

Diachronic Analysis of *The Arabian Nights*

Asma Aldukhayil

Department of Modern & Classical Language Studies, Kent State University

Abstract: *Alf Layla wa-Layla* has been passed down orally for centuries, and the emergence of its translations, generally referred to as *The Arabian Nights*, preserved this work and gave rise to controversial debates about its origins and translations. The most common discussion about these translations is the orientalist nature of such translations in the West. This paper extends discussions on *The Arabian Nights* and offers another perspective by analyzing and comparing excerpts and paratextual elements from various translations that have been produced over the years. The paper examines different representations of this work's 'otherness', traces the shifts in translation trends, and explores the potential role of the translator's gender. The major findings of the analysis reveal that the different versions of *The Arabian Nights* shifted from translations that focus on literalism, to translations that aim at achieving equivalence, naturalness and conforming to the *skopos* of the text. The analysis of the illustrations in the translations reveal that Arab women are sexualized while men are depicted unfavorably. The final finding is that the explicit versions of *The Arabian Nights* were translated by males, whereas female translators translated child and family appropriate versions for the most part of the work's history.

Keywords: *The Arabian Nights*, female translators, gender, translation history, translation shifts

Introduction

The origins of the Arabic *Alf Layla wa-Layla* are unknown. It has been passed down orally for centuries, and it was later translated into multiple languages and circulated for centuries as *The Arabian Nights*, or *One Thousand and One Nights* (among other titles). The translations of this collection of tales are undoubtedly considered one of the most influential classic works in Western translated literature, particularly the translations by Antoine Galland (1704–1717) and Sir Richard Burton (1885), while the “original” Arabic *Alf Layla wa-Layla* is not as highly regarded by Arab scholars.

Due to the canonicity of *The Arabian Nights* in Western literature, various aspects of this work have been studied, such as its themes, translation choices, exotification of the “other”, mistranslations, purposes of translation, and the historical footprint of this work. The aim of this paper is to offer a close examination of the history of *The Arabian Nights*¹ representations that are embedded in the English versions, which are located in different times and therefore, presumably, changed societies. Through this analysis of the history of these translations, the study seeks to shed light on translation history, such as translation trends and the role of gender

¹ Here “translations of *The Arabian Nights*” refers to English translations from Arabic and also relay translations from other languages.

in translation relevant to the times of each translated version. Of course, a plethora of previous studies (Borges & Weinberger, 1984; Irwin, 2003; Makdisi & Nussbaum, 2008) have pointed out certain features of the “Western” *Arabian Nights* (i.e., under the umbrella of orientalism). Therefore, this analysis serves as an extension to earlier studies by investigating the translations within a wider scope, looking for shifts other than those involving orientalist thought (perceptions of the “East”), such as gender role/relation shifts (in characters or translators/contributors), and representation and packaging of *The Arabian Nights*. The first question addressed in this paper is regarding whether or not representations of *The Arabian Nights* have changed over time in Anglophone versions of the work, and if so, in what way? The second question the study aims to answer pertains to any possible influence the translator’s gender might have on their translation. And finally, the author discusses the findings regarding representations and gender roles and what do they say about translation history in general and *The Arabian Nights* translation history in particular.

Since the origins of this work have been debated and contested for decades (Marzolph et al., 2004) and the credibility of translations and their translators has also been questioned (Irwin, 2003, 2019), it seems necessary to define what is meant by the term ‘translation’ before discussing translations of *The Arabian Nights* any further. For the purpose of this paper, the term refers to any types of works that are assumed and considered to be translators by the target culture—in the words of Gideon Toury, they are “any target language text which is presented or regarded as such within the target system itself, on whatever grounds” (1982, p. 27). In addition, any textual varieties that “serve as translations from a scholarly point of view, moving and transmitting source materials from one cultural context to another and from one language to another” (Tymoczko, 2007, p. 66) are part of the definition of translation(s) here; this includes “borderline translations” that come in a variety of forms:

... unusual and borderline cases of translation have been compiled by G. C. Kálmán (1986), who lists such types as (case 1) a target text with no source text, (case 2) a source text with a target text that is identified as an original, and (case 3) a source text that has no target text. Kálmán also discusses autotranslation (case 4), where the writer is bilingual, writing in two languages and translating back and forth between them (ibid., pp. 66–67)

The only exclusion is that fully relay translations of *The Arabian Nights* into English are not considered for reasons discussed below (reasons unrelated to the concept of what constitutes translation).

Review of Literature

Given the canonical position of *The Arabian Nights*, it has been the subject of extensive research. The studies most relevant to this paper are briefly discussed below.

As mentioned before, there are several *The Arabian Nights* translations that appeared throughout the history of this work. Some researchers have criticized renowned translations (such as Burton’s) for being inaccurate and inadequate due to the translator’s insufficient command of the Arabic language and culture (Haddawy, 1990; Irwin, 2019). In addition, although several

translations of this work claim to be from an original Arabic manuscript or publication, many are actually relay translation(s)—mainly based on Antoine Galland’s well-known French translation (1704–1717) (Irwin, 2003; Nishio, 2012).

Studies examining *The Arabian Nights* translations have also discussed the Orientalist thought embedded in many of these (Borges & Weinberger, 1984; Irwin, 2003; Makdisi & Nussbaum, 2008). Sabouri and Karimzadeh (2011) pointed out how Sir Richard Burton’s translation is considered a misrepresentation of the East, concluding that “Burton’s translation of *The Arabian Nights* is indeed a part of the Orientalist scholarship” and that “today’s biased images of the Orient are but the outcome of a centuries-long scholarship of which translation is an essential part” (2011, p. 131). Kabbani also discusses the notion of *The Nights* being an Orientalist text, as it provides a faulty depiction of the East that made it seem “even imperative, for the imperialist to step in and rule them” (2004, p. 24). In addition, translations such as Edward W. Lane’s *Arabian Nights’ Entertainments* are considered an ethnographic source (Schacker-Mill, 2000), which can at times feed into the Orientalism thought, and at other times, reveal semi-accurate renditions of the East that assist in building an understanding of the ‘other’ to some degree.

Other studies found traces of political thought in *The Arabian Nights* and their translations (Irwin, 2004; Bahrawi, 2016). Bahrawi (2016) traced elements of political thought in Naguib Mahfouz’s *Arabian Nights and Days* (1979) that echoed the political abuse around Mahfouz at that time. The study did not, however, state whether the version examined was a translation or an original by Mahfouz, which can alter our interpretation of the findings. Irwin (2004), by contrast, examined both Arabic versions and translations in English, presenting an alternative perspective to the themes of this work. Perhaps most significant is his discussion of the recurrent “one-man utopia” nature of the tales—particularly the tale of Aladdin (which is reportedly a creation of Galland that he included with other tales in his translation)—and how this kind of utopia is noticeable in French folktales in the early modern period, where “[t]o dream of confounding a king by marrying a princess was hardly to change the moral basis of the Old Regime” (Darnton 1984, p. 59, as cited by Irwin 2004, p. 252). This claim that the French political situation may have influenced the utopian nature of the tales and created a unique type of utopia that includes one person only is a perspective that can be further explored through different versions translated from Arabic or as relay translations, although that is not the aim or focus here.

Some studies have explored feminist characteristics in, particularly the role of Shahrazad (considered a feminist figure). Malti-Douglas (1997), for example, tracks the potential influence of *The Arabian Nights’* Shahrazad on other Western and Eastern renditions of this feminist character. She focuses on two modern renditions of Shahrazad: the first is a Western rendition by Ethel Johnston Phelps, in *Shahrazad Retold* (1981), and the second is an Eastern recasting of Shahrazad in Nawal El Saadawi’s *Suqūṭ al-Imām* (The Fall of The Imam) (1987). Another study that focuses on the feminist aspect of translations of *The Arabian Nights* was conducted by Bahrawi (2016), who analyzed the feminist features of Hanan Al-Shaykh’s (2013) retelling and compared it with previous translations, discussing their modern takes on *The Arabian Nights*. *The Arabian Nights* and its translations are mostly controversial due to the obscenities in the tales. Irwin (2003) examines this feature in different translations and compares how each version handled the explicit content. His analysis found that there are different representations of the

obscenities: they are not exaggerated by Payne, but rather rendered in a more allusive manner; in Burton's translation, the obscenities are exaggerated, whereas they are omitted by Lane.

As suggested above, research revolving around *The Arabian Nights* is abundant. This does not mean that enough research has been done. There is still more that can be researched about this work, especially in the context of translation history. Exploring different representations and gender-related issues and relating these to translation trends and history leaves room for research, and this study hopes to contribute to that end. The following sections discuss the potential research questions, the methodology, analysis and findings, and the limitation of the present study.

Methodology

There are many translated versions of *The Arabian Nights* in English, but not all versions are included into the corpus for analysis for reasons of feasibility. The list of translated versions selected for analysis in this study are:

- Edward William Lane's *Arabian Nights' Entertainments* (1876)
- John Payne's *The Book of the Thousand Nights and One Night: Now First Completely Done into English Prose and Verse, from the Original Arabic* (1882–84)
- Wiggin and Smith' *The Arabian Nights: Their Best-Known Tales* (1909)
- Martha A.L. Lane's *The Arabian Nights' Entertainments: Stories From The Thousand and One Nights Told For Young People* (1915)
- Husain Haddawy's *The Arabian Nights* (1990)
- Malcolm C. Lyons and Ursula Lyons' *The Arabian Nights: Tales of 1,001 Nights* (2008)
- Hanan Al-Shayk's *One Thousand and One Nights: A Retelling* (2013)

The main criteria when selecting the samples was that they are completely or mostly based on the Arabic manuscripts. In other words, relay translations from the French version by Galland (or other languages) are excluded in the hope of limiting external factors (omissions or losses of text) that might be behind certain translation choices, particularly since determining whether a given choice is not a result of a preceding choice in the pivot-language version is much more difficult.

No source texts (i.e., Arabic manuscripts) are included in the analysis for several reasons. First, not all versions are based on the same source (ST) manuscripts. For instance, several translators admitted that they did not have an original, such as Al-Shaykh's (2013) auto-translation; other translators state that their translations were fully or partially translated from one manuscript and that some other tales were written by them, such as Payne (1882–84). Edward W. Lane (1876) mentioned in his preface that his translation was based on two Egyptian manuscripts—the Bulaq (1835) and Calcutta (1839) editions, whereas Haddaway (1990) stated that his version is based on the fourteenth-century Syrain manuscript. Moreover, acquiring access to all these “original” Arabic scripts on which the translations were based is not possible, since some manuscripts are now lost, even though there are records of them existing (Irwin, 2003; Kabbani, 2004; Reynolds, 2006).

Furthermore—as evident from the list above—Sir Richard Burton’s famous translation, *The Book of the Thousand Nights and a Night* (1885), is not included here due to a couple of reasons and limitations. Initially, a preliminary investigation based on this study’s methodological approach led to the conclusion that the main representational theme in Burton’s work is orientalism, which again has been thoroughly discussed in previous research, so including his translation in this study might prove to be futile and unrevealing—simply a repetition of previous findings. In addition, Burton’s translation does not meet the main criterion for selection, which is that the translation is based on an Arabic manuscript. Burton’s translation is purportedly an unabridged version based on Payne’s translation but supplemented by the Calcutta manuscript (Sillas, 1999). These issues all contributed to the exclusion of Burton’s version from the analysis. The following section discusses the elements that were identified and selected for analysis.

Selected Excerpts

Due to time limitations, this study selects several textual samples for the analysis. These excerpts are:

- 1) the beginning of *The Arabian Nights* where King Shahrayar is introduced (and the incident with his queen, i.e., him witnessing her infidelity and vowing to marry then kill every virgin in his land) and then Shahrazad is introduced before she starts to narrate the tales for 1001 nights.
- 2) one tale that is available in all the selected versions, which is the tale of “The Fisherman and The Genie”.
- 3) the ending of the tales, which concludes the fate of Shahrazad, the King and all womankind.

Paratextual Elements

Paratextual elements are the textual and non-textual (i.e., illustrations) elements that surround the main text. These include the forewords and prefaces, footnotes, illustration on the cover and/or illustrations accompanying the tales.

Another noteworthy aspect of this work is that while the tales are narrated by the female character Shahrazad, most translated versions are actually “narrated” (i.e., translated) by male translators/authors. The role of gender is an interesting feature, and the analysis hopes to reveal whether it provides any substantial material for discussion. In addition, the translators’ nationality and other contributors’ nationality are also included in the analysis.

Findings

Textual Findings

The first thing that stands out from the analysis of the text (i.e., the three excerpts, prefaces, introductions and footnotes) is that the early versions by Edward W. Lane and Payne appear to be highlighting the “otherness” of *The Arabian Nights*’ origin. In other words, they retain some foreignness, particularly something that is strongly attributed to Arabs at the time of *The Arabian Nights*, such as Islam, the dominant religion in those times. This is traced in the multitude of

literal renditions of Muslim supplications and expressions. For example, Payne and Edward W. Lane both choose to present Anglophone readers with the literal rendering “In the name of God!” (Lane 1867, p. 71; Payne, 1882–84, p. 31) in the tale of “The Fisherman and the Genie”. By contrast, Haddawy chooses to simply say “invoking the Almighty God” (1990, p. 81); whereas Al-Shaykh omits this expression. Edward W. Lane even prefers to keep the name “Allah” rather than the word “God”. Payne uses “God”, but his translations of expressions are literal, except for the choice to not use the Muslim name for god, “Allah”.²

In Al-Shaykh’s version, the word “Allah” is used only five times, whereas “God” is used 215 times. In Haddawy’s translation, “Allah” is never used; instead “God” is used 739 times. These are the only two translators of Arab descent, and both seemed to prefer domesticating this name for some reason, in addition to less awkward or less literal rendering of other Muslim expressions. It can be speculated that this preference is related to the shift in translation thought—i.e., the emergence of advocates of *skopos* theory in the early twentieth century, where the purpose of a text is the priority (Windle & Pym, 2011).

Additionally, the earlier translations selected for the study, all nineteenth-century translations, were produced during an era in which Romanticism prevailed. This was a time when the importance of the source language and source culture overshadowed the significance of the target language and culture (ibid.). Therefore, the literal renderings, the favoring of “Allah” over “God” by Edward W. Lane, and the copious amount of footnotes in his and Payne’s translations can all be regarded as likely attempts to bring readers to authors—which means the product (i.e., *The Arabian Nights*) “would make additional demands on readers, re-educating them in the process and bringing them to a respect for the difference” (Windle & Pym, 2011, p. 11). Although some studies have interpreted this retention of foreignness as choices to highlight the “otherness” of the “orient”, there is the potential for other alternative interpretations of the possible reasons behind preserving some of the text’s Islamic elements.

The other versions from the nineteenth century, the ones that are aimed at children, did not include the name “Allah” or any literal translations of Islamic expressions. This finding is not unexpected, since the intention behind reading these translations (for this audience) is typically not the intention of looking for or at another culture, but rather for entertaining children and teaching them morals.

To conclude the discussion here, the latter and more recent decrease of Arabic/Muslim-specific words like “Allah” or literal translations of common Arabic/Muslim supplications and expressions appears to downplay the Islamic context of *The Arabian Nights* by decreasing its foreignness and otherness, albeit not entirely domesticating the text and stripping it of some nuances of its origin. This approach, however, can also be explained as translators following certain shifts in thinking as to what is considered good translation. For instance, Romanticism in the nineteenth century advocated literalness, which meant that translations were more source language-oriented (Windle & Pym 2011, p. 11). Another possible explanation has been widely

² An interesting finding is that around the same period, i.e., the 19th century, the word “Allah” increased in English fiction, according to N-grams on Google. This might be an influence of the many translations of *The Arabian Nights* and possibly other Muslim-related literary works. More comprehensive research could shed light on other literary works translated from Arabic into English at that time and whether they had similar Islamic contexts.

discussed in previous literature, which speculates that these choices to bring out the otherness were due to orientalist thinking that was common during that era, as well as the fact that these translators were actually orientalist adventurers.

Non-textual Findings

The analysis of the paratexts, which are mainly illustrations, resulted in several issues. However, not all versions had illustrations. For example, Payne's translation had not a single illustration—neither on the cover nor inside the book. Haddawy's version has only a cover illustration, and Al-Shaykh had none. Other versions had illustrations, and the implications of these are discussed below.

The first feature is that all illustrations are created by Western artists (assuming from their first names and surnames, which are not on their own sufficient evidence). This raises the issue of representativeness, i.e., the issue of non-Arab artists drawing depictions of Arabs and Arab life. The only translation among those analyzed in which the problem of non-Arab artists creating these images is mentioned is in Edward W. Lane's work. Lane stated that he collaborated with an artist and provided him with some assistance. In his notes, Lane stated that “to insure their accuracy, to the utmost of my ability, I have supplied the artist with modern dresses, and with other requisite materials” and that he was involved by directing and suggesting changes to the illustrations, while making every attempt to “avoid fettering his imagination, which needs no eulogy from me” (Lane, 1867, xxi). This last statement implies Lane's awareness regarding an artist's imagination, especially one that has no real reference to the Arab world. Nevertheless, Lane does not discuss or hint at a related issue: that of drawing Arab people, particularly women. It is very unlikely that the artist knew what Arab women look like, and Lane himself may or may not have been exposed to many unveiled Arab women.

To elaborate further on the issue of the illustrations in Edward W. Lane's translation (and in the other western-translator versions that include images of Arab women where relevant), it should be noted that the women are not drawn with Arab women's beauty in mind, but rather Western standards of beauty—even though Edward Lane included a very detailed explanation of Arab women's beauty standards in his notes.³

An examination of the illustrations of Arab women in the other selected versions reveals a similar result (excluding Haddawy's and Al-Shaykh's versions). Arab women are, almost consistently, depicted as beautiful and slim and with delicate features in most of the examined versions, whereas men are typically depicted as overweight, short, with big noses, lots of facial hair (although this last one is a true feature of Arab men). In Edward W. Lane's translation and

³ Lane's notes on Arab women's beauty standards are lengthy. The following is only a short excerpt: “Four things in a woman should be *black*; the hair of the head, the eyebrows, the eyelashes, and the dark part of the eyes: four *white*; the complexion of the skin, the white of the eyes, the teeth, and the legs: four *red*; the tongue, the lips, the middle of the cheeks, and the gums: four *round*; the head, the neck, the fore-arms, and the ankles: four *long*; the back, the fingers, the arms, and the legs: four *wide*; the forehead, the eyes, the bosom, and the hips: four *fine*; the eyebrows, the nose, the lips, and the fingers: four *thick*; the lower part of the back, the thighs, the calves of the legs, and the knees: four *small*; the ears, the breasts, the hands, and the feet.” (Lane, 1867, p.26)

other translations (again, excluding Haddawy and Al-Shaykh's) there appears to be a pattern of Arab women (but not men) as an object of sexualization. Arab women, whether they are queens, princesses or slaves, are portrayed as beautiful. This can be seen as exotification of the Arab woman through paratextual elements of translation. A more in-depth analysis comparing Western beauty ideals of those times with the illustrations of *The Arabian Nights* might reveal that women were drawn according to European/Western beauty standards to appeal to Western audiences. This is but a speculation, and (as mentioned above) further study is required to test this hypothesis.

As mentioned above, Al-Shaykh and Haddawy's translations were the exception to this pattern. Neither includes any illustrations, other than the illustration on Haddawy's book cover, and the drop caps in Al-Shaykh's work (they are more ornamental and decorative than typical drop caps, which is why they are included in the analysis). Neither state the artist's name for the illustration on the cover or the drop caps. Unfortunately, the books and other extratexts found (e.g., interviews with the translators) do not state whether the decision to not include any depictions was made by the translators or if they had any role in this choice. An analysis of the translators' other works might reveal some pattern, but translators are usually not involved in illustration selections. One might attempt to contact the translators and ask about the absence of illustrations and whether it was a collective choice by them and their editors and the publishing house.

Another aspect the analysis seeks to explore is the question of the potential role (if any) of the translator's gender in the various versions. During the analysis, two things were noticed. First, non-expurgated versions in the nineteenth, twentieth, and twenty-first centuries were translated by male translators only; children's adaptations produced in the same timeframe and after are generally versions translated by female translators. That is to say, although translation was not regarded as a high-order profession, due to *The Arabian Nights*' explicit content, women published only morally acceptable versions, and no obscenities are found in their translations. There was only one exception in the twenty-first century translation—Ursula Lyons's contribution to her husband's translation; however, her role was very small, as she translated only three tales from Galland's French version because the stories were not available in the Arabic manuscript from which her husband was translating. The analysis of her translation did not, however, reveal anything significant. The latest version in the selected corpus is Al-Shaykh's translation in 2013, which includes more obscenities and would be most likely be considered immoral by nineteenth-century standards.

Nonetheless, the results fall in line with the history of translation in the Anglophone world (and possibly other places) and serve as further evidence of the fact that female translators did not translate as widely in terms of genres and that there were restrictions in what translations were acceptable for them (i.e., religious and family-appropriate texts) (Goodrich, 2014). That is, producing translations was more acceptable for women than creating or authoring original literary works, and women were restricted to morally acceptable texts. This appears to be the situation with translations of *The Arabian Nights* until Al-Shaykh's translation in 2013, which in a way broke this continuity of male-led "explicit" or "adult-version" translations of *The Arabian Nights*. It is important to note that this statement is not conclusive, particularly since the data collected are not representative of all translations produced since the first Western translation of this work—i.e., Galland's French version.

The second noticeable difference is found in Al-Shaykh's conclusion to the story, which sets her ending apart from its predecessors' endings. In my opinion, her ending to *The Arabian Nights* is what truly marks her translation as a feminist rendering (others may disagree). In all the examined samples, the tales end with Shahrazad surviving the King's wrath and saving womankind through her witty stories, remaining his wife with two or four children by the time the tales end. However, in Al-Shaykh's retelling, this ending is omitted. The ending is more open-ended; Al-Shaykh never explicitly states that Shahrazad is a wife and a mother, which in a way can be interpreted as a rejection of the stereotypical image of Arab women (or all women in general) as being only wives and mothers. Shahrazad saved her kind through her wit, and that is enough to make her a hero. In the foreword, the editor of Al-Shaykh's retelling, Mary Gaitskill, mentions this distinctive feature in Al-Shaykh's work—a feature that she considers to be a nod to Shahrazad's feminist characteristic:

she is an icon of feminine force, both submissive and powerful, invisible and generative. Traditionally *One Thousand and One Nights* ends when Shahrazad presents the king with three children and, because she has proven herself, he decides to marry her rather than kill her. Perhaps the most refreshing thing about Hanan al-Shaykh's delightful retelling is that it does not end with Shahrazad's transformation from storyteller to wife and mom; instead, al-Shaykh chooses to keep her in the realm of invisibility and magic (2013, ix).

It could also, however, be argued that this invisibility in Al-Shaykh's Shahrazad is not as empowering as it might appear. A conclusion that does not clearly end with a more visible and valiant Shahrazad does not favor this fabled feminist figure, but rather reduces her role to one that is almost comparable to any other character's role in the tales.

Haddawy's version includes a page titled Translator's Postscript, in which he states that "TRADITION HAS IT that in the course of time Shahrazad bore Shahrayar three children and that, having learned to trust and love her, he spared her life and kept her as his queen" (1990, p. 661; emphasis in the original). However, Haddaway acknowledges that his version is a fragment of the complete tales (he translated 271 of the purported 1001 nights), since his version is based on an incomplete manuscript of *The Arabian Nights*— hence, the inconclusive ending to Shahrazad's character.

Conclusion

Translations of *The Arabian Nights* have been produced since the eighteenth century, with English translations emerging in the nineteenth century and being produced multiple times by various translators from different times, societies, genders and nationalities. To date, the translations have generally been examined within orientalist and anti-orientalist perspectives, and studies about the translations' depictions of the East have been discussed by many scholars. This paper aimed at expanding the analysis of *The Arabian Nights* through a diachronic analysis of translation trends and representativeness issues in various English translations and what these issues can tell us about the translation history of *The Arabian Nights* and translation history more broadly.

The analysis traces a trend of literalness in the nineteenth-century translations that falls in line with the dominant trend of that time, which is when Romanticism was at its peak. The analysis also reveals another shift in the translations of the twentieth century; translators of these works appear to prefer the notion of equivalence over literalness, which might have been influenced by the rise of *skopos* theory, which foregrounds a translation's purpose and "dethrones" the source text (Windle & Pym, 2011, p. 17). This means that translators at that time have aimed at providing readers with entertaining texts that were closer to their own culture by downplaying the otherness of the text and producing a more natural text.

Other findings were that illustrations focused on highlighting Arab women and sexualizing them, while men were usually depicted unfavorably. Another issue with illustrations is that they were all created by Western artists, which raises serious questions of (in)appropriate representation.

The analysis included an investigation of the gender of translators in connection with the different versions; men were the translators of the explicit versions while female translators did not translate other than child-friendly versions until Al-Shaykh's translation in 2013. This finding falls in line with the history of translation in the English-speaking world such as Britain, where female translators were ascribed a restricted role in translation for a long time before they could expand their translation skills and produce translations in a variety of genres.

To conclude, this study seeks to explore some neglected aspects of *The Arabian Nights*' translation history. Further, more comprehensive, research is needed to confirm the findings or shed light on other patterns that were not revealed because of the small corpus.

Suggestions and Recommendations

One of this study's limitations is the issue of sample representativeness. The sample selection was not particularly systematic, other than hoping to explore various versions that are temporally distant and versions that are written by specific genders, nationalities, co-translated etc. However, the analysis does not include all known English translations of *The Arabian Nights*, which means that a more comprehensive corpus would be more likely to support, reject or refine the findings of this study, and it could also reveal other patterns that are otherwise unnoticeable in a small corpus. In addition, the texts selected within each version are also not representative of each version's entirety. Time did not allow a close reading of all tales in all versions; however, using a corpus tool to analyze a large corpus might provide promising results under short time restrictions.

Another limitation is that Edward W. Lane's work is framed as a scholarly work, even though the word "entertainments" in its title might (at first glance) have non-scholarly implications, so including this version and comparing it with versions that served other purposes (e.g., pleasure reading) may have skewed the findings.

As for future recommendations beyond this study, there are several potential future studies. For example, conducting a similar analysis or a closer one, in which different translations (also from different times) of a single manuscript, such as the Calcutta edition or the Bulaq edition, are

investigated. Themes such as gender or the handling of Islamic contextual motifs by the various translators can be one way to approach the analysis. Reception of the various translations of *The Arabian Nights* could also be further explored. For instance, analyzing the reception and discussion of this assortment of translations within the academic context of translation could provide interesting insights, i.e., what has been said about these translations by translation studies' scholars and what they might these discussions tell us about the history of translation. Another aspect of reception that could be studied is the reception of each translation in its own timeframe or of the different translations in a single period. Sources for analyzing modern-day readers' reception of the various versions can be obtained through e-book highlights, Amazon or Goodreads comments, and discussions about *The Arabian Nights's* translations on forums such as Quora or Reddit.

References

- Al-Shaykh, H (2013) *One Thousand and One Nights: A Retelling*. Pantheon Books.
- Bahrawi, N. (2016). A Thousand and One Rewrites: Translating Modernity in the Arabian Nights. *Journal of World Literature*, 1(3), 357-370.
- Goodrich, J. (2013). *Faithful Translators: Authorship, Gender, and Religion in Early Modern England*. Northwestern University Press.
- Haddawy, H. (1990). *The Arabian Nights*. New York and London: WW Norton & Company.
- Irwin, R. (2003). *The Arabian nights: A companion*. Bloomsbury Publishing.
- Irwin, R. (2004). Political Thought in The Thousand and One Nights. *Marvels & Tales*, 18(2), 246-257.
- Irwin, R. (2019). Arabist and Consul in Damascus: Sir Richard Burton and the Problematic Nature of His Translation of The Thousand and One Nights. In *Manuscripts, Politics and Oriental Studies* (pp. 420-432). Brill.
- Kabbani, R. (2004). The Arabian Nights as an Orientalist Text. *Marzolph and van Leeuwen*, 1, 25-29.
- Lane, E. W. (1867). *Arabian Nights' Entertainments*. N.p.
- Lane, M. (1915). *The Arabian Nights' Entertainments: Stories From The Thousand and One Nights Told For Young People*. Boston: Ginn and Company
- Lyons, M. C., & Lyons, U. (2008). *The Arabian Nights: Tales of 1,001 Nights* (R. Irwin, Ed.) Penguin Books Ltd.
- Makdisi, S., & Nussbaum, F. (Eds.). (2008). *The Arabian Nights in Historical Context: Between East and West*. Oxford University Press on Demand.

- Malti-Douglas, F. (1997). Shahrazad Feminist. *The Thousand and One Nights in Arabic Literature and Society*. Cambridge University Press/Cambridge, 40-55.
- Marzolph, U., Van Leeuwen, R., & Wassouf, H. (2004). *The Arabian Nights Encyclopedia* (Vol. 1). ABC-CLIO.
- Nishio, Tetsuo (2012) A Bibliography of the Arabian Nights in the 18th Century. *Bulletin of the National Museum of Ethnology*, 36(4), 561-573.
- Payne, J. (1882). *The Book of the Thousand Nights and One Night: Now First Completely Done into English Prose and Verse, from the Original Arabic*. 9 vols. London, Villon Society, 84.
- Reynolds, D. F. (2006). A Thousand and One Nights: a history of the text and its reception. *Arabic Literature in the Post-Classical Period*, 270-91.
- Sabouri, H., & Karimzadeh, A. (2011). The Orientalist Readings of The Arabian Nights. *Ferdowsi Review*, 1(4), 123-132.
- Sallis, E. (2013). *Sheherazade Through the Looking Glass: The Metamorphosis of the 'Thousand and One Nights'*. Routledge.
- Schacker-Mill, J. (2000). Otherness and Otherworldliness: Edward W. Lane's Ethnographic Treatment of The Arabian Nights. *Journal of American folklore*, 113(448), 164-184.
- Toury, G. (1982). A RATIONALE FOR DESCRIPTIVE TRANSLATION STUDIES. *Dispositio*, 7(19/21), 23-39. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41491224>
- Tymoczko, M. (2007). *Enlarging Translation, Empowering Translators*. Manchester: St. Jerome.
- Wiggin, K. D., & Smith, N. A. (Eds.). (1909). *The Arabian Nights: Their Best-known Tales*. Charles Scribner's Sons.
- Windle, K., & Pym, A. (2011). European thinking on secular translation. In *The Oxford handbook of translation studies*. Oxford University Press.