event with event, they are either incredibly careless or discreditably perfunctory. We have to reckon with them as the product of a race keenly alive to the value of colour and pictorial description, but a race whose constructive imagination was feeble and diffuse, lacking almost entirely that great essential for the development of art in its finer forms—the economy of means toward ends. (Housman, Preface)

Housman states the above as his reasoning for taking "liberties" with the text, the stories, and his version in general. Housman blaming the "race" who created the very text he is translating and profiting off of for their lack of directional constructive imagination is beyond irony. The Removers—Housman and Wiggin-Smith—do so because they feel the text is improved without the frame: they sacrifice the reality of the text as the *Nights* in order to privilege the beauty or usability of the text (repetition and multitude being ugly in their view). They consider the frame to be unnecessary, easily separated as if a part from the whole. The Retainers—Burton, Haddawy, and Galland—keep the frame in order to privilege the reality of the text, to retain ties and reflect fidelity to an Arabic oral ancestral text through their works. The Partial Removers—Lane, Lang, Payne, and Scott—neglect to explain their reasons to the same extent of the Removers and the Retainers; as if they hope their transgressions go unnoticed, or as if they feel their choice is the most reasonable and therefore without need of defending. Lane goes as far as any of them in terms of explanation with his note, simply stating of the dawn segments "such repetitions will in the present translation be omitted" (Lane, Chapter 1).

Just as these translators are speaking to their versions of *the Nights* and why they do or do not retain the frame, they are also speaking to their own work of representing the Orient through *the Nights*. Burton claims the *Nights* as "a perfect expositor of the medieval Moslem mind," and

states in his explanatory notes “I can hardly imagine *The Nights* being read to any profit by men of the West without commentary” (Burton, Preface). Representation is integral to the *Nights*’ involvement in Orientalism, as it came to represent Islamic culture, customs, and manners of Arabs and Middle Eastern peoples at large. As many of the translators focused on in this project were famous Orientalists of their respective periods, and as the *Nights* is one of their major contributions to the field, to disregard the connection between the text and these Western translators in terms of power, domination, and representation would be a gross oversight and would lead to a misrepresentation of the story cycle’s full context.

To return to Kuchuk Hanem and Flaubert, Said put their relationship as one of power taken: “Flaubert’s situation of strength in relation to Kuchuk Hanem was not an isolated instance. It fairly stands for the pattern of relative strength between East and West” (Said, 6). Theses translations worked to provide the *Nights* as a manifestation of peoples of the Orient, who Galland claimed “can be distinguished here, and appear as they truly are” (Galland, Épître). They used notes to distinguish their descriptions of the Orient and to use them to generalize about who and what made up the Orient. Lane’s use of the term “commonly” so high in his TF-IDF results underscores his attempt at representing the common actions of Orientals and therefore defining an “Oriental” for his audience, using examples from within the text or within his own life as a means of synecdoche.

An excellent example of synecdoche exists within one of Lane’s other texts, *An Account of the Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians* (1836), in which Lane uses a friend and guide named Ahmed as a representative for how all Muslims think and behave and portrays him as a “bizarre glass-eater and a polygamist” (Said, 160). Said describes Lane’s interactions with and representation of Ahmed as such:

> what seems to be factual reporting of what *one* rather peculiar Muslim does is made to appear by Lane as the candidly exposed center of *all* Muslim faith. No mind is given by Lane to the betrayal of his friendship with Ahmed or with the others who provide him with information. What matters is that the report seem accurate, general, and dispassionate, that the English reader be convinced that Lane was never infected with heresy or apostasy, and finally, that Lane's text cancel the human content of its subject matter in favor of its scientific validity. (Said, 161)

What "matters," according to Said, is that Lane feigned scientific knowledge of Muslims through Ahmed as a case study, and in doing so removed the singularity of Ahmed's actions in favor of synecdoche. Ahmed does not act as a single Muslim in the text, rather as an "accurate" and "general" description of all Muslims. In choosing how to describe what Islam generally is or how Muslims "commonly" act by using "*one* rather peculiar Muslim," Lane is defining the religion and its believers through this behavior for his audience. Using Ahmed thusly allows Lane to enact power over the idea of Muslims in general, as well as power over the Orient by describing it as such.

In using the *Nights* as synecdoche for the East, translators were exercising power over the story cycle and contributing to the system of power and dominance which defined the very center of Orientalism. This domination was deeply entrenched in power structures of the period (and up to modern day): colonialism, economic and political institutions, academic structures, as well as artistic institutions and literary circles. The centrality of the frame to this synecdoche is both in how its removal changed the circulation of the *Nights*, as well as in how the frame resists this type of representation itself, within the story. This resistance to synecdoche is through how the text handles Shahriyar and Shahzaman's use of their wives as representatives for all womankind, leading the kingdom into disarray and chaos as Shahriyar slowly kills off the female population. Shahrazad's storytelling stabilizes the chaos wrought by synecdoche, and her character serves as foil to the wives' behavior.

In the frame story of the *Nights*, when each Shahriyar and Shahzaman discover their wives' infidelity, they are at first shocked by the singularity of these indiscretions and see them as rare occurrences and not representations of a rule. When Shahzaman finds his wife in the arms of a man of lesser stature than himself[35] he believes his plight is greater than that of anyone else, and despairs greatly at this thought. Upon finding his brother's wife cheating on him in an even more humiliating manner, Shahzaman is relieved, knowing that his wife's infidelity was not a singular occurrence but rather an expression of a general truth: "there is no wickedness equal to that of women" (Scott); or "there be no Might save in Allah, the Glorious, the Great; and with Him we seek refuge from women's malice and sleight, for of a truth it hath no mate in might" (Burton); or "Never trust in women; nor rely upon their vows" (Lane); or "We seek aid of God against the malice of women, for indeed their craft is great" (Payne); or "all women were as wicked as the sultana, if you could only find them out, and that the fewer the world contained the better" (Lang).

In this example from the frame tale we see an expanse on the idea of representation: upon witnessing one woman cheating Shahzaman is distraught but thinks of himself as alone in this experience, but once the deed is duplicated in the story once, he decides that instead his experience is universal and his wife is representative of all women. Shahriyar goes through the same transformation, when Shahzaman first tells him about the indiscretion he states "In my opinion, what happened to you has never happened to anyone else" (Haddawy, 9). This serves partially as dramatic irony for the reader or listener, who already knows that Shahriyar's own wife has cheated on him. It also replicates the same process of one act or event as representing

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35 She is found with "one of his black slaves" (Payne), "one of the meanest officers of her household" (Scott), "a male negro slave" (Lane), "a black cook of loathsome aspect and foul with kitchen grease and grime" (Burton), and "one of the kitchen boys" (Haddawy). What is clear across versions is that Shahzaman is likely meant to be offended by her choice of lover.

the whole of womankind, which happens once again as the brother-kings travel to find someone whose suffering is greater than their own. They find a demon who keeps his human wife in a cage at the bottom of the sea, and yet she still manages to extort both kings into sleeping with her, and afterwards shows them a collection of many[36] rings which she has taken from each of the men she has cheated on the demon with. Upon this third and final occurrence of infidelity for both kings, they decide categorically that no woman is to be trusted, after which they return to their kingdoms and Shahriyar begins having a new bride executed each morning.

The kings use one woman (each of their wives, respectively) as a representative for the whole of womankind. Not unlike Kuchuk Hanem, who Flaubert spoke for and categorized for his audiences as "typically Oriental," these women are cast as typical by the kings, who make assumptions about all other women based off of their wives' examples. In contrast, Shahrazad comes into the story immediately named, and has her own definition of self in a scene outside of her marriage and connection to the king, and speaks whole worlds into being. She often serves to represent herself as a foil to the wives' examples, in her bravery, her intelligence, and her dedication to a cause outside of herself. The central facet of Shahrazad in this matrix is her own self-representation: she is an actor and creator, and a fundamental aspect of the story as well as its very structure and layout. She is not peripheral or representative, and if taken as such it is not due to her lack of involvement in her own portrayal and actions, in the frame itself.

As Shahrazad resists the synecdoche of several women for womankind, the frame likewise resists its own repurposing into a representation for the Orient. By removing the frame, both the Removers and the Partial Removers take a position of power over the text, for in the frame story is the *Nights*' representation of self, through Shahrazad, its narrator. In representing

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[36] The number differs from text to text, sometimes 570 (Payne & Burton) and at other times 98 (Lane, Haddawy, and Scott who puts it as "fourscore and eighteen")

the *Nights* in their own ways, the translators are not only expressing their own version like the storytellers who contributed to its creation, but simultaneously working to represent the Orient through their versions. Men like Lane do more than describe the Orient in their notes, however—they work to create it. In Said's terms, they "submit" the *Nights* to "being made Oriental." The dawn segments are central to the *Nights*' internal understanding of representation and synecdoche, as well as many other aspects of the story, and by removing them both the Removers and the Partial Removers compromise these internal understandings, leaving their texts all the more open to being recapitulated and used for projects such as the representation of the Orient.

Chapter Two

Dawn Segments

Worded Space, Voiced Silence, and Narrator-less Narrative

The dawn segments are multifunctional in the *Nights*' structural makeup and internal logic. They hold the engine of the story—a narrative engine—throughout, by narrating to avoid death, enfolding narrative to expand time, and insisting on a narrative voice. Using the tools of the digital humanities, this chapter will show how the removal of the frame affects the text, and cement the place of the dawn segments as essential carriers of meaning throughout the tale. The dawn segments are central to the *Nights*' internal structure, and without them the narrative engine of the text stops running. To forgo the frame and the dawn segments is to forgo representing the internal logic and motivations of the *Nights*. Ghazoul says of the story and its structure:

> *The Arabian Nights* is constructed like a game of skill (as opposed to a game of chance) such as chess. There are indefinite ways of playing a game, but it remains—despite its many variations—a chess game. Similarly, the text preserves its identity although it is performed, as it were, in more than one way. (Ghazoul 4)

The Retainers, the Partial Removers, and the Removers are all attempting to translate versions of the *Nights*, but only the Retainers offer a game that can be played. The Partial Remover texts offer a game with half of the pieces and no clear objective, and the Remover texts put forward a game with no rules, no board, and no pieces. Without the dawn segments, the Partial Removers and the Removers come to lose the intentionality of the story's suspense, the insistence the story cycle has on repeating and expanding itself, and the narrative voice of Shahrazad. The Partial Removers and Removers seal Shahrazad's fate as a dead or dying textual effect by diminishing her voice and severing her functionality.

The narrative engine of the *Nights* has three core facets, interdependent and all held together through the dawn segments. The first facet is the motivation of the *Nights*: to avoid death by narrating. The second is the *Nights*' insistence on embedding narration: the story is a series of narrators narrating about narrators. The final facet is the *Nights*' tendency to make narration known by insisting on the present voice of the narrator. Together the three facets create an engine of narration: with a tendency to embed, to call attention to voice, and to motivate both embedding and voice in order to delay death. Each is necessitated by the others, which becomes clear through close examination, beginning with an understanding of the pattern and structure of the story cycle.

The *Nights* is somewhat formulaic in structure in the Retainers' translation: as night falls, Shahrazad begins telling a story. When the sun rises, she falls silent on a cliffhanger. So the tale continues, much in the same way each day and night, and yet with different enframed tales in between. The structure of the story can be visually demonstrated as shown in Figure 5:

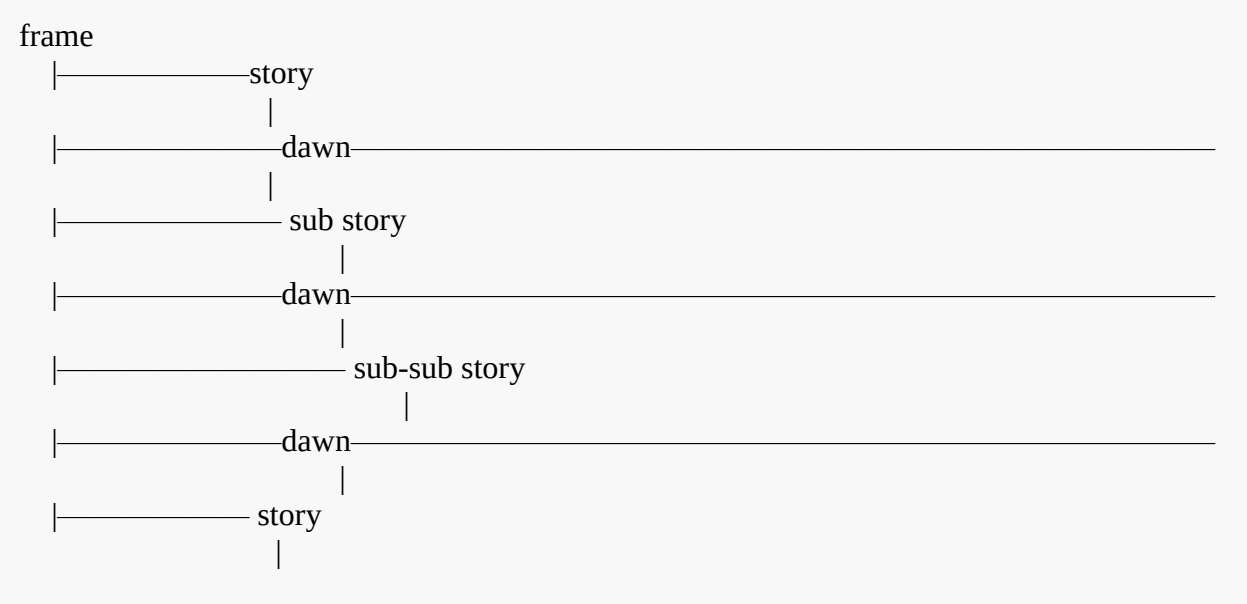


Figure 5 This is a representation of the formula of the *Nights*, in the texts that retain the frame. Continuous narration of a story is represented by the pipe, or vertical bar, symbol. The dawn, the reason the *Nights* is pulled from enframed story back to the frame story, is expressed by a line break. Indentation indicates the level of the story or sub-story: the further right the text, the further embedded we are in the spiral of stories within stories within stories. Finally, the left margin indicates the frame, and every time the *Nights* (the axis moving downward) connects back to the left margin is a moment when the frame tale appears in the narrative (during dawn segments and tale transitions). The Partial Removers and Removers would look similar, but would not include the dawn breaks.

The pattern in Fig. 5 is the structure of the story cycle which is created through narration, or sometimes highlighted by different versions' use of textual markers, such as blank space and centered text. A version of the *Nights* may have the look of Fig. 5 in the table of contents, or on the page by use of titles of tales and nights ("The Story of..." or "Night X"). Narrative can take the place of visual markers of night, as it does in Arabic texts that pre-date Galland and in Muhsin Mahdi's Arabic version entitled *Alf Layla wa Layla*.[37]

The dawn segments state that a night is ending and another beginning, similar to a title like "Night Eight," but through detailing the sun rising and night coming again. The difference amongst translators can be seen in examples of dawn segments by two Retainers, Burton and

[37] The titles were added in with Galland's text, and since many of the Arabic manuscripts available were published after Galland and include additions that he made (from the use of tale titles to the addition of stories like Aladdin and the Magic Lamp, or Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves) they also contain the titles. Mahdi attempts to give Arabic readers a glance of a pre-Galland version of the *Nights*, because the titles were ultimately a Western addition.

Haddawy, alongside a Partial Remover, Payne, who represents nights by numbering them but does not return to the frame. Burton's text is represented in Figure 6 below, Haddawy in Figure 7, and Payne in Figure 8.

Burton:

...Replied the Ifrit, "What! cost not believe that I was all there?" and the Fisherman rejoined, "Nay! I will never believe it until I see thee inside with my own eyes." And Shahrazad perceived the dawn of day and ceased to say her permitted say.

When it was the Fourth Night,

Her sister said to her, "Please finish us this tale, an thou be not sleepy!" so she resumed:--It hath reached me, O auspicious King, that when the Fisherman said to the Ifrit, "I will never and nowise believe thee until I see thee inside it with mine own eyes;" the Evil Spirit on the instant shook…

Figure 6 Burton's text, the dawn segment is between the third and fourth night. It is reproduced here in a similar way as in the text, the segments of text are separated by whitespace and "When it was the Fourth Night" is printed on the page in a different font and much larger than the rest of the text. The underlined segments are the portion which I refer to as the dawn segment, and the underlining is my own and is not replicated in Burton's text.

Haddawy:

...Then he sat down beside him and chatted with him. As they talked…

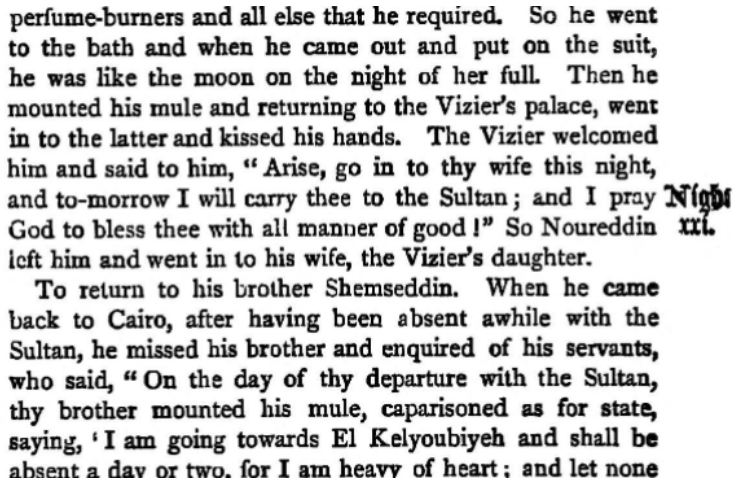
But morning overtook Shahrazad, and she lapsed into silence. As the day dawned, and it was light, her sister Dinarzad said, "What a strange and wonderful story!" Shahrazad replied, "Tomorrow night I shall tell something even stranger and more wonderful than this."

The Third Night

When it was night and Shahrazad was in bed with the king, Dinarzad said to her sister Shahrazad, "Please, if you are not sleepy, tell us one of your lovely little tales to while away the night." The king added, "Let it be the conclusion of the merchant's story." Shahrazad replied, "As you wish":

Figure 7 Haddawy's text, the dawn segment between the second and third night, reproduced here with the same italicization and whitespace as it is printed on the page. (Haddawy 25)

Payne:



perfume-burners and all else that he required. So he went to the bath and when he came out and put on the suit, he was like the moon on the night of her full. Then he mounted his mule and returning to the Vizier's palace, went in to the latter and kissed his hands. The Vizier welcomed him and said to him, "Arise, go in to thy wife this night, and to-morrow I will carry thee to the Sultan; and I pray God to bless thee with all manner of good!" So Noureddin left him and went in to his wife, the Vizier's daughter. Night xxi.

To return to his brother Shemseddin. When he came back to Cairo, after having been absent awhile with the Sultan, he missed his brother and enquired of his servants, who said, "On the day of thy departure with the Sultan, thy brother mounted his mule, caparisoned as for state, saying, 'I am going towards El Kelyoubiyeh and shall be absent a day or two, for I am heavy of heart; and let none

Figure 8 Payne's text, a Partial Remover who marks nights by use of text in the margins. He does this throughout his volumes, and only in the first few nights does he include Shahrazad noticing the dawn and falling silent. (Payne *Internet Archive*, 179)

Burton and Haddawy both contain dawn segments, indicated in Fig 6 through bold (added) and Fig 7 through italics (which are included in the original). Payne, in contrast, just places "**Night xxi.**" as a possible replacement for a dawn segment, when really the only aspect of the dawn segments that this could replace is the delineation. It is almost as if he wants to prove to the audience how many nights he has accounted for, so that they can keep track. Payne does away with the repetitiveness of the dawn segments and with Shahrazad, but in doing so, he severs his version of the *Nights* from the motivation and logical integrity it holds across the versions that retain the dawn segments and the frame. His version does not retain voice, enact embedding, or motivate itself by avoiding death, all due to his removal of the dawn segments. He has occluded the narrative engine of his version of the *Nights*.

The *Nights*' narrative engine is motivated by death, specifically narrating in order to avoid death. Shahrazad begins telling stories in order to delight and entertain Shahriyar so that when the dawn comes and he has to put her to death, he can't bear to do it. The frame story is predicated on Shahrazad's intention of staying alive as long as possible, to save herself from Shahriyar's wrath but likewise to save the lives of all of the other women in the kingdom who

could become his victims. Shahrazad exclaims, “O my father, how long shall this slaughter of women endure?” (Burton), and states her purpose as either to “succeed in saving the people or perish and die like the rest” (Haddawy, 15). From this point forward, the story is concerned with keeping Shahrazad alive, from one morning to the next. Shahrazad retains stories within her very mind and body; it is described that she:

> had perused the books, annals and legends of preceding Kings, and the stories, examples and instances of by gone men and things; indeed it was said that she had collected a thousand books of histories relating to antique races and departed rulers. She had perused the works of the poets and knew them by heart; she had studied philosophy and the sciences, arts and accomplishments; and she was pleasant and polite, wise and witty, well read and well bred. (Burton)

To kill Shahrazad would be to kill the story, and the objective of the text is to continually flirt with but continually avoid the end of the story-telling. The possibility of the story ending is a constant, and the cycle reaches toward infinity through each finite night, each night that could be the last. The *Nights*’ title alludes to this objective of infinity, as “One Thousand and One Nights” has been understood to represent ‘infinity plus one’: an infinite number of stories plus another, a thousand nights and another after that.[38] Ghazoul states this in a slightly different way: “Shahrazad’s objective is to reach the infinite through a finite medium, and to create continuity through an episodic structure” (Ghazoul, 83). To narrate, and specifically for Shahrazad to narrate, is to live within the *Nights*. In the enframed stories as well, those who narrate live and those who fail to narrate die (or are threatened with death). Many enframed characters tell stories

[38] From Ghazoul: “The use of one thousand signifying the maximum, the highest degree or the most conceivable, is often used in poetry… One thousand and one can be recast as 1000 + 1, or the maximum number imaginable, plus one… So Shahrazad in fact narrates *ad infinitum*.”

to save themselves from death, which leads the narrative into sub-stories,[39] as can be visualized in Figure 6.

One example of the *Nights*' motivation by (or against) death is in The Story of the Physician Douban,[40] which is echoed in Payne, Burton, Lang, Lane, Scott (all of the Partial Removers along with Burton, a Retainer), but this story is not present in Wiggin-Smith and Housman, the Removers. In the story, a doctor named Douban is originally sentenced to death by a king, but then miraculously saves the king's life. In return Douban expects to be released from his punishment, but the king decides to put him to death nonetheless. When the execution is about to happen, Douban tells the king about a book he owns, which "possesses many singular and curious properties; of which the chief is, that if your majesty will give yourself the trouble to open it at the sixth leaf, and read the third line of the left page, my head, after being cut off, will answer all the questions you ask it" (Scott, "The Story of the Vizier that was Punished"). The king grants Douban to go and retrieve the book, and then cuts off Douban's head, which begins speaking to the king after it has been severed from his body. The head instructs the king to open the book, the pages of which are blank and contain poison, quickly infecting the king and killing him. The empty book literally kills the king, or as Tzvetan Todorov states of the same story: "The blank page is poisoned. The book which tells no story kills. The absence of narrative signifies death" (Todorov, 74).

One of the stories which clearly represents the *Nights*' relationship with narration and narrating to delay death is the exact same story removed in Housman and Wiggin-Smith, the Remover texts. What they remove is more than just the frame, but in this case, traces it might

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39 Examples are in the first, second and third sheikhs' stories within the Tale of the Trader and the Jinni, or within the Story of the Porter and the Three Ladies of Baghdad, which contains six further enframed stories. It is common for enframed characters to become narrators themselves.

40 This title is not in italics or quotes because it is not referring to any one story in any one version, but a story that exists across versions and has different titles in different versions.

have left behind amongst the enframed stories. They are taking a sense of life and death away from their versions by removing the frame, alongside stories like the one of Douban.

The *Nights*' momentum is created by avoiding the narrator's death, and by narrating to delay death. This is the first factor of the tripartite narrative engine: *narrating against the clock.* To narrate against the clock is to narrate against time, and to narrate against time effectively, the passing of time must be mediated: stretched so as to push of inevitable death even further. *Enfolding narrative* expands the functioning of time in the *Nights*, and is the second aspect of the narrative engine. In order to "reach the infinite through a finite medium" (Ghazoul, 83), Shahrazad and her stories do not transcend time, but rather, expand it. As Shahrazad narrates stories to Shahriyar over the course of the *Nights*, she is buying herself time, but she is never fully separated from time or from its passing. If at any moment she runs out of entertaining and glorious tales, or fails to end on a particularly juicy moment of a story when the dawn comes, Shahriyar will follow through on his promise and put her to death.[41] For this reason, she has to embed stories within stories, to keep narrating each individual story as long as possible while still holding the movement of the story cycle forward.

Through the power of narration and the suspense she is able to live day by day. This is not a permanent solution to her problem—any morning could be her last if she stops narrating. But her solution is made effective by Shahrazad's ability to expand time within the narrative, which she does by further embedding it: putting one story into another, so that the end of any given story is dependent on the end of every level of story embedded therein. She is *enfolding narrative,* putting a story within another like Russian nesting dolls.

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[41] Interestingly, there are some cases where Shahrazad finishes a story exactly as she finishes a night, and where the king could surely put her to death, and yet, the story continues (this is rare, but can be seen in Haddawy at the beginning of the One Hundred and Second Night, p. 248). Still, this oddity is only available in Retainer texts.

In order to better understand enfolding and the *Nights'* narrative engine it is important to underscore how the story cycle works with time. Time is central to the relationship between the enfolding of the story cycle and the dawn segments, because expanding time would not be necessary if there was no time to expand. Time is not linear in the *Nights*, however, in the way it is often conceived to be today. Time in the *Nights* is sequential—because one night occurs distinctly *after* the last, and the thread of the *next* dawn coming is present throughout the text—but it is not exactly linear. It is cyclical: returning to a day or night in much the same way, to hear a different story of a different time, to live for a moment in a different time. Walter Benjamin's theory of messianic time has weight in the *Nights*: messianic time is a semi-nonlinear formulation of time which includes feeling and experiencing forms of the past (and specifically past revolutions). (Benjamin, "On the Concept of History") In the *Nights*, no story of a long-lost king or merchant is lost in the moment it is lived, but it can be recalled, it can rupture the time in which we live. Moments form together via succession and connect back to the revolutions of a day, as the earth passes around the sun.

The dawn segments create a text in the *Nights* which helps to keep this cyclical time for the reader or listener, like a grand clock calling out *night* and *day* when their moment in the text comes. Like a clock, the dawn segments' (when they appear) are near constant in wording and unwavering—they do not often change in wordage, they do not become infrequent, and they do not disappear (unless the translator doesn't print them). They are best classified by Housman—ironically, a Remover—who states in his preface:

> Procrastination was the basis of [Shahrazad's] art; for though the task she accomplished was splendid and memorable, it is rather in the quantity than the quality of her invention—in the long spun-out performance of what could have been done far more shortly—that she becomes a figure of dramatic interest. (Housman, Preface)

Again, terms are used to describe the dawn segments like “repetitive,” “long spun-out,” “widespread,” and “numerous.” But here we have a champion for the repetitions and length of the dawn segments: as Housman puts it, Shahrazad’s intrigue is in her repetitiveness. It is through the quantity of her actions that she succeeds. If she were to stop narrating after two or three nights, as she does in the Partial Remover texts, she would lose Housman’s “intrigue,” or the suspense of the story cycle. Todorov writes of the *Nights*’ functioning: “Such is the incessant proliferation of narratives in this marvelous story-machine, the *Arabian Nights*. Every narrative must make its own narration explicit; but to do so a new narrative must appear in which this narration is no more than a part of the story” (Todorov 78).

Making narration explicit is where the third facet of our narrative engine—voice—comes to the fore. As they are reproduced from Burton in Fig. 6 and Haddawy in Fig. 7, the dawn segments are a narrative description of Shahrazad’s silence, in that they are called in with the words, “And Shahrazad perceived the dawn and ceased saying her permitted say” (Burton, 29); and “*But morning overtook Shahrazad, and she lapsed into silence, leaving King Shahrayar burning with curiosity*” (Haddawy, 23). Both of these segments are descriptions of her silence, of Shahrazad discontinuing the speech that previously inked the page. In reading “Shahrazad fell silent,” the reader is made aware that the enframed story they were just reading had its roots in Shahrazad and her voice. The silence they are now experiencing is contrasted with the noise Shahrazad was producing before, and will continue to produce if she is to survive another day. It is through the dawn segments, the pieces of text in which Shahrazad is silent, that her voice is actually retained.

The feeling of *voice*, of having the tales each told by a narrator (either Shahrazad or one of the characters of an enframed tale) is central to the engine of the text and is our third facet of

narration in the *Nights*. Voice in the *Nights* is tied to narrators: the reader begins with an omniscient narrator telling them about Shahriyar and Shahzaman, but as soon as the first night comes along, the reader is aware that they are being told a story by Shahrazad, and her voice takes on the enframed tales. Voice is indexed for the reader only through the dawn segments—Shahrazad never provides commentary or pauses in the middle of an episode of a story to make herself remembered. The dawn segments in the *Nights* act as indicators of a change in voice, an alteration in whose story we are experiencing.

Through the dawn segments Shahrazad's voice is retained throughout the text. If they disappeared so too would her voice, the reader might lose their awareness of the frame, and the narrative engine would stop running. Shahrazad narrates to avoid death, therefore her narrative must be expansive, to allow her to live. For this reason, her narrative must literally make time, which is done by embedding the text within itself. Her voice cannot be lost, because then time would be transcended entirely and there would be nothing to expand, nothing to motivate, no one's life hanging in the balance. With the dawn segments' removal comes the removal of time and of voice. To work once again off of Ghazoul's "game of skill" metaphor, the Removers and Partial Removers have cut out the very piece of the text in which the game is founded, they have removed the board and are playing chess on a blank, or halved, surface. So then why remove them, and what could the text gain from their removal?

The translators of Remover and Partial Remover texts answered this question for themselves in the first chapter: the dawn segments are "dull and stupid" (Lang), "prosy and long drawn out" (Burton), and create "repetitions" (Lane). Housman calls the frame and the dawn segments "that prolixity which in an impatient age tends to debar readers from an old classic" (Housman, Preface). These comments suggest that the dawn segments are purposeless and

overused, or requiring of patience. They are not unique—the same wording every day and night may get tiresome, and "debar" readers. Off of this critique, it would be a fair hypothesis to venture that the Partial Removers' texts are more unique than the Retainers', or that they contain less repetition.

This is not true, however, as can be exemplified by testing the lexical uniqueness of each of their texts. Using Python programming, I ran a function which returns the percentage of unique words in each of the texts I have looked into, the results of which are in Figure 9.

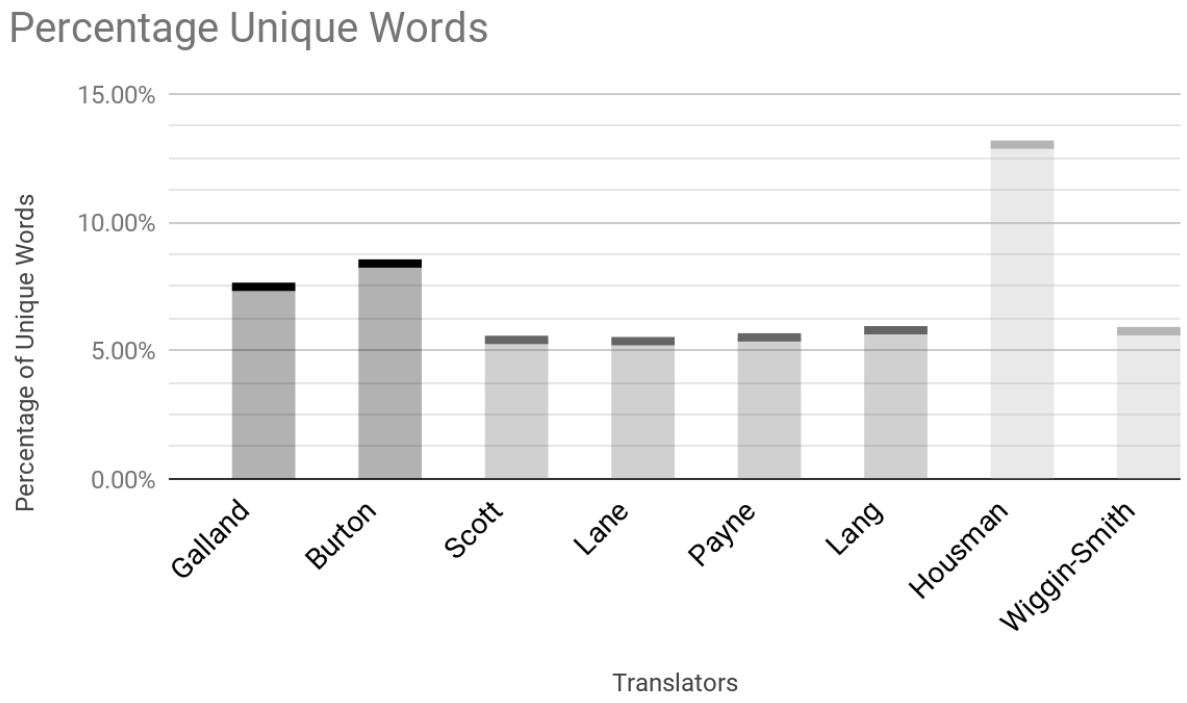

Figure 9 The average percentage of unique words in each text, organized by Retainers (darkest shade, far left), Partial Removers (middle shade, center) and Removers (lightest shade, far right). As can be seen, most texts are around the 5% unique words range, including all of the Partial Removers as well as Wiggin-Smith, a Remover. Galland and Burton, our Retainers, are in the high 7% range, and the Removers are the highest average with an average over 9%. The bold lines at the top of the bars bear no significance to the argument.

Clearly the Partial Remover texts were not any more unique than the Retainer texts, in fact they come out as less so. This is not to say that removing the dawn segments makes the Partial Removers' texts less lexically unique, but it does disprove the oft-repeated assumption that removing the dawn segments would make their texts less lexically repetitive. Housman is the most unique, followed by Galland and Burton, our Retainer texts (clearly not rendered repetitive by their use of "dull and stupid" dawn segments over their many pages). Housman's text is likely so unique only because it is very short, and words are not repeated as much throughout the text because there is simply less text for them to be repeated in. Text length can be seen in Figure 10.

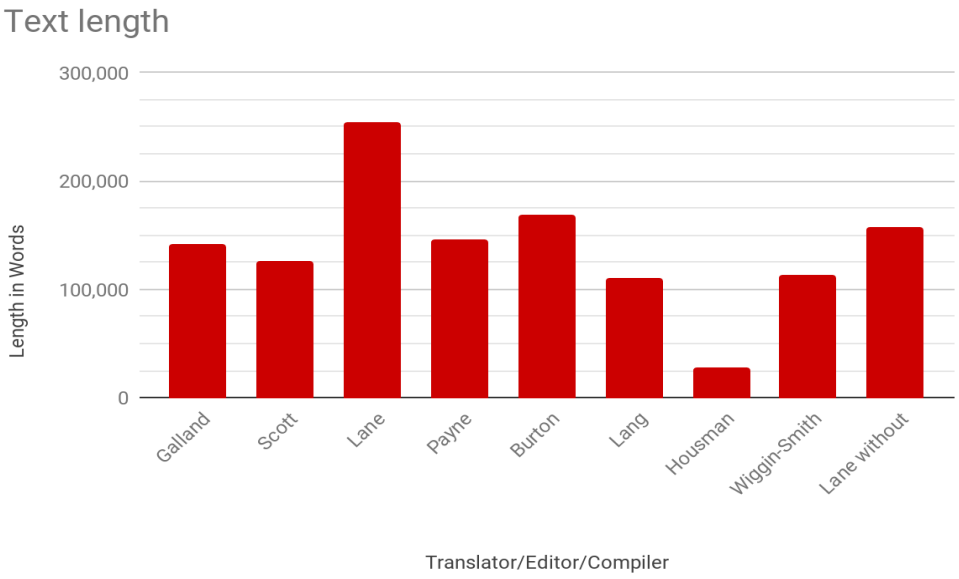

Figure 10 The length of each text in words. Lane is the clear leader, which was surprising to me since he did not have more stories than any other text. I worked out how many words he had without his footnotes sections, and it turns out his footnotes took up almost 100,000 of his words. Housman's text is by far the shortest, which explains why his uniqueness percentage is so high.

With this data on the uniqueness and length of each text, we can conclude two important things about the frame and how much repetition it actually adds to a text. First, those texts which

are much more repetitive in word choice are actually not the texts that retain the frame, but those that partially remove it. Second, those that remove it entirely don't have a clear relationship to uniqueness, but rather can best be approached through comparison with the two other categories, which have clear trends.

There are other ways of feeling that a segment of text is repetitive or "long drawn out," however, besides feeling the repetitiveness of the wordage itself. When reading the dawn segments, one could get the sensation of being confronted by text one already knows, or that the frame story has not progressed or moved forward. While the dawn segments provide the motion and continuation of the narrative engine which governs the *Nights*, they also (in themselves) enact inaction—they do not change. Housman, a Remover, said that he removed the frame tale (and the dawn segments along with it) because it lacks "economy of means towards ends." The dawn segments are without progress in Housman's understanding. Benjamin discusses progress and its assumptions: "The concept of… historical progress cannot be sundered from the concept of its procession through a homogenous, empty time" (Benjamin, "On the Concept of History," 394-395). The dawn segments don't progress the action of the frame, in the sense that would be provided by an empty, linear conception of time and its experience. But time is not "empty" or "homogenous" in the *Nights*, and so for the frame to act as such would be strange and out of place.

The dawn segments exist in inaction; by continually delaying Shahrazad's death their very purpose is to deny the actions of the king. This is how they find their centrality: in their delaying of action but simultaneous creation of action. The dawn segments delay action in themselves, but they are also necessary in order for the narration—the true engine and agentic fabric of the story cycle—to continue. Tzvetan Todorov refers to it thusly "the act of narrating is

never, in the *Arabian Nights*, a transparent act; on the contrary, it is the mainspring of the action" (Todorov, 73). Hence, the frame both creates pause (within the frame) and creates momentum (within the enframed tales). Housman, in removing the frame, retained the *action*, but removed its *actor* by removing its narrator.

Kate Wiggin, in her introduction to the version of the *Nights* that she edited with Nora Smith (the Wiggin-Smith text), describes the choice of removing the frame in her text in the following manner:

> We, like many other editors, have shortened the stories here and there, omitting some of the tedious repetitions that crept in from time to time when Arabian story-tellers were adding to the text to suit their purposes. (Wiggin-Smith, Introduction)

It may seem strange to a reader of the *Nights* that an editor would choose to leave something out because it was originally included to suit the purposes of a storyteller—it raises the question: what in the story cycle *was not* crafted to serve the purpose of a storyteller? Wiggin refers to the repetition as *tedious*, a term which echoes Lang's "dull and stupid" and Lane's "repetitions." The image gathered by each translator's classification is of a piece which is useless; and while they can appear useless in their inaction, it is with their enforcement of inaction that they gain their use. They are not "dull" in their repetition—or even if they are dull and prolix, their repetition is what generates meaning in the text.

The episodic structure of the *Nights*, keeping time through dawn segments from morning to morning, is central in the story cycle's effect of infinity, or rather, infinite circularity. The *Nights* is not infinite in its separation from the passage of time, but through its insistence on it. The dawn segments indicate time passing in the frame story, but also the frame story's insistence on circularity. That *nothing changing* may come across as "dull" to someone like Lang, and in some senses the dawn segments' insistence on their own immutability can be frustrating, but that

is exactly their point. The dawn segments need to hold the reader away from the enframed story, just as they do for Shahriyar.

Ghazoul says of succession and Shahrazad:

> Succession is as vital to narrative as seriality—that is, paradigmatic repetition—is to poetry. The narrative is the temporal discourse par excellence. There is an element of poetic justice in Shahrazad's struggle against deadline (and it is literally a dead line) armed with narrative: she fights time with time. (Ghazoul 18)

Ghazoul emphasizes narrative as "temporal discourse," which the *Nights* certainly is. And she well represents the two types of time with which Shahrazad weaves the story: Shahrazad "fights" linear, temporal time with the time of narrative, which is expandable and malleable. Different pieces of the text express their temporality in different ways: the dawn segments express the passage of time in the frame, but act to pause the enframed tales. The dawn segments are both action and inaction, temporality and permanence, movement and stagnation. The dawn segments indicate pause and space to the reader as well, by confronting them with a repetitive piece of text which they have already read before. Many of the translators of the *Nights* that remove the frame state their reasons based on the cumbersomeness of this confrontation—specifically Lang (who calls them "dull and stupid") and Wiggin-Smith (who call them "tedious repetitions") —but the dawn segments' cumbersomeness is central to their function as worded space and carrier of action, suspense, and life. These worded spaces retain Shahrazad's life, or reflect its sustenance to an audience waiting on bated breath to see if she is to survive to the next day to finish a story for them. Through narration she is both creating time for herself, but is also consuming the time that passes with each moment. The time she buys is the time of a life lived, time measured in moments and experiences—Benjamin's messianic time. The time she consumes is the time that passes in the course of a night, the time that can be measured in hours and minutes.

The dawn segments, and the frame via the dawn segments, create space, delay action (within the frame itself) and simultaneously are the seed of action (in the enframed tales). They create a sense of worded space for the reader, where one has to endure being separated from the actions occurring in the enframed stories to accompany Shahrazad as she pursues another day of life. Sandra Naddaff, in her book *Arabesque* on repetition and aesthetics in the *Nights*, writes of the dawn segments:

> So often and regularly does this interruption occur that by the time we have reached, say, the fifteenth night, we no longer take conscious note of the literal meaning of the night break but simply acknowledge it for what it is—a narrative device for marking and… distorting the linear movement of time. (Naddaff, 84)

It is true that one reading the *Nights* may find themselves skimming or ignoring the actual wordage of the dawn segments, assuming that one can take the content therein for granted. Naddaff recognizes the relationship between the dawn segments and linear time as a narrative device, and in fact elsewhere in the book claims that "narrative is… intrinsically a type of repetition, a restating, retelling, recapitulation of events or states that have existed prior to their being narratively transmuted" (Naddaff, 63). Despite her understanding of the connection of the *Nights*' tendency to repeat itself often with its temporal internal logic, she draws an incorrect conclusion in claiming that the dawn segments "distort" linear time; they do *alter* time, but they do so by expanding it, not by transmuting it or making it non-linear. Non-linearity in the time of the *Nights* at the levels between stories only occurs in texts and versions that remove the dawn segments.

Naddaff roots her argument about the distortion of linear time in the changes in narration style from the depth of one story to the next. She argues that because the frame and the enframed tales' omniscient narration changes, it becomes difficult to keep track of time. In the frame events are narrated in third person omniscient narration, as in the first deeper layer of enframed

tale, but occasionally when an enframed character starts narrating a further deeper sub-story (twice removed from the frame) they do so in first person. In reading, we go from third person omniscient narration by an unnamed narrator, to Shahrazad's third person omniscient narration, to the first person narration of an enframed character beginning their own story. For example, "After our father's death, the property that he left was equally divided among us, and as soon as these two sisters received their portions…" is from the beginning of "The Story of Zobeide," a tale twice removed from the frame, in Scott. Naddaff argues that this tense change—from "his father's death" to "our father's death"—would confuse the reader to the point where they can no longer keep track of where they are temporally, which compromises the linearity of the narrative, and serves to "kill the natural movement of narrative time" (Naddaff, 94). She is incorrect, not in her conclusion that multi-layered narrative embedding compromises the steady linearity of time, but in assuming that the conclusion is the death of the "natural movement of narrative time." Narrative time in the *Nights* is cyclical, a spiral of stories within stories within stories. The repetition and enfolding that the dawn segments authorize can also be understood as central to the temporal functioning of the story cycle. Naddaff's death of the "natural movement of narrative time" only occurs when the dawn segments are removed, which can be seen amongst the Removers as well as the Partial Removers. Not only do the translators in these categories kill time in their texts, but in removing the dawn segments they simultaneously kill Shahrazad, the narrator and primary character of the *Nights*.

As has been established, Shahrazad requires the dawn segments in their exact formulation—semiregular and unchanging—in order to survive. If the dawn segments were to stop occurring, her voice is gone and her death is in question: who is narrating? We've established the flexibility of time which exists in envelopes of envelopes, embedded—but could

the whole of the text be narrated in the course of one night? Once the markers of day and night (the dawn segments) are lost, the reader has no way to track time in the frame. These are the questions left with a reader of Lane, Payne, Scott, and Lang. Housman and Wiggin-Smith leave no questions about the frame: Shahrazad merely doesn't exist in their versions, her voice has been extricated.

The final marker of the frame tale throughout the story, and the last trace of Shahrazad in a few of the Partial Removers, are the transitions provided by Shahrazad and other narrators, which take us from one tale into another. Lane's text retains Shahrazad (and hence some semblance of the frame tale) only as a transition from one tale to another, and does so only twice (for reference, Lane uses Shahrazad 4 times in his footnotes and twice in the whole of the text past the first night). Most often in these transition moments Shahrazad exclaims "This (last story) is nothing compared to (the title of the next story)."[42] The frame tale itself is not too *numerous* to be removed from Lane's text entirely, but it is too numerous to be fully retained and to contain its full meaning.

Shahrazad's diminishment—or relegation to footnotes and introductions in the cases of Lane and Housman, respectively—is well reflected through a Natural Language Processing approach across the Removers and Partial Removers. Burton's TF-IDF results index the frame clearly, most notably through representation of Shahrazad.[43] Shahrazad was not in the top 20 TF-IDF results of any of the other texts. It would make sense for her name to be in TF-IDF results for each translator, since they each spell it a different way, and therefore the code would count

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42 Lane needs Shahrazad in transitioning between tales, because her character (as well as her backstory) acts as an adhesive between tales. One example of her passage in between tales is as follows: "But this story is not as strange or as amazing as the story of the fisherman. Dinarzad asked, "Please, sister, what is the story of the fisherman?" Shahrazad said… It is related…" (Haddawy, 36).

43 See Figures 2 and 3 for reference of TF-IDF scores

each one as a different word and favor it.[44] This absence of Shahrazad underscores the loss of the frame in all of these versions: even though it is unique to each text, each translator uses words like *afrit* (Payne) a word for a powerful jinn or demon, or *magician* (Wiggin-Smith) more than the name of the narrator herself. The number of times Shahrazad is mentioned in each text according to category is contained below in Figure 11.

Retainers		**Partial Removers**		**Removers**	
Galland	Scheherazade 88	Scott	Scheherazad 25	Housman	(0)
Burton	Shahrazad 49	Lane	Shahrazád 14	Wiggin-Smith	(0)
Haddawy	Shahrazad 55	Payne	Shehrzad 14		
		Lang	Scheherazade 19		

Figure 11 Representation of each text with the way they have spelled Shahrazad, along with how many times her name appeared in each of their texts, excluding the introductions and tables of contents.

The loss of the dawn segments removes the narrative engine from the text, by severing core facets of its functionality, namely its motivation to narrate to delay death, its tendency to embed and expand time, and its adherence to the voice of the narrator. Further, removing the dawn segments removes the seat of action and creation of narration, by removing the narrator and major actor, Shahrazad. The Remover and Partial Remover texts, in the process of removing Shahrazad, likewise leave her life in question. As the structure of the *Nights* is based on

[44] This is due to the fact that TF-IDF weights words only found in one text higher than words found across texts. Shahrazad's name appears to the code as four different words in the Partial Removers: Scott spells it Scheherazad, Lane: Shahrazád, Payne: Shehrzad, and Lang: Scheherazade. Therefore, it would make sense for any of these to be high in each translator's TF-IDF scores, because each one is particular to that text alone.

attending to the question of Shahrazad's life and whether or not it will continue, to stop taking stock of her current state, dead or alive, is to declare her dead to the reader. In effect, losing Shahrazad, editing her out, is actually killing Shahrazad, and killing the internal logic of the story cycle with her.

To remove the dawn segments is to take out a cog of the engine, to compromise the fuel it runs on. Often critics of the *Nights* refer to it as a flexible narrative fabric, which can be "performed, as it were, in more than one way" as Ghazoul puts it. If such visualization of the *Nights* as a game of skill is to be applied to the Partial Removers—Lane, Payne, Scott, and Lang—they are each trying to play chess without all of the pieces. The Removers—Housman and Wiggin-Smith—are trying to play without the rules.

As was established in the first chapter, the Removers and Partial Removers take power over representations of the Orient through removing the frame and removing the story cycle from its contexts. The translators of this project use their versions of the *Nights* in order to not only represent the Orient, but in representing it, to construct it. The frame resists this synecdoche, and hence those translators who remove the frame entirely further take a position of dominance over the text. The *Nights*' self-representation is through the narrative engine that generates it. To remove facets of this engine and impede its generative force—ability to continue narrating *ad infinitum*—is to provide a version of the *Nights* which has lost its internal logic alongside losing its ability to self-represent. The Removers and Partial Removers take power of representation over the Orient by taking power, generative narrative power, out of the text itself, and becoming the generative power themselves.

Conclusion

Any work done with *One Thousand and One Nights*, or a similarly multi-faceted story cycle, must confront variation and the complications variation can sometimes create. In the case of the *Nights*, however, the perceived problem of multiple versions is actually necessitated by the structure and internal logic of the story cycle. The unity of the whole lying deep within the *Nights* is its narrative engine, the function of which hinges on the frame tale and specifically the dawn segments, or the moments where the story returns to the realm of the narrator, Shahrazad, as she tells stories to avoid or delay her own death. This engine is produced intact in Retainer texts, both in the initial frame tale and throughout using dawn segments, but is occluded or comparatively deactivated in Partial Remover and Remover texts. Therefore, while variety amongst versions of the *Nights*, or recitations of *Alf Layla Wa Layla*, is both permitted and necessitated by aspects of the story cycle, some reflections of the *Nights* undermine the generative power that contributes to variation in the first place. As they lost the *Nights*' narrative engine with its dawn segments, the texts of the Removers and Partial Removers became synecdochal for the East, the Orient; or the culture and customs of millions of people, given those translators power of representation of the Orient via their texts.

In the first chapter we witnessed these translators' own reasons for removing and retaining the frame, out of which only Burton and Housman described something similar to the narrative engine in describing the frame. Burton claimed his text as an attempt to provide "not only the spirit" of the *Nights*, "but even the mécanique, the manner and the matter" (Burton, Introduction). Burton and the other Retainers, Haddawy and Galland, retain the frame and the dawn segments, which allows their versions to represent the *Nights* fully, both in structure and in content. Partial Remover and Remover texts may well represent the content of the *Nights*, but

they fail to retain the mécanique, the engine through which the *Nights* generates itself and works as a narrative machine. This machine consists of three facets: narrating night after night to avoid death, looping narratives within one another to expand time in the frame, and using narrators to hold voice and suspense throughout.

The effects of this representational work are still operating today, from racist stereotypes about Arabs and Africans carried out in the texts (especially the notes of Lane and Burton), to misconceptions about cultural practices in the Middle East and the East writ large, which operate socio-politically and are continually carried out through the *Nights* and its descendants. Said cites Alexander William Kinglake (an Orientalist in the 19th century) as having written: "the *Arabian Nights* is too lively and inventive a work to have been created by a 'mere Oriental, who, for creative purposes, is a think dead and dry—a mental mummy'" (Said, 193). The *Nights* and the Orient were each instrumental in constituting one another for 19th and 20th century Europe and the globe. The effects of that representation are still apparent; Disney's *Aladdin* is emblematic of such inaccurate and overgeneralized representational work.

Many of the translators state their intention to represent the Orient via *the Nights*, most clearly Galland, who claims that his book provided his readers with "the Orientals, Persians, Tartars and Indians... as they truly are, from monarchs down to people of the poorest condition" (Galland, Épître). The *Nights* became a synecdoche for the Orient, creating harmful results for both the *Nights* itself as well as those it worked to represent. All of the translators discussed in this project, Retainers, Partial Retainers, and Removers alike, took part in the process of the *Nights* representing the East. However, in choosing not to reproduce the initial frame story, the Removers actually severed the text from the portion of the text which most clearly resisted synecdoche, obscuring the *Nights*' critique of Orientalism.

Clear patterns of representation, synecdoche, and the removal of internal structure and meaning creation can be found across seven English translations of the *Nights*. My hope is that this research can contribute to the reading and teaching of the *Nights*, working to facilitate a more nuanced perspective of what the *Nights* is and what it has worked to do; specifically in terms of choosing to work with the *Nights* as a landscape whenever possible (unless critiquing a specific translator or manuscript is called for), keeping the door open to multiplicity in literary work, and being critical of how the *Nights* and its contents can provide a representation of the Orient. With pieces like the *Nights*, be they story cycles or similarly complex and heavily worked-on texts, NLP can be an extremely useful tool for developing a different analytical angle, a new scope and a new dataset off of the words on the page themselves.

I hope that the work of this project can contribute to a greater trend of using NLP to work with versions of the *Nights*, as well as with other texts and story cycles. For example, a similar examination of multiple versions of Aesop's Fables and the Panchatantra, and even the Iliad and the Odyssey, could provide similar insights as my work has done for the *Nights*, and applying my code to all three story-cycles comparatively could yield interesting results. Being able to see complicated and heavily proliferated texts from the vantage point of distant reading and NLP helps to allow scholars to see trends in time, shared characteristics of texts, as well as differences and outliers. A fitting next step of this work in terms of scope would be to look into similarly multiplicitous story cycles and how their histories can speak to the history of the *Nights*, and to try to develop a greater understanding of these types of narratives work, how they interrelate, and how they are mediated and worked with over the course of history.

Using NLP—a tool which represents a text (a whole) through its data (or its parts)—in an argument about the dangers of synecdoche is an irony not to be overlooked. My own work has

crafted an image of the *Nights*, created at a further distance from the texts I discuss than the translators themselves were from the Arabic versions of the *Nights* they translated. Data can be tricky in its tendency to give arguments and statements more credence despite often not being the best formulation of the facts or of the "truth" which they are taken to represent. Donna Haraway is a useful way into my thinking, in her discussion of how scientific data can appear "objective" despite being heavily situated in certain beliefs and mindsets (Haraway, 575-576). Conversations about the downfalls of data and an increasingly digitized world are being had currently, especially in the works of philosophers of science and technology, and this project is indebted to their thinking and critique.[45]

The tools of the digital humanities can indeed oversimplify or pass over what could be considered central details of the text, a problem that I have worked to avoid in this project by continually looking at the texts to support my findings and supporting my conclusions with the thoughts and arguments of other theorists who have worked with the *Nights*. I accept that there are likely nuances which I did not take into account or aspects of the texts that I was not able to see from my vantage point. I hope that continued work on the *Nights* may elucidate the subject further and help us to discover more about the text and our methods in literary criticism and theory, and that my project can contribute to such work.[46]

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[45] Specifically the works of Karl Popper, Michael Ruse, Thomas Kuhn, David Bloor, and Bruno Latour have been instructive in empiricism and its pitfalls, and have influenced my thinking about data in this project.

[46] Much of the data I was able to collect about the *Nights* was not directly utilized in this project, but may be helpful in the pursuit of other foci or questions in regards to the text. In my work I was able to focus heavily on the frame and the dawn segments across texts, off of finding patterns across texts in terms of how the *Nights* showed itself. My data, code, and results are all available in the Digital Commons of Bard College, along with my project, and I hope that all interested parties feel free to use my methods or code in order to better understand my research, or to expand the work of NLP in literature—with regards to the *Nights* specifically as well as in research in other areas. Through programming I developed not only the data produced in this project, but also nuanced understandings of the texts I used, many of which I didn't read in their entirety. The conclusions that I reached and arguments I made can be seen as evidence for the use of these tools, which can both deepen critical literary work done in the close reading realm, as well as create new and fruitful trends of discussion through their use separate from close reading work.

The digital humanities could certainly further and deepen the work done on or about the *Nights,* and a possible study on the story-cycle that focused on texts in other languages (Arabic is the most obvious, but NLP tools are not as widely available in Arabic[47]—French could also be extremely interesting). Focusing on the relationship between the frame and the enframed stories could also be very fruitful. A useful next step to this work would be to analyze the major manuscripts in Arabic that the translators work off of, to look into their differences and similarities and to work through things like TF-IDF and structure across languages. This work would be difficult to replicate exactly in Arabic, but holding the conception of the *Nights* as a landscape across languages could provide some very interesting results and further elucidate and complicate the arguments of this project as it stands.

My work intended to describe the relationship between the *Nights*' frame and its Orientalist representation, as well as the *Nights*' internal functioning mechanisms held through the dawn segments. While the frame and the dawn segments may have seemed inessential or even confrontational to some translators, their centrality to the frame is evident upon examination of the texts. Translators Richard Burton, Antoine Galland, Jonathan Scott, Edward William Lane, John Payne, Laurence Housman, and Kate Wiggin & Nora Smith attempted to represent the Orient via the *Nights*, an attempt which the very frame story—that some of the translators remove—resists. Removing the frame further separates those versions (of the Partial Remover and Remover texts) from the internal functioning of a narrative machine, a mécanique central to the *Nights*. By slowly losing Shahrazad—the narrator of a narrative machine and

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47 In my research, work is being done to develop tools for syntactic and semantic analysis of Arabic, especially by Elias Muhanna at Brown University, as well as at Jordan University of Science and Technology, University of Sfax, Coventry University, and Taibah University (among others). The availability of these tools are limited though, especially compared to English. This work is happening currently and should be supported by the academic community, because availability of something similar to NLTK (the Natural Language Toolkit, which has access to tools in many languages but is limited in Arabic) would allow really interesting research in Arabic language. These tools may exist in academic circles or in places that I wasn't able to find.

therefore the holder of generative power in the story cycle—the translators that remove the dawn segments take generative power over the text for themselves, helping to further repurpose it as an inadequate representation of the Orient.

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