Roots of Oral Tradition in *The Arabian Nights*

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The undersigned, appointed by the dean of the Graduate School, have examined the thesis entitled

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An Application of Oral Performance Theory to

'the Story of the King of China's Hunchback'

Presented by Zaid N. Mahir, a candidate for the degree of Master of Arts, and hereby certify that, in their opinion, it is worthy of acceptance.

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Dedication

To my late mother,

a victim of the Bush family war on Iraq.

To my beloved wife,

whose presence in my life made all the difference.

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I would like to express my thanks to Professor John Miles Foley for introducing me to Oral Tradition as an academic discipline and for open-mindedly advising this thesis.

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Premise

Oral Storytelling in the Arab World

The rich oral tradition in the Arab world is one of a collective imaginary and a reflection of the collective consciousness. Tales and stories have had a twofold purpose. On the one hand, they provide entertainment to an audience so long accustomed to orality that they have developed a particular taste for, and an appreciation of, verbal imagery. On the other hand, tales respond to a variety of needs--cultural, social, religious, etc-- that emerge constantly from the individual's interaction with the surroundings, as well as from the influence of society on the individual. Tales also display concerns and dreams shared generally by human beings and particularly by certain communities at certain periods of time. Thus they find their echo in an audience willing to be part of the world of the tale being orally narrated. Moreover, tales have an educational effect in the Arab world, and the morality emerging from such tales serves as a model of correct behavior, not only for youth but also for adults who need to be reassured about their disciplines and creed.

The act of storytelling itself has played a key role in reinforcing the multipurpose message of oral tales, giving meaning and value to life. Traveling from one area, region, or province to another, a tale was sometimes slightly changed to fit the taste of the new audience whose would-be reaction, however, often was of crucial significance to the act of storytelling itself and, therefore, had a bearing on the narrator's performance. As such, the same story was often told differently to an audience of children than to an audience of adults. And heroes and single-handed deeds of heroism, for instance, had to be adjusted to suit a given community's historical background; heroic protagonists would have to belong to that community or to its historical background, whereas the wicked and cowardly belong to other groups or regions.

In the same vein, oral storytellers would use their store of historical names and events to develop new tales and embellish them with all the requirements of a successful storytelling, fulfilling the technical demands of suspense and tension, as well as boosting the morality of tales. In his *Qadhaya Sha'biya* [Popular Issues] (2003), Farouq Khawrshid stresses the continuity and significance of such a practice among storytellers (pp. 33-43). Some of the historical names introduced, he says, may not even have a distinguishing historical stature, yet they acquire one particularly in popular history. Khawrshid designates certain names that have resonance with respect to famous

old Arabian tribes, such as the Beni Hilal tribe. Along these lines, storytellers tend to free their heroes from the restraints of time and place, allowing for the utilization of magical means of transportation and travel. A hero would then be able to travel across boundaries-- on earth, in the air, over the seas-- and consequently acquire a supernatural quality. The general atmosphere of the tale would be one of dream or myth, where the past and present easily merge, drawing the audience into the world of the tale.

Fulfilling the roles of performer-entertainer and historian-narrator simultaneously, the oral storyteller in the Arab world has done more than merely maintain an orally founded tradition in which stories were transmitted orally. In her article, “Oral Narrating and Performing traditions” (2002), Deborah Folaron enumerates the fundamental components of oral tradition (pp. 1-2); among these is the transmission of the ‘text’ through the human medium in dialogue with the audience. Clearly, emphasis here is not only on the dynamics of transmission, i.e., the narrator’s performance, but also on the interaction between narrator and audience in the light of the performance. Traditionally, the oral storyteller “used voice to narrate a series or sequence of events…. Dramatic or theatrical quality was added to the narration by imitation, mimicry, impersonation and rhetorical manipulation of language in order to create verbal imagery”

(p. 1). As such, one might say, the storyteller has been able to shorten the distance between himself as narrator and the audience in terms of reception, creating a fictional space in which the auditor "was invited to enter into a special relationship of complicity" (p. 2) where he would be part of a shared experience. Once this entry is completed, through a language of cultural and symbolic codes, both oral storyteller and audience "engage in dialogue and in essence co-create a 'text'" (p. 2). Needless to say, the dialogue, for the most part of the narrative event, is to be understood not in the literal sense of the word.

Interaction between the storyteller and audience may reach a moment of emotional involvement, of empathy, on the part of the audience with a particular character or event. Thanks to the oral storyteller's artistic skill that creates suspense and increases expectation, the audience members then become exceedingly active receivers who play a participatory role in the reception of the narration. At once they become "'performers' themselves, with a certain bargaining power in the narrative event" (Deborah Folaron: p. 2).

In this respect, we have an interesting episode that reveals the influence the storytelling event had on the audience in Iraq, early in the twentieth century. In a handwritten testimony (2005), Nu'man Mahir al-Kan'ani, a well known Iraqi poet and writer, speaks of a particular incident of which he was verifiably informed in the 1930s.

He says:

> Popular coffee shops in Baghdad used to hire a *qassakhoun* (or oral storyteller) to 'read' tales some of which, however, were humorous and funny. Most of the tales were about Abu Zaid al-Hilali, al-Zeer Salim, and other heroic characters. One night, at the suggestion of a classmate in ninth grade, we went to a coffee shop called Dijla (or Tigris) overlooking the great river on the al-Russafa side. Around nine o'clock in the evening, the usual time for the reading of tales to begin, a number of the coffee shop customers were assembled inside, waiting for the event. The shop owner had the chairs rearranged in three successive bow-like rows in front of which, on the floor, he put a (wooden) board, 3 by 2 meters approximately. That board represented the stage. On it he put one single chair and a small table. A few minutes later, the oral storyteller arrived, dressed in a *dishdasha* (or men's gown) and a *zuboun* (or men's outdoor robe) over it; on his head there was a *yashmagh* (or men's head scarf), worn according to a particular fashion called '*tcharrawiya*' common in Baghdad. The *qassakhoun* was accompanied by two people: a young boy carrying a lantern and walking in front of his master,

and a young man carrying a huge and thick book and walking by his master's side.

Welcomed by the coffee shop owner, the storyteller sat in his chair, with the book before him on the table. We moved from a space inside the café to the space occupied by the chairs, before the stage. At once the *qassakhoun* began his oral narration. His starting point was where he had stopped the night before. He described the heroic feats of Abu Zaid al-Hilali and arrived at a certain point that, however, seemed rather funny to me and my classmate. But everyone was listening attentively. My classmate and I managed to learn by heart what exactly was said then. The *qassakhoun*'s narration went thus: "A great sand-storm blew and took over the whole land and region. Horse hooves sparkled with fire. Abu Zaid drew his sword and hit at his enemy, yet the enemy received the sword with his *zerdiya* (or shield). Abu Zaid then hit with his spear at the enemy's chest, but the latter received the blow with the *dirga* (or coat of mail). At last Abu Zaid managed to strike his enemy who, under the mighty blow, was hurled to the ground. Soon one of the attendants informed the police; shortly afterwards, the police arrived at the fight-scene,

arrested Abu Zaid, and took him to jail." Here the *qassakhoun*, having been 'reading' for about an hour and a half, stopped. He closed his book, thankfully praised Allah, and left the coffee shop as he had come in.

On that same night, one of the audiences could not sleep. He tossed in his bed, as we were told, restlessly for some time; impatient, he left his house in the middle of the night. He was seen carrying a hatchet on his way to the *qassakhoun*'s house. It was after midnight when the man knocked fiercely and noisily at the door. A few minutes later, the door was opened and the storyteller came out, dressed in his night (sleeping) gown. Disquieted and concerned, for never before had he been visited at that time of the night, he grew anxious at the sight of the hatchet. The neighbors' doors and windows were opened. Putting this together, the narrator realized that his midnight visitor must have been one of that night's auditors at the coffee shop. "What's wrong?" he asked. In an angry tone the visitor answered: "How can I sleep, and how could you sleep, while Abu Zaid was in prison?" Surprised but obviously practically skilled enough to solve such a problem, the *qassakhoun* replied: "Oh, is that why you are

> dismayed? Don’t worry, man; it’s quite simple. But will you wait for a moment here? I’ll come back soon.” Inside went the storyteller; a few seconds later, he came back with the huge book in his hands. Under the light of the lantern, with the neighbors watching, he started reading the next episode in the sequence of events of the story, that is, after the arrest-scene. Briefly he ended up his reading with the following sentence: “Some of Abu Zaid’s friends then went to see the ruler of the country. Mediating for their friend, they praised the latter’s noble qualities and distinct bravery and prowess in times of war. The ruler was convinced and decided to set Abu Zaid free.” Relieved and reassured, the visitor praised the *qassakhoun*’s moral disposition and common sense and went back home.

This episode clearly reveals how gripping the act of oral storytelling must have been to the audience in the Arab world. It also indicates the extent to which an auditor could go in his spontaneous reaction to the narrative event. That auditor-midnight visitor must have been so interactively involved in the oral performance that his own moral code, itself a reflection and a continuation of a long-inherited, general moral code, ultimately took over and prevented him from dealing with the story as an imaginary work and waiting for its

sequential action. Hence the impact that story, and many such stories, had as an oral tradition upon the listening public in the Arab world.

Chapter One

Theoretical Background

In their book, *Voices of Modernity: Language Ideologies and the Politics of Inequality* (2003), Richard Bauman and Charles Briggs, discussing the role of language in the construction of modernity as propagated by European Enlightenment thinkers, realize the constant "concern with temporal continuities and discontinuities in language" (p. 10) that permeates contemporary discussion of modernity. Such discussion, however, brings to light a familiar opposition between the past and the future that seems to persist in contemporary endeavors to account for modernity epistemologically. Bauman and Briggs' response to the question of temporality centers on the concept of tradition and its utilization in the creation and maintenance of modernity. They define tradition as "the intertextually constituted continuum of reiterations by which the language- and thus the thought- of the past survives into the present, the mechanism that bridges the historical juncture represented by the advent of modernity" (p. 11).

This definition is illuminating in that it points to the discursive quality of tradition. According to Michel Foucault in his "What is an Author?" (in *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*, 2001), discursivity is marked by the potential of a given text for the production of rules of formation of other texts, thus establishing the endless possibility of discourse. A discursive text will not only "[make] possible a certain number of analogies that could be adopted by future texts, but...also...a certain number of differences" (p. 1632). In its capacity for initiation, then, a discursive text will pave the way for the introduction of new elements within the field of discourse the text has initiated (ibid.), for modifications that are as important as the initial act of creativity, and for transformations that re-situate it in a more clear-cut and formal perspective (p. 1633). Discursivity thus encourages the exploration of possible applications which relate to the initial text as a primary point of reference.[1] Bauman and Briggs' argument indicates that they do realize the discursive power of tradition. The 'continuum of reiterations' that human practices, habits, lifestyles, and rituals uphold and maintain over time endows tradition with the capacity, not only for survival 'into the present,' but also for bridging 'the historical juncture' that modernity seeks to establish in its attempt to bring about change. Junctures and gaps are bridged, not by identical replicas of that with which modernity attempts to break (i.e.

tradition), but by new and diverse forms of tradition that are durable. The durability of such forms is, in my opinion, the result of the potential for coexistence that tradition has. Further, we would be motivated by common sense to attribute durability to tradition, that is, the intrinsic power of existence in the face of time.

Bauman and Briggs' approach towards a viable epistemological concept of modernity rejects the dichotomous attitude to tradition developed under the influence of European Enlightenment. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries European thinkers viewed society and science as two separate and independent cultural domains, the former constructed by humans, the latter nature-derived. In order to create a compromise between the two realms, social traits and properties were made to approximate scientific elements. The process of mediation involved the production of hybrids whereby scientific advances were gradually imbued with powerful social and political meanings. On the other hand, as Bauman and Briggs clarify, the "hybridization process" was countered by a process of "purification" that aimed at "eras[ing] awareness of these connections in order to maintain the illusion of the autonomy of these realms." [2] The impact of this dialogic on the European view of tradition was tremendous. Tradition came to be perceived as an archaic discourse incompatible with modernity; the latter's endeavor was to effect a total break with

the past, in order to articulate a rational future (ibid. pp.10-11).

Thus marginalized and excluded from the process of modernity-making, tradition was underestimated, particularly in its potential for coexistence side by side with change. But the ability of tradition to initiate discursive practices, even if this happens in a mediational guise, defies exclusion and renders the European rationale of modernity fragile. The strength of tradition is due to the fact that it uses, as its instrument, the power of verbal language to articulate, promote, and thus ideologize its discourse. To this effect, Bauman and Briggs identify tradition, "both as an order of communication and as a mediator between past and present," with what they designate as "the communicative technology by means of which the chain of iterations that is held to constitute tradition is realized, that is, the spoken voice" (ibid. pp. 11-12).

The designation clearly points to the kind of cultures by which tradition was informed in the so-called premodern times and within which tradition thrived: cultures of the spoken word. Such cultures enabled tradition to persist and remain intact but also, and more significantly, to exert authority over the community. The discursive power of tradition was part and parcel of the foundational elements of oral cultures which dictated, through the spoken word, their own ideologies to their subjects. Hence the value of the spoken word and

the discursive formations associated with it (ibid. pp. 13-14). Hence, therefore, the significance of orality in cultures within which the spoken word was utilized to communicate tradition, empower traditional discourse, and invest it with authority. The practices, norms of behavior, and rites and rituals in communities of oral cultures received constant attention from, and were protected by, individuals whose role was to preserve tradition in the same way modern cultural institutions do. The impact of tradition was, therefore, proportionate to the extent to which its technology (i.e. the spoken voice) was far-reaching within the social context of culture.

On the other hand, the power of the spoken word and its discursive formations in oral cultures directs attention to the idea of 'text' and its position in oral tradition. Given our modern sense of 'text' in the material sense of the word, that is, the text as a thing, we are often inclined to interpret it literally. We would make the mistake of associating it with the act of writing, that is, with literacy and thus deny the existence of texts in cultures where orality dominates as a medium of communication. Addressing the misconception of 'text' in oral traditional studies, John Miles Foley, in his *How to Read an Oral Poem* (2002), provides us with a wide array of examples of oral traditions, from prehistoric times down to our own days, wherein what would pass for a text far transcends our monolithic conceptions and

one-sided expectations. An oral traditional text, says Foley, combines variable elements and rests on diverse instruments of verbal expression. It is one that cannot be restricted, typologically, to the formal aspects of its linguistic physiology, in the same way we understand forms and genres in the modern age (pp. 22-57). The existence and prosperity of an oral traditional 'text' in premodern cultures must be attributed to the dynamic relationship between words expressed and the context within which they were expressed. Taking the argument a step further, one may metaphorically claim that an oral traditional text in cultures of the spoken word existed in a social contract with the culture which it belonged to and, further, flourished as long as it managed to meet the expectations of the contract.

One main reason for the modern misunderstanding of the concept of 'text' when applied to oral tradition, according to John Foley, lies in the misapplication of the concept of 'orality' to texts of cultures of the spoken word. In his article, "Words in Tradition, Words in Text: A Response" (1994), Foley repositions oral text in terms of the equation:

words in tradition vs. words in text. He refuses to rely on the descriptive term 'orality' alone, which he sees as "an undifferentiated mass of varia...a typology that unfairly homogeneizes much more than it can hope to distinguish." Instead, he emphasizes 'tradition,' without

which, he asserts, oral composition would become so inclusive that it refers to "*all* spoken discourse, texted or textless" (p. 170). Obviously, Foley realizes the significance of the underlying aesthetic of 'oral tradition' and, at the same time, is suspicious of the extent to which 'orality' can transcend the narrowness and limitedness of the quality of 'unwrittenness' implied in the term. He adopts Werner Kelber's metaphorical designation, the 'biosphere,' for the concept of 'tradition.' Quoting the latter, Foley says: "By this metaphor he designates 'a collective cultural memory,' comprised of discourse and chirographs, and shared by speakers and hearers alike" (p. 171).

In the light of this definition, Foley notices, the idea of context comes to the fore and gains momentum, so much so that removing events from their traditional context will result in a misreading which, in turn, impoverishes events and renders them unable to convey meaning; consequently, we fail to hear the echoes "reverberating" through performance of the events. Once performance loses context, it will cease to be a communicative act and the event performed will, then, be deficient and inadequately received, since "each work of verbal art is nourished by an ever-impinging set of unspoken but implicitly articulated assumptions shared among the discourse community" (ibid.). These assumptions, rooted in the cultural frame-of-thought of the community, stand behind what Foley designates as

the *rhetorical persistence of traditional forms*, underlying the dynamic of the influence of tradition in oral cultures.

Foley's argument seems to support, though from a different perspective,[3] an earlier investigation of orality and literacy by Richard Bauman, who devotes his book, *Story, Performance, and Event* (1986) to a field-work study of North American oral storytelling. Emphasizing the social aspect of human culture and recognizing the typological predicament of the term 'literacy' in modern studies of oral literature, Bauman resents the current tendency among anthropologists to over address an epistemologically oriented contrast between orality and literacy. He believes that both serve to inform a better inquiry into the role that language, as verbal act, plays in the constitution of social life. Not only does verbal art bring to light the "*artful* uses of oral language," but it also directs attention to itself as "part of larger social and cultural systems organizing the social use of language" (p. 9). This two-fold significance of verbal art, that is, the aesthetic and the social, underlies the need to develop an integrative vision of oral tradition that rejects polarity in favor of a form-function interrelationship. Such a view, Bauman's argument seems to suggest, will not only create the compromise between orality and literacy necessary for a better understanding of how oral tradition works, both in oral cultures and cultures of the printed word, but also recognize the position of orality

as a mode of human expression subordinate to tradition. One is even tempted to claim that tradition, in its discursive formations, informs the oral function of language, when the latter is seen purely as a set of rules of verbal expression. That is, a tradition-based epistemological approach towards studying the human act of verbal art will point up the performative aspect of oral tradition as one invested in social interaction and promoted by a diversely cultural discourse.

Back to John Foley's notion of rhetoric. Our common knowledge of rhetoric reminds us that it is invested in argumentation and persuasion, with potential listeners as both target and judge, as Aristotle informs us in his treatise on rhetoric (*The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*, pp. 117-21). Foley's designation of the dynamic of oral tradition (the rhetorical persistence of traditional forms) indicates that the oral traditional idiom maintains its performative meaning within the general structure of the oral traditional text. Whenever the 'text' is read and/or recited, oral tradition begins to make its impact on the listeners who, by virtue of their familiarity with tradition will respond to the way the 'text' is read, and their response is initially shaped by their oral communicative experience. The argument here points to the position of the audience in the general reception and perception of oral traditional idiom, an audience who are expected to be informed enough of their own tradition and, further,

alert enough to its rhetorical force, to "invest the entexted utterance with its due heritage of performative meaning" (p, 172).

An audience's familiarity with the rhetorical force of their oral tradition thus appears to underline the significance of rhetoric in relation to the culture within which an oral tradition grows and flourishes. In his book *Rhetoric in Popular Culture* (1994), Barry Brummett offers a conceptual perspective on the nature of rhetoric and its importance in popular culture. He defines rhetoric as "*the ways in which signs influence people*," and explains that "[t]he term *signs* refers to the countless meaningful items, images, and so on that surround us" (p. 4). He calls for "seeing everyday experience as alive with persuasive influences" and associates this with "*the ability to control events and meanings*" (ibid.). The power of persuasion derives from the extent to which everyday events and situations can influence us, that is, through the management of meaning. Rhetoric, therefore, is embodied in all the transitory experiences of everyday life that make up meaning: "[E]verything is a *signifier*,...everything *signifies* something else, or...everything has *signification*" (p. 7). Rhetoric thus is invested in culture. The building blocks of culture, in Brummett's perspective, are two: signs and artifacts. The first refers to all things that, in our interactive communication with the phenomena of life, come to acquire signification or meaning, either referring to

themselves or indicating other things, events, or situations. Signs are either indexical, iconic, or symbolic, depending on the way a thing (sign) is linked in people's minds with something else (meaning)- by way of association, resemblance, or agreement, i.e., convention, respectively (pp. 6-10).

However, these three kinds of meaning are complex and not readily distinguishable from each other within the larger frame of social construction of cultures. Their interpretation depends, therefore, on how widely shared they are among societies, communities, and groups of individuals (pp. 10-11). The second block of culture, artifacts, is even more complex than the first. They are both a subset and an extension of signs, a socially created reality, continually charged with meaning, and can be the material signs of group identifications (pp. 11-18). An artifact (i.e. an action, event, or object) is often perceived as a unified whole whose meaning depends on our group perception of a given phenomenon, as well as on the social context within which we wish to place the phenomenon.

Brummett's designation of the blocks of culture is informed by Raymond Williams' view of culture as a "whole way of life" that includes even our constant endeavour to survive as humankind. Brummett adopts Williams' definition of culture as "a very active world of everyday conversation and exchange. Jokes, idioms, characteristic

forms not just of everyday dress but occasional dress, people consciously having a party, making a do, marking an occasion" (p. 20). These are artifacts that make up culture and to which human beings are exposed every day. These are, in other words, the "countless meaningful items" that surround us and influence our perception of our own experience of life; their influence creates meaning and the way they create meaning is rhetoric. However, the relationship between artifacts and culture is not arbitrary but guided by a socially defined system: "What turns a group of *artifacts* into a *culture* is that they are *systematically* related: They make up a *system* of artifacts anchored in group identifications" (p. 20). These artifacts, then, are in a state of eternal interplay with each other as well as with the social system of which they are intrinsic composites. They are material manifestations of group identifications. As such, one may say, they are socio-politically charged and, in as much as they articulate concepts, beliefs, and norms characteristic of the group they represent, can be taken to identify the culture that they construct.

In the light of this understanding, one of the main characteristics of cultures, according to Brummett, is that they are experienced through texts. However, Brummett's definition of 'text' transcends the purely linguistic concept of signs and signifiers that characterizes an act of writing, since "words are not the only signs, the only entities

with meaning. Things other than or in addition to words can be texts as well "(p. 27). However, this definition may be more inclusive than it should. It may refer to any human experience, regardless of its contribution to the making of meaning and, consequently, to the production of the same set of effects that the notion of culture (as signs and artifacts) implies. Brummett therefore restricts his definition of 'text' to "*a set of signs related to each other insofar as their meanings all contribute to the same set of effects or functions*" (ibid.). Here is an emphasis on unity of meanings of diverse signs, unity that results from the way people perceive a group of signs available to them within a particular social context. Regardless of the size of the sign-group, it is the extent to which the signs are charged with meaning that turns signs to text and, thence, to culture. Consequently, we come to see texts as "the ways in which we experience culture" (p. 31).

The preceding argument on rhetoric and culture readily lends itself to the following question: since meaning is embedded in signs and artifacts that are not in isolation but in a state of interaction within a social setting, and since culture is to be understood in terms of the 'material manifestations of group identifications,' is it possible for culture to thrive as an abstract, that is, without a medium as concrete as the signs and artifacts that make up the culture? The answer is

clearly, 'No.' Culture is rooted in, and often emerges as a development of, thought. Man’s thinking faculty is in a state of continual search for expression that would concretize, and thus utilize, thought. Thinking itself is influenced by the medium through which knowledge is acquired. Hence the communicative aspect of culture, with its emphasis on the reciprocal nature of interaction between individual and community.

Language, on the other hand, is a means of cultural activity as well as a form of communication. It is articulated through a variety of venues- literature, politics, religion, etc- as well as a variety of forms- narrative, expository, rhetorical, etc; it employs to its own advantage its first and most significant agent- man- to make itself possible. Language therefore becomes an act inviting participation; in turn, participation reshapes the uses of language and lends them levels of interpretation. This underlines the performative aspect of language and, at the same time, directs attention to the individual as an agent of the spoken word, an agent who, in his utilization of whatever expressive instruments of language are available to him at a given moment in history, will partake of the process of interpretation, decoding verbal utterance and receiving feedback from the community. The latter then leaves its imprints on the memory of the individual and, more significantly, on his awareness of the cultural

aspects of life within the community. The individual's use of language within the community becomes thus an act of interaction culturally informed but also variously promoted through the individual's performance of his speech acts. Culture is at the core of performance.

In his book, *Performance: A Critical Introduction* (1996), Marvin Carlson refers to the term 'cultural performance' to remind us that "the culture content of a tradition…[is] transmitted by specific cultural media as well as by human carriers" (p. 16). Citing Milton Singer who first coined this term, Carlson explains that 'cultural performances' are those distinct events encapsulating culture and making it exhibitable to societies in such a way that the cultural structure of the said societies would be concretely observable. In other words, cultural performances enable members of a given society to see the signs of their own culture exemplified, appealing to their perception of sight, sound, and other images. This definition clearly points, among other things, to the idea of performance as an organized activity made possible via performers, audience, and place of performance, with particular emphasis on occasion. Performance thus becomes "a discrete concretization of cultural assumptions," set apart in time, place, and occasion (ibid.). Moreover, the notion of performance as activity invested in cultural placement calls upon us to be attentive to the contextual aspect of performance, that is, all the factors and elements

of performance that reveal how ‘text’ functions as a performative and communicative act in a particular cultural situation. Hence the significance of the total performance situation in which the specific activities of the performer are but one main composite. In this respect, performance as a cultural practice results not only from what the performer does but also, and more significantly, from the particular context in which he does it, whereby the practice itself becomes an occasion for re-inscribing (though not literally) or reinventing ideas, concepts, themes, and features characteristic of the social life of a given group or community.

The word 'occasion' deserves attention here. It points to the act of performance as a possibility defined in terms of situation and context. Bauman, again in his *Story, Performance, and Event*, speaks of oral literature text as a record of deeply situated human behavior, a record, that is, which can be made alive in performance. As a mode of communication and a way of speaking, oral performance, "like all human activity, is situated, its form, meaning, and functions rooted in culturally defined scenes or events- bounded segments of the flow of behavior and experience that constitute meaningful contexts for action, interpretation, and evaluation" (p.3). The performance event is as important as the text itself, providing an empirical framework for the comprehension and appreciation of oral literature as a socially

defined one. It embodies all the social forces that have contributed to the making of the oral literary text at a given moment in history. But more than this, the performance event gives vent to all the social forces at play within the context of performance and, thus, points up the kind of artistry involved in the performance as a verbal act in the first place.

Bauman outlines the structure of performance events as "a product of the systemic interplay of numerous situational factors." These factors are:

1. Participants' identities and roles;
2. The expressive means employed in performance;
3. Social interactional ground rules, norms, and strategies for performance and criteria for its interpretation and evaluation;
4. The sequence of actions that make up the scenario of the event (p. 4).

Each one of these, alone as well as in association with the other factors, underlies an important quality of oral performance of an oral literary text: variability. The participants in a given performance have their own goals and purposes that shape their performance and reveal their competence. Their verbal expression, drawing upon the linguistic

heritage at hand, creates expectations among listeners that vary in agreement, depending on such factors of delivery as tone, accentuation, segmentation, etc that the event dictates throughout. The normative social structure within which the performance takes place already has its conventions and rules built into the collective consciousness of the group or community attending the performance, generating expectations that vary in priority depending on the conventions themselves in their association with the themes and topics of general significance. And the event itself, in its instant impact on the recipients of the performance, undergoes possible changes or alterations in plot, depending on the degree of interaction that the event creates among the audience: "The models provided by generic conventions and prior renditions of 'traditional' items stand available to participants as a set of conventional expectations and associations, but these may themselves be used as resources for creative manipulation, shaping the emergent text to the unique circumstances at hand" (ibid.).

The notion of performance as a cultural practice has had a variety of critical readings, ranging from emphasis on gender and bodily display, cultural politics of memory, to identity and ethnic performance. In the introduction to *Performance and Cultural Politics* (1996), Elin Diamond asserts that “culture complexly enunciates itself

in performance, reiterates values, reaffirms community, and recreates, in Victor Turner's words, sites of 'liminality' with which to broach and resolve crises" (p. 6). Diamond then refers to Turner's designation and concept of 'social drama,' as well as to Richard Schechner's performance models, and adds: "liminality both interrupts and sustains cultural networks, tending to reaffirm an organic model for the understanding of culture" (ibid.). The idea of an organic model reinscribed via performance does in fact draw attention to the representational aspects of a given culture, aspects that are remembered and stressed with an eye to promoting certain communal ideologies deemed essential to the well-being of culture. That is to say, performance helps concretize and maintain certain distinct features of the cultural structure of society or of a given group within society and, consequently, incorporates these features as intrinsic composites of ideology and creed. Culture and performance thus assume a reciprocally interactive role realized through a number of codes or modes of communication adopted by those who perform and those who receive (hear or see) the performance; their interaction will be guaranteed as long as the modes in question are familiar to both.

Now what is the nature of performance that seems so culture-bound that it creates expectations among, and draws response from, members of a community engaged in watching and listening to a

performance? To this and related issues Richard Bauman, in his *Verbal Art As Performance* (1984), devotes his attention in what has come to be acknowledged as a conceptual frame of reference in performance theory. His conception is based upon understanding performance as a mode of speaking, that is, "as a species of situated human communication" where "the formal manipulation of linguistic features" no longer maintains priority as it does in text-oriented utterance (p. 8). Citing theoretical approaches to the conception of verbal art as communication, Bauman particularly refers to J. L. Austin's theory of speech acts and the latter's negative attitude toward the special uses of language as in acting on stage and speaking in soliloquy. He quotes Austin as saying, "language in such circumstances is in special ways-intelligibly – used not seriously, but in ways *parasitic* upon its normal use" (p. 9). Deviation from normality in linguistic usage is, according to Bauman, an assertion that verbal art as performance does in fact involve "transformation of the basic referential…uses of language" to suit situated communication (ibid.). Artistic performance thus carries a message to its audience, requiring them to interpret what they see/hear in a special way: "do not take it to mean what the words alone, taken literally, would convey" (ibid.). The conclusion that Bauman draws here is the implication that performance develops along

its lines an interpretative frame peculiar to the experience that performance engages the audience in.

Since performance is shaped by its communicative teleology, the question of interpretation comes to the fore. Bauman tackles this issue by stressing the performer's responsibility to his audience "for a display of communicative competence…[that is] an assumption of accountability to an audience for the way in which communication is carried out, above and beyond its referential content," rendering the performer subject to the audience's evaluation and, more significantly, making his performance "available for the enhancement of experience" (p. 11). This realization of the nature of performance and its communicative interchange necessitates on the part of the audience a "heightened awareness of the act of expression" in which the performer is directly engaged, an act that shapes their reaction, evaluation, and aesthetic participation in the experience.

But how is such a frame of reference accomplished, since performance requires communicative interaction? Bauman adopts Gregory Bateson's concept of metacommunication to describe the "range of explicit or implicit messages which carry instructions on how to interpret the other message(s) being communicated" (p.15), that is, on how to enable auditors to decode the messages that the performance carries and articulates. Bauman then offers a list of the

communicative means of performance that have been generally recognized and widely documented in various cultures as keys to performance. They are: special codes, figurative language, parallelism, special paralinguistic features, special formulae, appeal to tradition, and disclaimer of performance. His realization of the formal and conventional nature of these devices suggests to Bauman the formal appeal of the performance which, arousing a sense of group expectancy, “binds the audience to the performer in a relationship of dependence that keeps them caught up in his display” (p. 16). However, these keys to performance are only examples of the communicative means that cultures utilize. There are many more possibilities, depending on the prominent features of each culture.

The notion of performance, as explained thus far, points up two main senses of performance which, according to Richard Bauman and Joel Sherzer in *Explorations in the Ethnography of Speaking* (1989), have acquired paramount significance in the study of the ethnography of speaking. The first is "performance as speaking praxis, [that is] the situated use of language in the conduct and constitution of social life" (p. xviii). This approach is basically concerned with the functional aspect of performance as practice to be understood in terms of the role it plays in society, as a form of social production and reproduction. It does not account for the mechanism of artistic verbal performance,

since it does not explain "the dynamic interplay between the social, conventional, ready-made in social life and the individual, creative, and emergent qualities of human existence" (p. xix). Conversely, the second approach "centers on performance as artful, the poetics of performance," which offers an insight into the art which transcends the socially functional towards an explanation of "the ways in which artistic verbal performance may work in the ultimate service of persuasion, power, pleasure, and the general intensification of social experience" (p. xx).

Hence the interpretive value of the second approach, a dimension that requires a formal interpretive framework within which the act of speaking is to be understood. Since meaning at a simple level of human communication is the result of the individuals' interaction with each other, speech itself has become the primary instrument of social interaction. Performance, then, in its interpretive sense demands that it be appreciated formally and aesthetically, with a view to articulating the socio-cultural implications of the interaction that performance makes possible. This happens, indeed, once performance is conceived of "in terms of the interplay between resources and individual competence, within the contexts of particular situations. Performances [will] thus have an emergent quality, structured by the situated and creative exercise of competence" (p.7).

Bauman's list of the keys to performance enables this kind of interplay to be realized when we read an oral traditional 'text' as one invested in performance.

Notes

1. Foucault further asserts that the "initiation of a discursive practice…overshadows and is necessarily detached from its later developments and transformations" (p. 1633). I am inclined to disagree with him on this point. As my argument will later show, the power of tradition is such that it manages, via interaction with future recipients, to reinforce its discourse and make itself more articulate through its later developments. A mere look at modern film and stage adaptations of traditional stories, for example, testifies to the extent to which developments and transformations of a traditional text draw upon, and are informed by, the initial act of discourse.

2. Voices of Modernity, p. 4. Bauman and Briggs' discussion of the hybridization and purification dialogic begins very early in the book, where they draw upon Bruno Latour's historical account of modernity in his book, *We Have Never Been Modern* (1993).

3. Foley's critique of the anthropological differentiation between orality and literacy stems, in my opinion, from his aesthetically oriented appreciation of oral tradition. His attitude, as his survey of diverse oral traditions in *How to Read an Oral Poem* reveals, briskly vents

out a concern for verbal art as a human artistic accomplishment that should be appreciated in its own terms.

4. It is my belief that the notion of familiarity with an oral traditional text need not be questioned on the basis of time-span, for a faint knowledge of one's communal traditional roots is enough to trigger interaction, as human experience shows us.

Chapter Two

With a view to approximating oral traditional roots in texts of popular culture, such as *The Arabian Nights*' text, performance is hereby emphasized as an art invested in culture, whose formal and aesthetical aspects are to be underlined and appreciated. We now proceed to study one large portion of the *Nights* in the light of the frame-of-reference designated by Richard Bauman in his oral performance approach. It is the "Story of the King of China's Hunchback," which is recounted over sixty-nine nights and occupies 15% of the Arabic edition of the *Nights*. But first, a few words on the edition under consideration.

It is Muhsin Mahdi's Brill edition of the earliest Arabic manuscript known which, as Mahdi informs us, is the same manuscript that was first introduced to Europe by Antoine Galland in a French translation in the early eighteenth century. Although entitled, *Alf Layla wa-Layla* [The Thousand and One Nights], this edition has thirty-five and a half stories, narrated over 282 nights, no more. Of this original text and the French translator, Mahdi says:

It was a fortunate event in the history of the *Nights* when the three-volume Arabic manuscript from Syria arrived in Paris where Antoine Galland…awaited it…. Like the scribes and publishers of the Arabic versions of the work, Galland fell under the spell of the title: *A Thousand and One Nights*. He embraced the myth of an Arabic original containing that many Nights and whiled away years hoping to receive a complete copy from the Orient. When a copy of the whole work failed to materialize, he contrived a French version of his own, offering innocent readers what looked like a translation of the whole Arabic original. He had fabricated part of it, including a thousand and a first Night…. He was the first Western writer to wish for the number of Nights indicated by the title and, after a fruitless search, to create the missing portion himself.

(*The Thousand and One Nights*, Part 3, p. 11)

Muhsin Mahdi devotes a large portion of his edition to a careful and well-researched investigation of the so-called four original Arabic versions of the *Nights* that were published in the first half of the nineteenth century and which, both in the West and the Arab world, have been variedly assumed to be the 'correct' editions. They are, in order of appearance:

Calcutta I, 1814/1818 2 vols.

Bulaq (or Cairo ed.) 1835		2 vols.
Calcutta II, 1839-42		4 vols.
Breslau,	1825-38	12 vols.

He argues against accepting anyone of them as reliable, since they were all the result of recensions, additions, interpolations, even fabrications made in the second half of the eighteenth and first half of the nineteenth centuries by Arab scribes, non-Arab Muslim editors, and Western translators and editors. Those were catering to the European demand for the *Nights*, amidst an increasing antiquarian interest in the Orient. The surge of interest in the bizarre and exotic, allegedly characteristic attributes of the East, resulted in breathless attempts by Arabic scribes, particularly in Egypt, to look for folktales and popular stories and incorporate them in the corpus to meet the numeric requirement of 1001 Nights.

Further, in regard to the Calcutta I Arabic edition, itself incomplete in terms of the number of Nights ascribed to the corpus, one main concern of the editors and publishers was to provide versions that would be free of vulgarity (and obscenity) characteristic of many tales. Motivated by their sense of decorum and what was traditionally considered as proper language by established grammarians and linguists in the Arab-Muslim world, says Mahdi, those editors and

publishers freely modified their so-called original versions, omitting, adding, and replacing as they pleased. The outcome was four Arabic editions, each claiming to be the original one, while none of them truly was.[1] Hence my decision to use Muhsin Mahdi's edition of the Arabian Nights, an edition that keeps the original manuscript, which is maintained in the Bibliothèque Nationale de France, intact and free of 'decorous' intervention. Apart from filling in a small number of gaps, some of which resulted from damage to or poor maintenance of the papers of the manuscript, Mahdi refrains from redaction, elaboration, interpolation, or any such intervention that traditional editors made in their endeavor to produce a 'readable text.' His act of gap-filling is therefore limited to providing missing phrases and words that already exist in other parts of the tales, or that more commonly occur in other later verifiable manuscripts than less common phrases, clauses, and words. Equally important is the fact that Mahdi's gap-filling words and phrases do not pretend, or even try, to meet conventional grammatical and linguistic standards of 'correct' phraseology, sentence-construction, or diction.

Story of the King of China's Hunchback

Synopsis

There lived in China a hunchback who was the King's stooge and boon companion. One day he was invited to dinner by a tailor and his wife who, loitering on the streets in the evening, came across the hunchback and were amused by his singing and drunkenness. His funny status appealed to them; they thought they could use him as their boon companion that night. At the dinner table, he choked with a fish-bone and died. Afraid of the consequences, though apparently unaware of their guest's identity, the tailor and his wife took the corpse to a Jewish medical doctor's house in the middle of the night. They asked to see the doctor, then secretly left the corpse on the stairs and went away. Stumbling over the body in the darkness of the staircase, the doctor believed he had caused his patient to die. Likewise afraid of the consequences, he took the corpse away and left it in a standing position against the wall of the King's Muslim steward's house next door. The latter, on his way back home after midnight, saw the standing figure and thought it was a thief-- the thief that he

believed was stealing his meat and grease for quite a while. He struck the hunchback with a hammer and, believing that he had killed him, went out to try and get rid of the dead corpse. He took the corpse to the nearby market-place, before stores were open, and left it standing in a street corner against a store wall. It was almost dawn. Shortly afterwards, a bypassing Christian broker stopped by the store to urinate. Believing the standing figure to be a thief who wanted to steal his turban, the broker immediately struck the hunchback with his fist and called for help. The sentry assigned to protect the market-place responded to the call. However, at the sight of the dead hunchback lying on the ground and the broker beating him, he arrested the broker and took him to the Wali, that is, the man in charge of security in the town.

At the King's orders, the Christian broker was to be hanged but, thanks to a last- minute intervention by the steward who claimed that it was he who committed the crime, the broker was instantly pardoned and replaced by the Muslim steward on the gibbet. Again in a last-minute intervention, the steward was now replaced by the Jewish doctor, the latter then by the tailor, each successively stepping forward to indict himself and save his predecessor.

Informed of the death of his boon companion, the King of China had these four persons brought to court. He inquired into the nature of

the murder and was made to hear the story from beginning to end. To save their life, each one of the four suspects told a tale and claimed it was more amazing than the tale of the hunchback's death-enigma. Each of the tales they told involved one type of physical deformity or another. None of the storytellers succeeded in satisfying the King's thirst for amazing details and bizarre events until it was the tailor's turn. Being the last storyteller, he had to face the greatest challenge: every one of the suspects looked up to him as their savior. He embarked on recounting a long and intricately woven tale. His skill was such that he managed to make his tale continuously unfold to beget new tales, in a non-stop sequence that ultimately drew the King's admiration. Consequently, the four persons were acquitted. Then the hunchback was miraculously brought back to life.

Keys to Oral Performance in the Story

In order for us to apply Bauman's performance keys to this 'text' of the story, we need to briefly underline certain distinct elements of popular culture that appear abundantly in the story.

Urban Background

The setting of the tales of the story is the urban sites of Baghdad, Cairo, and Damascus. Each of the tales recounted in relation to these sites incorporates well-known features of urban life recognizable in big wealthy houses, palaces and courts of sultans and princes, and market-places.[2] And the narrative frequently stops for short periods of time to provide highly descriptive passages wherein details of architectural beauty (particularly interior design), luxurious aspects of livelihood (incense, perfumes, expensive clothes), and plenty of food (particularly expensive meals where meat, sweets, and spices are profusely offered) are repeatedly mentioned with a view to highlighting a celebratory approach to life. Wealth and prosperity in the tales allow for the presence of characters whose corporeal desires are emphasized as stimuli to their social behavior. Sexual lust is

allotted a noticeable space within the dynamics of the main plot. In an article entitled 'The "Mansion" and the "Rubbish Mounds:" The Thousand and One Nights in Popular Arabic Tradition' (2004), Muhsin al-Musawi stresses the importance of the bodily discourse in *The Arabian Nights*, where description of private life becomes intrinsically woven with the narrative structure. This relationship gives vent to scenes of physical love, playful displays of sexuality, and licentiousness which themselves are central to popular culture. However, al-Musawi maintains, these "properties of popular culture…are the properties of the ephemeral and passing against the upheld stability and institutionalization of the Metropolitan center" (p. 366).

Intrigue and Machinations

Along the same line of argument and the emphasis on physical pleasure, the story abounds in examples of schemes and wicked plots devised and implemented to enable certain figures to attain personal goals at the expense of naïve lovers and reckless libertines. Due to the conservative nature of the highly aristocratic society in the Arab-Islamic world, intrigues and plotting were instrumental to achieve interclass mobility, wherein social and ethnic barriers would be dismantled in order to articulate individual freedom. [3] In terms of power relations, I believe such maneuvering and scheming can be

seen as an attempt to create possibilities for temporary suspension of class distinction, within the hierarchical frame of thought characteristic of such societies, before reinforcing the same hierarchy through acts of coercion, brutality, and torture. Often such acts in the story are committed or caused by female characters. One distinct trait of these characters is their resourcefulness. They never lack the means to entice their male targets and render them helpless and unequipped. Taking advantage of the hierarchical social build-up of their urban milieu, they use their physical beauty to enhance their act of coercion, sometimes aided by other females, other times by male assistants.

Poetry and Song

Poetry is one of the distinct elements of popular culture in the story. The narrator frequently incorporates verses that do not totally conform to classical Arabic poetry but are vernacular variations on poetic norms. Usually these verses express human feelings and attitudes commonly regarded as universal and exemplary, such as wisdom, grief over the mutability of the things of life, erotic love and related suffering at denial, and joy at reunion of lovers and families. Verse-song is also found in the tales, being one characteristic element of prosperous and happy life in urban sites. As such, song and poetry recited to the accompaniment of musical instruments, generally inside palaces and great houses, tend to have a festive quality, as they

contribute to the picture of wealth and abundance distinguishing urban life in the medieval Arab world. The “Story of the King of China’s Hunchback” has many such verses that the narrator uses to create emphasis, link the parts of the plot together, and sustain the power of narration. Often, these verses tend to be commentaries on life, expressed when characters are in the midst of certain difficult situations. They have therefore a particular resonance with the populace who would be able to identify themselves with the character in question.

Let us now examine the tales of the story under discussion, applying Bauman’s performance keys to the written ‘text.’ The story is structurally divided into four major tales, the last of which in turn unfolds into six tales. They are as follows:

Tale of the Christian Broker

Tale of the King’s Steward

Tale of the Jewish Doctor

Tale of the Tailor

Tale of the Barber and His Brothers

First Brother: the Hunchback Tailor

Second Brother: the Paralyzed Baqbaaqa

Third Brother: the Blind Faqfaq

Fourth Brother: the One-eyed Butcher

Fifth Brother: He Whose Ears Were Cut Off

Sixth Brother: He Whose Lips Were Cut Off

A quick look at the list and succession of these tales suggests a structure of *parallelism* in which the tales seem to be following a certain pattern that binds them together in a relationship of cause and effect. This pattern is the ransom-tale. [4] Since the story begins with the hunchback's apparent death and ends with his unexpected revival, all the composite tales between the beginning and end are, ontologically speaking, viable as long as they remain within the context of the hunchback's story. This is not to say that they cannot exist by themselves. But the tales' significance is closely related to the fact that they have been told to serve one particular end-- saving the life of their narrators. The urgency of the situation is such that the act of telling a tale, or even an interesting tale, is by itself not enough to obtain the King's pardon. Rather, it is telling a tale that should prove

more amazing than the story of the hunchback's death, more amazing, that is, in every respect: detail, incident, character-involvement, mood, etc. Everything revolves around, and boils down to, this teleology.

At a structural level, then, the parallelism of the tales within the framework of a ransom-tale becomes so important to the narrative itself that, in terms of oral performance theory, it informs the act of telling the tales itself and dictates to the storyteller his performance. It creates a sense of regularity of situation for him and, as he moves from one event to another, from one tale to another, he becomes better able to emphasize the salient features of the tales, as they recur within the ransom-tale framework, and convey them to his audience. As a key to performance, parallelism rests on recurrence, and what counts for the storyteller here is the extent to which he can keep the idea of ransom alive in his audience' minds. He would have to create a sense of familiarity with the situation at hand and, depending on the quality of his performance, parallelism enables him to convey that sense of familiarity to the audience. As soon as his listeners are drawn into the world of the tales, they become partners in the act of performance of which they are witnesses. Their ears will be further attuned to narration, thanks to certain recurrent structures that act as prompts cuing the context within which interaction is to take place.

The discussion clearly underlines the significance of the essential ransom-tale of Shehrazad and Shahrayar, told anonymously at the outset of *The Arabian Nights*. A brief reminder, therefore, of this tale should not be considered redundant in this context.

Synopsis of the Ransom-Tale

It is related that Shahrayar, a Sassanian King, provoked by his wife's unfaithfulness, decided to avenge himself upon all women. Killing his wife and her train of maids and black slaves, he made up his mind to marry every virgin girl in his kingdom and kill her on the following day, that is, after deflowering her. He carried out his plan for some time until no one in his kingdom could tolerate that practice any longer.[5] Shehrazad, the vizier's daughter, implored her father to marry her off to Shahrayar, in the hope that she might change his malevolent attitude towards women and teach him a lesson. Shehrazad is described as a well-read woman, versed in the histories of nations and countries, and who has learned wisdom and poetry and acquired medicinal knowledge. Thus well-informed of human nature and the power and impact of the 'word' on the human psyche, Shehrazad embarked on her mission and, contrary to her father's wish, was married off to the despotic melancholic king. On the wedding night,

she begins her narration.

This is the essential ransom-tale upon which the idea of the Nights is based and which informs the tales. Now an audience listening to the Nights recounted, with Shehrazad's ransom-tale in mind, would be able to follow up the progress of the numerous tales in the 'text', not only in terms of suspense created through sequential action, but also with a view to seeing the extent to which Shehrazad's skill as a narrator can encounter and subjugate that human psyche. [6] Of this, Muhsin al-Musawi, in his *Alf Laylah wa-Laylah fi Nadhariyet al-Adab al-Inghilizi* [The Thousand and One Nights in English Literary Theory] (1986), says: "Unlike other women, Scheherazade often depends on her wit, common sense, and wide knowledge. She is more familiar with, and aware of, his [that is, Shahrayar's] psychology; so she narrates to him a collection of stories to keep him occupied every night, thus manipulating him in the same way magic and medicine manipulate people: now comforting him, the next time treating his wound and pain. Her tales are not devoid of references to women's fickleness; yet as Scheherazade thus manages to win his confidence, she recounts stories of women's faithfulness [to their husbands] and cleverness. Moreover, she refrains from employing directly didactic preachment or blunt drollery; rather, her tales are exciting enough for Shehrayar to grow fond of this art for a thousand and one nights!"

(p.7).

Although it does not appear again in the corpus, that is, it is never repeated, the ransom-tale's presence is domineering. This results from the recurrence of certain phrases and clauses at the beginning and end of each of the Nights. These phrases, functioning as a reminder of the essential situation (a newly married woman engaged in a cut-throat endeavor to buy time to ransom her life) maintain a sense of *parallelism* throughout the narrative. The opening phrase in each Night is:

1- زعموا أيها الملك السعيد وصاحب الرأي الرشيد...

with variations on the first word and the adjectives used to describe the addressee, Shahrayar. These are:

a- زعموا أيها الملك السعيد صاحب الرأي السديد...

b- بلغني أيها الملك السعيد...

c- بلغني أيها الملك العزيز...

Soon after the first few nights, a new phrase is added to this one wherein Shehrazad's sister, Dinarzad, takes the initiative and triggers a new Night:

2- فلما كانت الليلة القابلة قالت دينارزاد لاختها شهرازاد لما دخلت مع الملك شاهريار الى الفراش يا أختاه بالله عليك إن كنت غير نايمة فحدثينا بحدوتة من أحاديثك الحسان

نقطـع بهـا سـهر ليلتنـا هـذي

with variations on some portions of the phrase. These are:

a- فلمـا كانـت الليلـة القابلـة قالـت دينـارزاد لاختهـا شـهرازاد بـالله يـا أختـاه إن كنـت غـير نايمـة فحـدثينا بحدوتـة مـن أحاديثـك.

b- فلمـا كانـت الليلـة القابلـة دخلـت شـهرازاد مـع الملـك شـاهريار فـي الفـراش. قالت أختها دينارزاد يا أختاه إن كنت غير نايمة فحدثينا بحدوتة وتمَي لنا حديثك.

The closing phrase in each Night is:

3- وأدرك شـهرازاد الصـبح فسـكتت وقطعـت الحـديثوإنشـق الفجـر

with variations on the position of the composite-phrases of the sentence:

a- وأدرك شـهرازاد الصـبح وإنشـق الفجـر فسـكتت عـن حـديثها.

b- وأدرك شـهرازاد الصـبح فسـكتت عـن الحـديث.

This phrase is often preceded by a request put forward by Dinarzad in which she praises her sister's storytelling and receives Shehrazad's reassurance of a more interesting narration on the following night:

4- ولمـا ان طلـع الفجـر قالـت دينـارزاد لاختهـا شـهرازاد مـا أحسـن حـديثك وأعجبـه. قالـت وأيـن هـذا إن عشـت وأبقـاني هـذا الملـك، فهـو أحسـن مـن هـذا الحـديث وأعجـب ممـا أحـدثك بـه الليلـة القابلـة

with such variations as:

a- وقالت أختها دينارزاد يا أختاه ما أطيب حديثك. قالت الليلة القابلة أحدثكم بأطيب من هذا وأعجب وأغرب إن عشت وأبقاني الملك ولم يقتلني.

b- فقالت لها دينارزاد يا أختاه ما أطيب حديثك وأعجبه. قالت وأين هذا مما أحدثكم به في الليلة القابلة إن عشت إن شاء الله تعالى.

The above-mentioned phrases and clauses may be translated as follows:

1. It is purported, Oh thou happy King and possessor of wise opinion...

    a. It is purported, Oh thou happy King, possessor of unerring opinion...

    b. It came to my ears, Oh thou happy King...

    c. It came to my ears, Oh thou mighty King...

2. When the following night came, Dinarzad said to her sister, Shehrazad, as she [i.e. the latter] went with King Shahrayar to bed, Oh dear sister, in the name of Allah, if you are not asleep, tell us a tale, one of your fine tales, whereby we may traverse the progress of this our night.

    a. When the following night came, Dinarzad said to her sister, Shehrazad, in the name of Allah, Oh dear sister, if you are not asleep, tell us a tale, one of your tales.

b. When the following night came, Shehrazad went with King Shahrayar to bed. Her sister, Dinarzad, said, Oh dear sister, if you are not asleep, tell us a tale and finish your narration.

3. The dawn was broken, and the morning descended upon Shehrazad, so she stopped talking and suspended the narration.

a. The morning descended upon Shehrazad, and the dawn was broken, so she stopped her narration.

b. The morning descended upon Shehrazad, so she stopped narration.

4. And when it dawned, Dinarzad said to her sister, Shehrazad, what a pleasant and amusing narrative yours is! She [i.e. Shehrazad] said, and what is this in comparison with what I would tell you tomorrow night, if I lived and this king spared my life! It is more pleasant and amusing than this narrative.

a. And her sister, Dinarzad, said, Oh sister, what an agreeable narrative yours is! She [i.e. Shehrazad] said, tomorrow night I would tell you a more agreeable, amusing, and amazing narrative if I lived and the King spared my life and did not kill me!

b. So Dinarzad said, Oh sister, what an agreeable and amusing

narrative yours is! She [i.e. Shehrazad] said, and what is this in comparison with what I would tell you tomorrow night, if I lived, Allah willing!

The recurrence of these phrases throughout *The Arabian Nights* is significant. It keeps the essential story of Shehrazad and Shahrayar alive in the minds of those engaged in listening to the tales as they unfold. The storyteller's awareness of this prerogative helps him cue his performance in such a way that his audience will always be alert to the significance of the upcoming Nights. He will be able to sustain anticipation among his listeners, whose admiration for the narrative and the narrator, Shehrazad, increases as the tales sequentially progress. Moreover, the parallel structuring of these phrases within the general narrative underlines for storytellers certain attributes of professional narrating. First, they emphasize the need to be able to keep listeners at bay, as Shehrazad does to Shahrayar, and gradually build toward the ultimate denouement. Second, they remind storytellers of their status in terms of historical narration.

According to Deborah Folaron, in her article "Oral Narrating and Performing Traditions in the History of Modern Middle Eastern and Maghrebian Theatre and Drama" (2002), "[t]he narration of events as they relate to each other within an ideological framework, and the contextualization necessary to re-enact those events as they

presumably would have happened, are the usual tasks of the historian”(p. 3). This is precisely what Shehrazad does. Her selection of events is varied but deliberate: she has a higher goal than merely to provide entertainment. As each Night draws to an end, the audience receives the signal, through the recurrent phrases mentioned above, that the narrator has just finished one more night successfully and would remain alive for at least one extra night. This progression adds to the listeners' hope for a better fate for Shehrazad but also, and more significantly, reinforces the power of verbal art in the face of tyranny and injustice. G. K. Chesterton, in *The Spice of Life*, says that for all his despotism, Shahrayar has become an eyewitness to the self-independent nature of art. That dictator was compelled to listen to a tale: art alone was the alternative to life.[7]

It is in the light of the preceding argument, informed by the *parallelism* indicated, that our reading of the “Story of the King of China's Hunchback” (and of the parallelism distinguishing the structure of its four major and six minor tales) should proceed. The four major tales, told precisely to ransom their narrators, exemplify *parallelism* by virtue of being positioned against the background-narrative of the ransom-tale. But this is not all that there is to them. Like Shehrazad's framework, these incorporate a number of phrases and clauses carefully distributed in the tales in a structure of parallelism. They

recur at certain moments in the tales, defining the stages of the narrative and creating expectations to be met throughout. One interesting aspect of the narrative to which these recurrences give rise, theme-wise, is its insistence on deformity as an outcome of the love adventures in which the main characters are unwittingly involved. This aspect pertinently recurs in each tale and appears to be possible only after other stages have been reached. Below is a synopsis of each of the four major tales, followed by a survey of the recurrences that create the *parallelism* of the tales. The synopses, however, do not quote the phrases which will be mentioned and translated afterwards.

Tale of the Christian Broker

The broker relates how, long ago, he met in Egypt (his homeland) a handsome, well-dressed youth from Baghdad. The latter's liberal manners had such an appealing impact on the broker that the latter invited him to a luxurious dinner at his own house. The Baghdadi youth recounted his story- how he lost his right hand in the pursuit of physical love. He said that, while trading in Egypt long time before, he came across a beautiful woman whom he sold some cloth and instantly fell in love with. His attentions requited, the youth enjoyed the private company of the lady in her own house for quite a while. Night after

night, he would fulfill his incessant pursuit of lust with her, squandering his money over food and drink and the pleasures of luxurious life, until he was broke. Unable to sustain himself anymore, he robbed a soldier in the market-place. Consequently, he received the conventional punishment inflicted upon thieves: the cutting off of the right hand with the sword. He ended up marrying the woman and inheriting her, shortly afterwards.

Tale of the King's Steward

The steward recounts his tale that happened only the night before. He was dining at a friend's house with many fellow countrymen when one of the guests, to everybody's astonishment, refused to eat of a famous dish called al-Zirbaja. Faced with their persistent inquiry, he relented and started to eat, only after washing his hands 120 times with 3 kinds of soap. Thus he uncovered his thumbless hands. He then explained. He was from Baghdad, son of a well-known merchant who lived during the reign of Harun al-Rasheed. In his own store in Baghdad, the youth sold expensive cloth to a beautiful woman and instantly fell in love with her. She turned out to be the lady-in-waiting of Zubeida, Harun al-Rasheed's wife. Admitted to the palace through a secret plan, he was married off to the lady-in-waiting. However, before

the consummation of marriage in sex, he incurred the bride's indignation at his unwitting behavior: he had eaten of al-Zirbaja dish offered to him at the wedding party, and neglected to wash his hands afterwards. She punished him by cutting off his thumbs, then his toes, and made him swear never to eat al-Zirbaja again without washing his hands 120 times in advance. They lived together as husband and wife until she passed away.

Tale of the Jewish Doctor

The doctor relates the story of a beautiful youth whom he was commissioned to treat of some ailment a long time ago in Damascus. The marks of physical abuse on the youth's body and the sight of the right arm whose hand was amputated made the doctor suspicious. To his restless looks, the youth explained. He was a wealthy merchant's son from Mosul in Iraq. His father had sent him to trade in Damascus, where he was visited by an agreeable-looking woman. He fell for the woman and immediately enjoyed her private company in his rented residence. One day, after several amorous affairs, she brought a younger woman to his residence and let the two enjoy a private night. In the morning, he discovered that the young woman's head had been severed from her body and the first woman had disappeared. He

escaped to Egypt where he lived for three years, before returning to Damascus utterly bankrupt. At the same residence he had formerly kept, he found a golden necklace that used to belong to the dead young woman. Attempting to sell the jewel at the market, he was arrested and tortured at the Wali's court. Charged with robbery, he suffered to see his right hand cut off. Soon afterwards, he was escorted to the Governor of Damascus' office. It turned out that the two women had been the Governor's daughters. Driven by jealousy, the eldest slaughtered her sister, before committing suicide. The Governor, himself narrating this last episode to the Mosulli youth, married off his third and remaining daughter to the youth as a compensation for the latter's unjust suffering.

Tale of the Tailor

The tailor recounts his meeting, at a meal in the morning of the previous day, with a lame beautiful youth who, at the sight of an old barber sitting among the invitees, refrained from joining the assembly. Prevailed upon to change his mind, he pointed to the barber and told his story. He used to live in Baghdad, he said, thriving on the fortune he had inherited from his wealthy father, when one day he fell in love with a young woman whom he briefly saw in a closed avenue. He

became lovesick. However, through the agency of an old woman, he managed to obtain a date with his beloved one, the Justice of Baghdad's daughter, in her father's house. On the assigned day, recovering from his love-sickness, he sent for a barber. Instead of doing his job, the barber wasted his customer's time in the morning, prating and offering extra services, such as cupping. He insisted that he was more than a barber and that he was good at many disciplines: astrology, medicine, alchemy, Arabic grammar, linguistics, scholastic theology, arithmetics, algebra, and rhetoric. Resenting the youth's impatience, the barber insisted that he deserved attention and, further, demanded to be the youth's companion on that day. Dismissed, he was allowed to leave with a lot of food which he managed to send to his house, while hiding in the neighborhood in anticipation of the youth's departure. Then, he followed the latter to his destination.

In the Justice's house the enamoured youth hid himself in the girl's chamber, at her father's sudden return. The Justice beat one of his slaves. The slave cried out loudly and his laments were immediately echoed by the barber who, stationed outside the Justice's house, believed the cries to be the youth's. The barber's laments, in turn, drew a lot of people to the house, forcing the Justice to open the door in astonishment. Awkwardly facing the multitude, the latter let

the barber enter the house in search of his master, whom he accused the Justice of beating in retaliation. Upstairs, the youth had just hidden himself in a big box. Spotting the box, the barber realized who the occupant was. He lifted the box over his head and went away with it. Frightened and hopeless, the youth jumped out of his shelter and fell at the doorstep of the house, breaking his leg and developing a permanent limp. He ran away and, eventually, left Baghdad and wandered from one country to another, before he ended up in China.

To this, the tailor continues, the barber retorted in an attempt to defend himself against the youth's allegations. He did what he did in order to save the youth from death. I was neither curious nor talkative, he confirmed. Of all my father's sons, I am the least talkative, least curious, and most reasonable. To prove his claim, he begged to be listened to, as he told his tale.

Elements of *Parallelism*

A number of clauses, similar to those of Shehrazad and Dinarzad mentioned earlier, recur at the beginning and end of each tale, underlying the challenge the narrators face as they attempt to ransom their life. To the King's wondering statement,

1.a- هل سمعتم بأعجب من هذه القضية وما جرا لهذه الأحدب

the Christian broker approaches, kisses the floor before the King, and says:

.تـك بشـئ جـرا لـي يبكـي الحجـارة اعجـب مـن قصـة هـذه الأحـدبيـا ملـك الزمـان ان اذنـت لـي حـدث b-

When he finishes his tale, the broker says:

.فهذا أيهـا الملـك مـا هـو أعجـب مـن حـديث الأحـدب . وهـذه مـا جـرى لـي وغريـب مـا اتفـق لـي c-

But the King retorts:

.بعـة علـى أجـل الأحـدبليـس هـذا أعجـب مـن حـديث الأحـدب ولا بـد لـي مـن شـنقكم انتـم الأر d-

Next, the Steward approaches and, addressing the King, requests in a tone of bargain, saying:

إن احكيت لك حديثاً اتفق لي ليلة البارحة قبل أن التقي هذه الأحدب عندي، فإن كان اعجب من حديث الأحدب 2. a-

.تهـب لنـا اروحنـا وتعتقنـا

The King's reply is:

.نعـم، إن وجـدتها اعجـب مـن حـديث الأحـدب وهبتكـم أرواحكـم الأربعـة b-

Finishing his tale, the Steward says:

.وبعـد هـذا جـرا لـي مـع الأحـدب مـا جـرا. وهـذا حـديثي ومـا رأيـت البارحـة c-

Dissatisfied, the King firmly turns down the storyteller, saying:

.ه بـأغرب مـن قصـة الأحـدب الأكـدبما هذا ولل d-

Third, the Jewish doctor proceeds, kisses the floor before the King, and says:

3. a- يـا سـيدي عنـدي حـديث أقولـه أعجـب مـن هـذا الحـديث.

And the King briefly replies:

b- هات.

When the Jewish doctor's tale is over, he says:

c- فهـذه ما هـو بااعجـب من حديث الأحـدب.

Further dissatisfied, the King replies at length:

d- نعـم والله مـا هـو أعجـب ولا أغـرب مـن قصـة الأحـدب الأكـدب ولا بـد مـا اقتلكـم انتـم الأربعـة، فـانكم انتـم الأربعـة اتفقتـم علـى قتـل الأحـدب الأكـدب وقلتـم حكايـات مـا هـي بأعجـب مـن انـت يـا خيـاط وانـت راس البليـه، فهـات حـدثني بحـديث غريـب قصـته، ومـا بقـي غـير عجيـب يكـون أعجـب وأغـرب وألـد وأطـرب، وإلا قتلتكـم الجميـع.

The tailor takes the challenge and briefly says:

4. a- نعـم.

Then he embarks on narrating his very long tale that brings about the King's pardon but only after the six minor tales (which will be briefly related in Chapter Three) are recounted. To the tailor's

b- فمـا هـي أعجب وأغرب من قصـة الأحـدب الأكـدب

the King's final response is:

-c هــذه القصـــة الــتي جــرت بيــن هــذه الشـــاب والمــزين الفضــولي انهــا لأطــرب وأحســن مــن قصـــة الأحـدب.

These phrases and clauses may be translated as follows:

1-a. Have you heard of a more amusing issue and what's happened to this hunchback?

b. Oh thou King of all time, if you give me the permission, I will tell you something that happened to me, which makes stones cry, more amusing than the story of this hunchback.

c. And this is what happened and chanced to me; so this is, Oh thou King, what is more amusing than the tale of the hunchback.

d. This is not more amusing than the tale of the hunchback, and I must have you all four hanged, for the sake of the hunchback.

2-a. If I tell you a tale that chanced to me last night, before meeting this hunchback at my place, and it turns out to be more amusing than the tale of the hunchback, will you grant us our life and set us free?

b. Yes. If I find it more amusing than the tale of the hunchback, I will grant you all four your life.

c. Hitherto, this is what happened to me indeed with the hunchback, and this is my tale and what I saw last night.

d. By God, this is not more amazing than the story of the hunchback-liar!

3-a. Sir, I have a tale to tell, which is more amusing than this tale.

b. Go ahead.

c. So this is what is more amusing than the tale of the hunchback.

d. Verily, by God, it is neither more amusing, nor more amazing, than the story of the hunchback-liar; I must kill you all four. It is because the four of you agreed on killing the hunchback-liar, and told tales that were not more amusing than his story. No one remains except you, tailor, and you are the cause of this trouble. So come and tell me an amazing, amusing tale, more amusing, amazing, savory, and gleeful. Otherwise, I will kill you all.

4-a. I will.

b. But it is not more amusing and amazing than the story of the hunchback-liar.

c. This story that took place between this youth and the curious barber is, verily, more gleeful and pleasant than the story of the

hunchback.

Now, within the framework of Richard Bauman's oral performance approach to oral tradition, *parallelism* "involves the repetition, with systematic variation, of phonic, grammatical, semantic, or prosodic structures, the combination of invariant and variant elements in the construction of an utterance." [8] The above-mentioned recurrences in the four major tales do, in fact, suggest a pattern that fits into Bauman's definition of parallelism. In their insistence on maintaining basic structural principles but to a degree of flexibility defined by the context within which they fall, these recurrences enable the performance of the Arabic 'text' to meet the requirements of the situation. Such persistence, in Bauman's perspective, "may serve as mnemonic aids to the performer of a *fixed traditional text*, or enhance the fluency of the improvisational or spontaneous performance." [9]

With this understanding in mind, we move to Chapter Three, where the survey of *parallel* structures continues, now in the six minor tales, with a view to underlining the general pattern of narration in the Story, before singling out (briefly) other keys to performance.

Notes

1. For an illuminating account of, for example, how Calcutta I edition was conceived of and devised, as well as the reasons behind its publication, let me quote parts of Muhsin Mahdi's historical account in his *The Thousand and One Nights* (Alf Layla wa-Layla), Part 3, where he says:

> Of the four editions in question, two appeared in Calcutta when the city was the capital of British India and the seat of the British East India Company.... The faculty of the College of Fort William, the administrative center of the Company and the British government in India, published first Calcutta as a textbook for use in teaching Arabic to Company officers.... Persian and Arabic were the most important Indian languages studied at the college.... In addition to offering instruction, the faculty of the College, in order to meet the needs of their [British] students, were engaged in producing textbooks, in the original languages and in translation, consisting of abridged and altered portions extracted from original works.... First Calcutta...was published in two volumes.... The editor,

> Shaykh Ahmad Ibn Muhammad Shirwani al-Yamani, the native speaker of Arabic appointed in 1810 to teach that language at the College, claimed that the work he was editing had been authored by a Syrian with the intention of facilitating the teaching of spoken Arabic. He took the liberty of extensively editing the manuscript from which he was preparing the edition, including modification of the endings of such stories as..."The Hunchback and the King of China." Also, he padded the edition, supplementing it with a number of stories foreign to the *Nights*, with the overall intention of preparing a useful manual for teaching Arabic at the College and elsewhere.

(pp. 88-91)

Earlier, in the introduction to his edition of the Arabic original of the *Nights*, Muhsin Mahdi quotes Shirwani (who wrote in Persian) as saying:

لا يخفى أن مؤلف ألف ليلة وليلة شخص عربي اللسان من أهل الشام. وكان غرضه من بالعربية فتحصل له من قراءته طلاقة تأليف هذا الكتاب أن يقرأه من يرغب في أن يتحدث في اللسان عند التحدث بها. ولهذا كتب بعبارات سهلة كما يتحدث بها العرب، مستعملا في بعض المواضع ألفاظا ملحونة بحسب كلام العرب الدارج. ولذلك فلا يظن من يتصفح هذا ما وضعت عمدا تلكالكتاب ويجد ألفاظا ملحونة في مواضع منه أنها غفلة من المصحح، وإن

الألفـــاظ الــتي قصـــد المؤلــف اســتعمالها كمـــا هـــي.

My translation of the passage is:

It is obvious that the author of *Alf Layla wa-Layla* is a native Arab from Sham [i.e. modern Syria]. His purpose in writing this book was for it to be read by whoever wanted to speak Arabic fluently; they would read the book and so be fluent. This is why the author uses easy language, the language spoken by Arabs, incorporating here and there ungrammatical words and terms, as befits the colloquial language of Arabs. Therefore, he who sifts through this book should not, coming across ungrammatical terms here and there, assume that they are the result of negligence on the part of the proofreader. Rather, such terms and words are intentionally maintained intact, as the author intended to use them in the book.

(p.14)

However, Mahdi then explains, after reading the manuscript Shirwani used for the Calcutta I edition, he discovered that the latter did *not* maintain colloquial words and terms intact, as he claimed he did. Conversely, Shirwani "corrected" most of them, according to his literary taste and linguitic disposition. Moreover, Shirwani lent the text a very free hand, omitting, adding, changing, and neglecting as he pleased (p.15).

2. The significance of such features for the study of popular culture has been adequately underlined in many recent publications in the Arab world. See, for example, Farouq Khawrshid, *Qadhaya Sha'biya* [Popular Issues] (Port Sa'id: Mektabet al-Thaqafa al-Diniya, 2003); Ibrahim abdul-Hafidh, *Malamih al-Taghyeer fi al-Qassass al-Sha'bi al-Ghina'i* [Features of Change in Lyrical Popular Fiction] (Cairo:Mektabet Zahra' al-Sharq, 2001); and Mursi al-Sabbagh, *Dirasat fi al-Thaqafa al-Sha'biya* [Studies in Popular Culture] (Alexandria: Dar al-Wafa' li-'Aalam al-Tiba'a wa al-Nashr, 2000). On *The Arabian Nights*, see particularly Muhsin Jasim al-Musawi, *Mujtama' alf laylah wa-laylah* [The Society of the *Thousand and One Nights*] (Tunis: Markaz Manshouraat al-Jami'a, 2000).

3. I make this assumption in the light of Muhsin Mahdi's article, "From History to Fiction: The Tale Told by the King's Steward in the 1001 Nights", *Oral Tradition*, 4.1-2, 1989. In this article, Mahdi makes the argument that the "tale...is adapted directly from a report about events said to have occurred early in the tenth century in Baghdad and transmitted not as fiction but as history" (p. 65). The tale reveals, as the synopsis will soon show, the extent to which interclass mobility is possible in an age where class distinction is intensively endorsed by the ruling regime, itself an example of conventional power.

4. For a well-informed reading of the ransom-tale from a literary perspective, see Mia Gerhardt, *The Art of Storytelling* (Leiden: Brill, 1963). In a section entitled, "Ransom Frame" (pp. 401-16), itself part of a discussion of the structure of the *Nights*, she describes the complex emplotment of a certain number of tales (four) and explains it in terms of the ransom-frame. She cites the "Story of the Hunchback" as one such example.

5. According to the so-called four original Arabic manuscripts, Shahrayar carried out his plan for a very long time (3 years in Boulaq's edition), until there was no girl left in his kingdom!

6. In my opinion, it is this performative quality of Shehrazad's narrative that suggests the discursive nature of *The Arabian Nights*, from a Foucauldian perspective. This is largely due to the power of tradition that informs the corpus and persists in various forms throughout the tales.

7. In Muhsin al-Musawi, *Alf Laylah wa-Laylah fi Nadhariyet al-Adab al-Inghilizi*, p. 8.

8. Richard Bauman, *Verbal Art as Performance*, p. 18.

9. Ibid. pp. 18-19. Emphasis is mine.

Chapter Three

The structure of *parallelism* continues to inform the rest of the "Story", that is, the six minor tales attributed to the barber and narrated by the tailor, dictating to the narrator his instrumental use of the ransom-tale framework and maintaining a sense of urgency throughout. To meet the expectations of his listeners-- both the King of China in the "Story" and listeners in the general sense of the word-- the tailor takes advantage of the deformity theme utilized thus far.[1] Building towards the salvation of the whole group of suspects, he includes details of *unnatural cruelty* inflicted upon each one of the barber's six brothers.[2] These details may seem gruesome and repugnant enough to draw listeners away from the act of narrating. Conversely, though, they keep the hunchback story alive in the listeners' minds; the King's dissatisfaction with the first three narrators testifies to the influence the hunchback's strange death had on the king's decree. In other words, the story of the hunchback's death begins to assume here a kind of significance that goes beyond serving as the *raison d'etre* of the tales. It becomes intrinsic to the strategy that the four narrators, but particularly the tailor, will have to use to

obtain ransom. In a sense, therefore, the hunchback story becomes *the* narratological background against which all the tales are to be judged. Indeed, the King's patient listening to the tales (and his final judgment of the narrative quality) suggests the amount of challenge that storytellers face as they attempt to win their listeners' approval and appreciation of narration.

The fact that, for all their ingenuity, the three preceding narrators fail to generate admiration gradually augments expectations and makes the sense of urgency all too real. During the progress of the tales, and through the agency of the Arabic storyteller who embarks on the mission of narrating these tales to an Arabic audience, the reality of the situation can be conveyed to the audience only via performance. We can see a kind of analogy between the role that the tailor plays within the text of the “Story” and the role the Arabic storyteller plays outside of the text. Just as the former's narrating is the decisive factor in the whole process of ransom-acquisition, the latter's performance of the tales, but particularly of the tailor's tale, is the decisive factor in the process of acquisition of audience' applause, to which the Arabic storyteller aspires. His success, within the general framework of Performance theory, rests precisely on the extent to which he can utilize the recurrences, structurally paralleled, to cue his performance in such a way that his auditors will be drawn to engage in

interactive listening. He will, therefore, allot the barber's account prime attention, emphasizing especially the latter's reiterations, as they occur in parallels.

The following is a synopsis of the barber's tale, which includes the tales of his six brothers.

Tale of the Barber and His Brothers

The barber used to live in Baghdad, during the reign of the Caliph al-Mustansir billah [who ruled from 1226 to 1242 A.D.]. At the Muslims' 'Eid, or religious festive celebration of fast-break, the Caliph ordered that ten highwaymen be brought to his court to be executed. Believing that the ten men, escorted by the Wali and his guards, were on their way to a feast, the barber slipped into the boat that would carry them to the Caliph. At the Caliph's court, after the ten men were beheaded, and to the Caliph's indignant inquiry, the barber explained that his silent acquiescence was due to his wisdom and farsightedness. The amount of science, philosophy, and rhetoric that I have acquired, he said, was incomparable. I have always been ill-requited, for all my disinterested endeavor to offer succor to the right people. He then told the following stories.

First Brother: The Hunchback Tailor

He was a tailor who lived in Baghdad off a modest income. One day a married woman appeared to him through the scuttle of her house. She seduced him with her inviting smile; he fell in love with her instantly. Aided by her husband, she managed to entice the tailor into sewing a lot of clothes for herself, then for her husband, in return for nothing. To further humiliate him, she and her husband had him consent to marry their maid. On the eve of his wedding, they made him sleep in their mill and, with the assistance of the miller, the tailor replaced the mule in grinding the wheat. His consequent refusal to go on with the marriage plan drew one last act of humiliation. Made to believe that he was irrevocably desired by the wealthy man's wife, and that she had no hand in his latest misery, he accepted an invitation to enjoy the private company of the wife during an alleged absence of the husband. Discovered by the latter and put to shame in public, he suffered the Wali's physical punishment and was soon banished from Baghdad.

Second Brother: the Paralyzed Baqbaaqa

Baqbaaqa was wandering in town when an old woman approached him and asked if he was interested in being admitted to a

large house with an orchard, where he would enjoy the private company of a beautiful lady. He immediately responded to the invitation and ended up sitting in a luxurious pavilion, eating and drinking with a good-looking maid, to the accompaniment of other maids playing on the lute. Slapped on the neck repeatedly by the host-maid, he suffered to let his eyebrows be painted red, armpit hair plucked out, and facial hair utterly shaved. The maid got drunk and, in her excitement, had Baqbaaqa dance and her fellow-maids hit him with the furniture of the house. Recovering consciousness, he was made to strip and chase the drunken maid in the nude around the house until, in the frenzy of erotic pursuit, he fell from a dark room through a hole in the floor, down to the market. It was the skinners' section. He was humiliated and made a laughing-stock, beaten on the mountback of a mule, and banished by the Wali from Baghdad.

Third Brother: the Blind Faqfaq

Faqfaq was a blind man who lived off beggary and shared a small residence with fellow beggars, where they kept the money they earned. One day he knocked the door of a big house seeking charity. Turned down, he fell over the stairs into the street where he was helped by an inmate. They went back to their residence, not knowing

that they had been followed by the big house's owner, who had just denied Faqfaq help. Swiftly and skillfully, the pursuer managed to enter the house and hide, with the help of a rope dangling from the ceiling. Faqfaq received his share of the earned money and sat to eat with his inmates. Secretly sharing the meal, the stranger was soon discovered and beaten. The beggars cried for help and the police arrived. These three and the stranger, who now pretended to be blind, were taken to the Wali's office. At the phony beggar's request, he received 400 blows with a stick until he opened his eyes. He then claimed to be a member of that group of four beggars and that they pretended to be blind in order to have access to the private life of others. He requested that his fellow beggars be punished, as they tried to rob him of his due share, and that Faqfaq be the first on the list. Their pleas of innocence were in vain. Further, at the phony beggar's suggestion, the Wali sent for the earned money, gave a quarter of it to this informant, confiscated the rest for his own use, and banished the three blind men from Baghdad.

Fourth Brother: the One-eyed Butcher

He had been a wealthy butcher, in possession of houses and landed properties. His customers had been high-class people and

distinguished figures in Baghdad, before he was reduced to poverty in the wake of the following event. A simple-looking old man frequently bought meat at his shop for five months. The coins he paid were so bright and shiny that the butcher kept them in a separate drawer, for the good fortune they might bring. One day he opened the box with a view to using the coins to purchase new lambs. To his astonishment, he found small, circular pieces of paper instead! His anger and disappointment gave way to what he thought was an ingenious plan. He slaughtered a big ram and had parts of it hung on the hooks outside. Enticed, the old man stopped at the shop and did what he used to do before. The butcher got hold of his customer and quarreled with him, thus drawing people's attention. In refutation of the butcher's charges of fraud, the old man replied by claiming that the former sold human meat for lamb meat. Inside the shop, where the ram's flesh had been hung, the crowd were startled to see a human body, slaughtered and hung! The butcher immediately became the target of the furious crowd; he received a blow by the old man on his right eye. At the police-station, he denied the charges in vain. Beaten with a stick 500 times and scandalized in public for three days, the butcher was eventually banished from Baghdad forever.

In another city, now working as a cobbler, the butcher got one day very close to the King's convoy. As soon as the King saw the

cobbler's right eye, he refrained from going out on the hunting trip he had planned to take that day. In retaliation, the King's guards beat the man hard. The incident drove the cobbler to the other part of the city, where he recovered health and lived well. A few months had passed before one day he heard the noisy sounds of horse-hooves nearby. Frightened, he took to the nearest house and opened its main door. Inside a dark corridor, he was held by two men who took him for a criminal terrorizing and intimidating the owner of the house. At the Wali's court, the knife he held and his excruciated body testified against him. Whipped 100 times and scandalized in front of everybody, the cobbler was kicked out of the city forever.

Fifth Brother: He Whose Ears Were Cut off

He was a poor man who lived off beggary in the night time. Inheriting the trivial sum of 100 dirhams from his father, he bought glassware with the money and sat in the market to sell, dreaming of a better life. Soon, however, he lost himself in a daydream in which he envisioned himself making huge profits and accumulating a great fortune. His anticipated success continued until he became a powerful man to whom the minister would marry off his only daughter. Proud and arrogant, he would humiliate his bride and deny her

consummation of the marriage in sex. Reaching an extreme level of misconduct, this daydreamer would kick a glass of beverage off his wife's hand, only to find out that he had just kicked off his glassware-basket and reduced all the contents to small pieces.

He spent his day wailing his misfortune and tearing his clothes in public. A distinguished lady passed by and, inquiring, she helped him with the huge sum of 500 dinars. Happy with the gift at home, he was visited by an old woman who lured him into following her towards a big house, where he would enjoy the private company of a beautiful woman. He did. The beautiful woman playfully seduced the guest, before handing him over to a well-built black slave who, with a sharp sword, repeatedly hit him until he fainted. Believed to be dead, he was thrown into a cellar, from which he escaped. A month later, uncovering his identity to the same old woman, he made her repeat the experience. This time he managed to avenge himself and kill the black slave, a maid, and the old woman, but, as he attempted to strike at the good-looking seducer, she lured him into believing that she would recompense his misery with money and precious things. However, she ran away with everything, leaving very little for the man to go back home with. Next day he was arrested and, at the Wali's office, he bought his life with the stolen merchandise and was banished from the country.

Sixth Brother: He Whose Lips Were Cut off

This was a man who became a pauper after a life of richness. So he went out seeking help. At a big house owned by a wealthy Barmak, he asked and was admitted into a spacious property that ended in a great orchard. An important-looking man listened to his story and, pretending to be overwhelmingly touched, promised food and money. He asked his guest to eat of a series of dishes that actually were not brought in. Time and again, the host would order a certain dish and assume the attitude of a man engaged in eating and enjoying the luxury of expensive food. Baffled and amused at this humiliating mimicry, the guest joined the host in the act of make-believe until he decided to retaliate. Pretending to be drunk with the wine thus allegedly served, he slapped his mimic-host on the neck and said that, as he had been made unsober by the generosity of the landlord, he deserved to be pardoned. Applauded for this clever defense, the guest was not only pardoned but also raised to the status of a life-long boon companion of the Barmak, then his treasurer.

In the latter's mansion the barber's sixth brother lived long and thrived until his landlord died. The Sultan confiscated everything that had been in the possession of the deceased and of his treasurer,

rendering the latter a pauper again, subject to a life of aimless wandering in the country. One day he was attacked by a group of bandits who took him to be a rich man. Unable to ransom himself, he suffered to have his lips cut off. His captor's wife then seduced him; his reluctant response was ill-timed. Discovered by the husband, the man was further brutally mutilated: his penis was severed and he was cast away on the highway until he was rescued by caravan travelers.

Tale of the Barber Continued

The barber's tales thus completed, he begged to be duly judged as an uncurious, untalkative man. Although the Caliph's reply was sarcastic, he commended the barber as such. However, the latter was dismissed from the Caliph’s court and banished from Baghdad. Upon the Caliph's death, the barber returned to his hometown, to find all his brothers dead. The barber then turned to the young man, he said, and helped him escape a miserable end. Yet, he was ill-treated and accused of curiosity and misconduct.

Elements of *Parallelism*

The following phrases and clauses have been used to create structural *parallelism* throughout the tales. Whenever the barber

finished a tale, the Caliph joyfully replied with the statement

1- فضحك الخليفه من كلامي وقال يا صامط، يا قليل الكلام، احسنت ما قصرت. وامر لي بجايزه وانصرافي.

The statement has the following variations:

a- فضحك الخليفه من حكاياتي وقال صلوه بجايزيه ودعوه ينصرف.

b- فضحك الخليفه الى حين استلقى على قفاه وامر لي بجايزه.

c- ا سمع الخليفه قصتي جميعها وما اخبرته عن اخوتي ضحك ضحكاً شديدا وقال صدقت يا صامت، انت قليل فلم الكلام وما عندك فضول، ولكن اخرج الان من هده البلد واسكن غيرها.

To this the barber would reply

2- فقلت لا وﷲ يا امير المومنين ما اقبل شي دون ان احكي لك ما جرى لبقية اخوتي

With the following variations:

a- فقلت له وﷲ يا امير المومنين اني قليل الكلام وكثير المروة ولا بد ما احكى بين يديك بقية حكايات اخوتي حتى تعلم اني قليل الكلام.

b- فقلت وﷲ يا مخدومي انا ما انا كتير الكلام ولكن حتى احدتك كمالة حكايات اخوتي حتى مولانا الخليفه حكاياتهم جميعها ويصير على خاطره ويورخهم في خزانته ويعلم يتحقق اني ما انا كتير الحديت يا مولانا الخليفه.

These phrases can be translated as follows:

1. The Caliph laughed at my speech and said, well done silent man,

you haven't fallen short [of my expectations] untalkative man, and he ordered that I be given a prize and that I be dismissed.

a. The Caliph laughed at my tales and said, give him a prize and let him be dismissed.

b. The Caliph so laughed until he lay on his back, and ordered that I be given a prize.

c. When the Caliph heard all of my story, and what I told him about my brothers, he heartily laughed and said, in truth, silent man, you are untalkative and uncurious; but now, you are to leave this country and to reside in another.

2. So I said, Oh Prince of the Faithful, Allah forbid I accept anything until I relate to you what befell the rest of my brothers.

a. So I said unto him, Oh Prince of the Faithful, by Allah I am untalkative, though quick to offer succor, and I ought to relate unto your hands the rest of the tales of my brothers, so that you know I am untalkative.

b. So I said, Oh my master, by Allah I am reticent, I, but let me relate to you the remainder of the tales of my brothers, so that our lord, the Caliph, verily learns all their tales and perhaps, as the tales appeal to his heart, he has them transcribed and kept in

his own bookcase, and verifies that I am reticent, Oh our lord, the Caliph.

In his account of his brothers' tales, the barber reiterated a certain sentence immediately after the banishment-stage in each tale. He would utter the following sentence by way of proving how helpful, chivalrous, and quick to provide succor he was. And he meant it to be a reminder set against the young man's accusations, namely, that the barber's curiosity and incessant chattering were behind the young man's ultimate misfortune.

First Brother's Tale

1- ونفى من المدينه فخرج وهو لا يدرى اين يقصد، فخرجت وراه وزودته.

Second Brother's Tale

2- ا امير المومنين خلفه وادخلته المدينه سراً فصفع اخي مايه دره ثم نفاه من بغداد، فخرجت انا ي

ورتبت له مونته، فلولا مروتي فعلت دلك.

Third Brother's Tale

3- ونفا الوالى التلاته، فخرجت انا يا امير المومنين ولحقت اخى وسالته عن حالته فاخبرنى بهده الدى دكرت لك

خفيـــهفرددته وادخلته سراً ورتبت له ما ياكل وما يشرب في ال.

Fourth Brother's Tale

4- فهج اخى على وجهه وسمعت انا به فخرجت اليه واستخبرته فاخبرني بحديته وما جرا له فاخدته واقبلت به

المدينه سراً ورتبت له ما يقوم باوده.

Fifth Brother's Tale

5- فخرجت له تيابا لبسها وادخلته المدينه سراً وخرج هاجاً الى بعض البلاد فلقيوه اللصوص فعروه فسمعت انا به فخرجت له واضـــفته الـــى اخوتـــه.

Sixth Brother's Tale

6- فخرجـــت اليـــه وحملتـــه ودخلـــت بـــه المدينـــه ورتبـــت لـــه مـــا يقـــوم بـــاوده.

The sentence is translated as follows:

1. And he was banished from town, so he left not knowing where to go; I went after him and supplied him with provisions.

2. So he slapped my brother a hundred times, and then banished him from Baghdad; so I went out, Oh Prince of the Faithful, after him, brought him back to the town secretly, and set his provisions; I did that out of my feeling of chivalry.

3. And the Wali banished the three [men], so I went out, Oh Prince of the Faithful, and caught up with my brother; I asked him how he was doing, and he told me what I have just related to you; I brought him back [to the town] secretly, and arranged for his food and drink in private.

4. So my brother wandered aimlessly about; I heard of him [i.e. his

predicament], so I went out after him; I inquired and he told me what had befallen him; I took him back with me and entered the town secretly; then I supplied him with sustenance.

5. And he went out rambling in some country; he came across highwaymen who stripped him; I heard of him [i.e. his predicament], so I went out with clothes that he put on; I brought him back to the town secretly and had him join his brothers.

6. So I went out after him and carried him; then I entered the town and supplied him with sustenance.

In the light of Richard Bauman's performance approach, these reiterations gain momentum from the event that makes them possible and within which they are articulated. The event is the story of the hunchback's death and its consequences. Yet even this event cannot be fully appreciated as a work of verbal art (which is what the tales are, in the sense of form) without setting the "Story" against its narrative background-- Shehrazad's ransom-tale. In other words, the tales of the "Story" are situated in two events simultaneously: that of the "Story" and that of the *Nights* as a whole. Further, the artistic vigor of these reiterations, as constituent parts of the narrative structure of the "Story," draws upon the social context of the event of the hunchback's death. He was the King's stooge and boon companion,

in an age when to acquire such a position entailed high competition and drew intense rivalry. Therefore, the significance of these *parallel* reiterations, as situated utterances, becomes anything but merely textual. Awareness of this fact does inform the storyteller's approach to the 'text' and dictates to him his would-be performance. His narrating of the tales of the “Story” will be keyed to two things: the ransom-tale-guided “Story of the Hunchback,” and the socially guided (and situated) act of narrating the Story.

Bauman's recognition of the nature of narrative as one rooted in human events, in the first place, underlines for him the two-fold ontological aspect of narration. Referring to Roman Jakobson, he observes: "narratives are keyed both to the events in which they are told and to the events that they recount, toward narrative events and narrated events."[3] This observation is important to our understanding of the “Story of the Hunchback” as a narrative event in the first place. It directs attention to several forces working “collaboratively”, while the narrative text is being narrated. In his *Narratology: The Form and Functioning of Narrative* (1982), Gerald Prince sets the narrative event under two distinct but complementary categories, *Narrating* and *Narrated*, and argues for an important position for the *Narratee* in the general presentation of the *Narrated* (pp. 16-26). Of special interest here is the position of the *narratee* in the general process of narration.

It may be directly and explicitly articulated, through the preposition, you. In the "Story," as in the *Nights* in general, this preposition is used very often both at the beginning and end of each tale, distinctly reminding us of who happens to be the audience at that moment of narration. On the other hand, the preposition may not be articulated, and so we may not know of the listener's reaction or attitude during the narration. However, the oral performance approach to the text brings listeners onto a common plane of understanding, facilitating interaction between the *narrator* and *narratee*.

This plane exists as a result of the assumption that the audience is aware of their significance as receivers of the narration, that is, as decoders of all signs that are utilized in the act of *narrating* and which make up the narrative. Signs must be familiar to the audience; familiarity is the result of a common cultural background between the narrator and his audience. So when the latter receive the signs and decode them, they do so under the influence of a context-- their cultural context. Otherwise, they end up roaming in the abstract: oral *narrating* (of a story) to an audience can never be an exercise in abstraction, since its vehicle of expression is the spoken word. Context draws attention to what happens in the narrative and is informed socially, politically, and historically by the milieu within which the narrative is possible. Therefore, the more able to decode the signs the

audience are, the easier it is for them to (artistically) appreciate the act of storytelling and to interact with the storyteller. Performance, therefore, becomes the *sole* means for enabling the audience to decode, appreciate, and then interact.

Hence the significance of the *narratee* in the general framework of performance approach. This understanding designates Shehrazad's ransom-tale technique, as one rooted in an attempt to draw her audience-- Shahrayar-- to a common plane, where negotiation of power becomes possible only when she provides this audience with clues to her performance. Her structural parallels serve the purpose. And this is precisely what the “Story of the Hunchback” does. The text is informed and guided by *parallelism*, Bauman's key to performance. And it is within this frame of reference that any other key to performance should be underlined in the text.[4]

Notes

1. In her book *The Art of Storytelling*, Mia Gerhardt speaks of mutilation as a prominent motif in the "Story of the Hunchback." She says: "Each of the four men reports, not a personal experience, but an extraordinary adventure told by someone else…; and every time the account of this adventure serves to explain a bodily defect…. [T]he mutilation is attributed to a third person, which puts the man who reports about it in the same position as the reader: intrigued at first, and subsequently pleased when his curiosity is satisfied by the mutilated man's account" (p. 413). Within the narrative context of the "Story," deformity or mutilation becomes important enough to the act of narration itself that it should be emphasized during the *performance* of the text.
2. I am employing the term *unnatural cruelty* as it is used by Jane Garry and Hasan el-Shamy, in their edition of *Archetypes and Motifs in Folklore and Literature*, 2005. The two editors use the term to designate one of the prominent motifs in folklore and popular literature. Among the four types of unnatural cruelty they underline, there is one entitled Cruel Spouses (pp. 398-403). However, it is always the man who plays the cruel part. The editors

do cite an early story in the *Nights*, one that is told by the vizier to his daughter, Shehrazad, by way of warning her of the consequences of marrying the King. The story is about a husband's cruelty to his wife. There is no mention of women being the cruel party, as is the case in the tales in the "Story of the Hunchback," which raises questions about the teleology of such practices in the *Nights*.

3. In *Story, Performance, and Event*, 1986, (p. 2).

4. At the end of the thesis, I provide an Appendix of some utterances, descriptions, and motifs that serve as keys to performance. However, my point is to emphasize the overwhelming significance of *parallelism* in the text of the "Story," as one that informs the narration, rather than being one key among several. According to Richard Bauman, it is enough for an oral traditional text to have one of these six keys to enable its performance.

Conclusion

The preceding reading of the 'text' of the “Story of the King of China's Hunchback,” in terms of the Oral Performance approach to oral tradition, suggests to me the following:

1. Being rooted in the popular culture of Arabic-speaking countries, such as Egypt, Syria, and Iraq, the tales utilize certain features of urban life that are common in the Arab world and, therefore, accessible to the public. Not only do the tales reflect popular taste and give vent to popular needs-- psychological, social, political, etc (as popular literature often does)-- but they are also pregnant with signs of, and references to, daily habits, social manners, and class-informed practices that constitute popular culture in urban centers. Their accessibility is further facilitated by the expressive language of the text. It is a combination of standard Arabic, Arabic vernaculars (particularly Egyptian and Syrian), and local dialects influenced by non-Arab neighboring countries. I call it Middle Arabic.[1] The Middle Arabic of the text is, by definition, understood by the populace, middle, and upper classes. It can be therefore designated as a *special register*, an in-between possibility of

communicating what, otherwise, might be restricted to the language of this class or that.

2. The significance of this compromise is two-fold. On the one hand, it enables the tales to be 'read' and appreciated in their own terms, without subjecting them to rigorous critical standards, such as those customarily applied by orthodox critics.[2] On the other, it enables their narrators to take the narration to horizons of performance that are unlimited in their impact on the audience, as the performance of the story of Abu-Zaid al-Hilali, mentioned in the premise, shows.

3. The idea of compromise is interesting in its indication of how flexible and, therefore, open to interaction a popular culture text can be, once approached properly-- that is, once cued via the right means of reading. This means or method, as my reading has shown, is the Oral Performance approach instrumentalized, both aesthetically and socially, by Richard Bauman. The tales can be approximated through Bauman's keys to performance, which will help their text open up venues for interpretation, in addition to the initial act of artistic appreciation. *Parallelism* is the most distinct structural quality of the tales that serves as a key to performance. It is the one clue needed to argue for the oral traditional roots of the text of the “Story of the King of China's Hunchback.” Moreover, I find

myself inclined to emphasize the plausibility of the Oral Performance approach for an extensive study of the Arabian Nights, as a work of verbal art rooted in the oral tradition of the Arab world.

4. Application of this approach may also enable us to suggest a pattern of narration that is carefully and skillfully upheld by the writer(s) of the *Nights*. For example, and with respect to the question of deformity underlined earlier, the structural *parallelism* in the Hunchback story has suggested to me a mode of narration that is basically (though not strictly) founded on the following pattern:

   1. A man in the market-place incidentally meets with a woman who stirs his amorous affections or erotic desire.

   2. The enticement generates a secret rendezvous to take place shortly afterwards, often at the woman's abode.

   3. The enamored lover's arrival at the designated place is often accompanied by generous supplies of food and drink.

   4. The rendezvous includes a celebratory consumption of food and drink and/or physical pleasure accomplishment.

   5. The rendezvous soon starts a series of adventures that end with the lover being cruelly deformed.

6. The lover either changes course of life or place of residence, with signs of utter resignation to the rule of fate.

5. In the light of Foucault's theoretical position, the success of the “Tale of the Tailor” can be attributed to the discursive power of the narrative, which is rooted in oral tradition. The text has the ability to continue to unfold, almost endlessly, and generate tales of increasingly "amusing" and "amazing" details to satisfy a well-informed and, accordingly, hard-to-win audience. It is discursive enough to defy narrative closure and, rather than being content with cold repetition of patterns, the “Tale of the Tailor” even suggests the possibility of generating more sub-tales ascribed to the barber. Indeed, the tale invites maneuvering and re-positioning of all the composite units of narration, such as character-involvement, scene-description, plot-execution, and the surprise element, which might help beget more sub-tales. The idea of deformity is itself an aspect of transformation, made possible by virtue of the discursive power of the tradition that informed these tales over time.[3]

6. I am therefore inclined to say that, contrary to Muhsin Mahdi's renunciation of the later Arabic originals as an outcome of additions untrue to the original manuscript, the *Arabian Nights* is a work of verbal art that invites additions and transformations *precisely*

because of its discursivity. This quality is a direct result of oral tradition. The “Tale of the Tailor” is a case in point. It serves to suggest the difficult task of a storyteller, as he strives to meet the expectations of a hard-to-please audience. It may even be considered as a miniature success of the ransom-tale frame and its narrator, Shehrazad. With this in mind, even the number 1001 may, to a flexible frame of thought, sound rigorous and boundary-bound. It will not allow for what, in the hands of professional storytellers, might become the 1002nd, 3rd, 10th, and 100th night in an Arab world rich with oral tradition.

Notes

1. By this I do not indicate any historical era in the same sense that, say, the designation Middle English does.

2. Ibn al-Nadim (d. 998), the first Arabic scholar to mention the 1001 Nights in his book, al-Fihrist, denounces the work and its likes as insipid and loathsome. He thus reveals the rigorous standards of literary appreciation dominating his age-- the second Abbasid era.

3. Needless to say, the word transformation should not be understood in a Kafkaesque sense of the word, a confusion which might issue as a result of the word deformity.

Appendix

The following is a list of phrases and utterances, occurring in the "Story of the King of China's Hunchback," which may be considered as potential keys to performance. Their regularity in the tales enables the storyteller, as performer, to cue his performance towards involving his audience in the act of narration as recipients of an encoded text with which they are already familiar. However, to determine exactly whether these phrases and descriptions fall under this category or that requires research to be informed by fieldwork, the kind that, for instance, Parry and Lord did in former Yugoslavia. For the purposes of this thesis (which is limited in scope), I include some, not all, of those utterances and suggest their eligibility as keys to performance, insofar as they fit into the definition that Richard Bauman provides for each key in *Verbal Art as Performance*. They are, therefore, liable to acquire different signification or added significance as this key or that, depending on how far we can prove, via extensive fieldwork in the Arab world, their conformity to Bauman's definitions.

Special Codes

1- فدارت وجهها وشالت النقاب فنظرت نظره اعقبتني حسره فما تمالكت عقلي.

2- وكشفت وجهها فنظرتها نظره اعقبتني النظره حصره.

3- ان لهده سبب عجيب يجب ان يورخ في الكتب ولو من ماء الدهب.

4- ولما سمعنا الحكايه تعجبنا غاية العجب وهزنا الطرب.

These may be translated as follows:

1. She turned her face [back to me] and raised the veil; I looked [at her] once and an *Alas* succeeded: I lost composure.

2. And she uncovered her face; I looked at her once and an *Alas* succeeded.

3. There must be such an amazing reason for this [story] that it should be documented in books with gold water.

4. And when we heard the tale, we got extremely amused and were shaken with ecstasy.

There is a sense of archaism in these phrases, which is, as Bauman realizes, an attribute of the special language of verbal art. But they are old-fashioned utterances "readily understood by all, even children" (p. 17). Also, there is a conventional use of rhyme, both internal and end-rhyme (which my translation does not show). A well-

informed and fully equipped oral storyteller, versed in the oral traditional forms of his own speech community, may choose to stress or accentuate the above-mentioned utterances. He may reiterate them within their own structural space to gain effect. Or he may read them *melodiously* to make their particular context emotionally charged.

Figurative Language

This is a characteristic quality of the text. Figures of speech are often used to emphasize the impact of meeting a beautiful woman in the market-place, sudden exposure to luxurious lifestyle (and the concomitant pleasures of watching and listening to pretty slave girls singing and playing on musical instruments), and the description of attractive urban sites and views. Moreover, the text abounds in verses and songs whose occurrence creates a particular resonance in the listener’s mind. Figurative language may strike the audience as exemplary of similar situations with which they are familiar and to which they can cue their reception. Examples include similes, metaphors, and personifications. One distinct quality in this respect is the use of hyperbolic language, creating emphasis and raising expectations.

1- عظيم وكانها البدر المصورفلما جلست وكشفت نقابها وقلعت ايزارها فوجدتها شكل
وتمكن حبها مني.

2- فلـــم اجلـــس غـــير ســـاعه حـــتى فتحـــت طاقـــه وطلـــت منهـــا صـــبيه كانهـــا الشـــمس المضـــيه، لـــم تـــرا عيـــني احســـن منهـــا، فتبســـمت لمـــا نظرتـــني... فـــانطلق فـــي قلـــبي النـــار ونقلـــب بغـــض النســـاء بالمحبـــه، وتميـــت جـــالس الـــى قـــرب المغـــرب وانـــا غايـــب الصـــواب.

3- فنزلـــت واصـــطفت وجـــلـــت قـــد اقبلـــت فـــي القاعـــة الصـــغيره واذا بعشـــر جـــوار كـــانهم الاقمـــار وعشـــرين جاريـــه اخـــرى قـــد اقبلـــت وهـــم نهـــد ابكـــار وبينهـــم الســـت زبيـــده وهـــي مـــا تقـــدر تمشـــي مـــن الحلـــى والحلـــل.

4- فـــدخلت الـــى الـــدهليز فاجـــد قاعـــه معلقـــه عـــن الارض ســـبع ابحـــر ودايرهـــا شـــبابيك مطلـــه علـــى الفواكـــه وســـاير الاطيـــار والانهـــار دافقـــه نزهـــة النـــاظرين وفـــي وســـطها بســـتان فيـــه مـــن جميـــع فســـقيه فـــي اركانهـــا الاربعـــه اربـــع حيـــات مســـبوكه بالـــدهب الاحمـــر تلقى المـــاء مـــن افواههـــا كانهـــا الـــدر والجوهـــر.

5- وان درتـــم البصـــر فـــي بركـــة الحبـــش ارجعـــت ابصـــاركم كليلـــه مـــن الـــدهش، الـــم تـــروا لـــدلك المنظـــر الجميـــل وقـــد احـــدقت بخضـــرتها مقطعـــات النيـــل، كانـــه زبرجـــد رصـــع بســـبايك فضـــه.

6- وان كنـــت بســـاحل مصـــر وقـــد حلـــت الشـــمس طلوعـــا ولبـــس البحـــر مـــن اتوابـــه زردا ودروعـــا احيـــاك نســـيمه القليـــل وظلـــه الوافـــر الطليـــل.

They may be translated as follows:

1. Sitting down, she uncovered her veil and took off her robe. I saw that she had a great face, like a full moon: her love conquered me.

2. I had not sat for more than an hour when a scuttle was opened and a young woman appeared. She was like the bright sun; I had not

seen such beauty before. She smiled to me... and fire erupted in my heart: my hatred for women turned to love. I spent the rest of the day sitting, having lost my head.

3. I stepped down and sat in the small hall. All of a sudden, ten slave girls, like moons, appeared and lined up. Then twenty slave girls-- bosomy virgins-- appeared with Lady Zubeida between them: she could hardly walk, with the weighty jewels she had worn.

4. I entered the corridor from which I saw a hall that was suspended from the ground seven seas [that is, layers]. The hall had many windows commanding an orchard that had all kinds of fruits, birds, and rivers flowing to the satisfaction of picnicking onlookers. In the center of the hall, there was a fountain with a snake in each one of its four corners. The snakes were red-gilded, wherein water came out of their mouths like pearls and gems.

5. And if you look at al-Habash pond carefully and prolong the look, it would render your vision weary and dim. Have you not seen that beautiful view, where the Nile patches stare at the verdure of the pond, and the Nile itself looking like aquamarine studded with silver-casts?

6. And if you happen to be on the shore of Egypt, and the sun arrived to rise and the sea assumed an apparel of its own clothes-- an

apparel of armors and coats of mail, it [i.e. the shore] would revive you with its little breeze and abundant shade.

Food Lists: Descriptive Codes?

A common feature of the "Story" is the frequent listing of food items and dishes, generally within passages involving social interaction. Certain designated dishes, mentioned with an emphasis on meat and quality ghee (or cooking fat), draw attention to wealth and plenty characteristic of higher classes. Detailed listing of spices, grains, nuts, honey, and sweets, for example, indicates luxuriousness and lavishness to be found, not only in rich people's households but also in houses that are particularly concerned with maintaining a refined taste for food as an expression of a refined taste for life. Being of different origins, these and other food items color the tales with a unique tinge of historical implications: it is a tinge resulting from an assemblage of cultures made possible in urban sites, only after the establishment of Arab-Islamic empires in Damascus, Baghdad, and Andalus respectively. The well-known medieval Muslim scholar, Ibn Khaldoun (d. 1406), in his *Kitab al-'Ibar wa-Diwan al-Mubtada' wal-Khabar*, commonly known as *al-Muqaddimah* [the Introduction], speaks of the transition of the State from nomadism to urbanization (pp. 190-92). He cites examples of unprecedented excessive luxury, particularly from the Abbasid era. They show the extent to which exposure to

other far more civilized cultures can have an impact on the newly urbanized state. I am, therefore, inclined to consider food lists (of items, dishes, etc) as keys to performance, although they do not literally conform to Bauman's definitions. They do, however, combine attributes of special codes (in their restricted use in daily speaking) and parallelism (in their frequent mention throughout the “Story,” though not necessarily in their structural positioning). For lack of a better designation, I call them *descriptive codes*. The following are but a few of them from the text:

1- فما لبت ساعه حتى قدمت لي خونجه من افخر الالوان من سكباج وطباهجه وقرموش مقلى منزل في عسل نحل ودجاج محشى سكر وفستق، فاكلنا حتى اكتفينا. تم رفعت المايده تم غسلنا ايدينا ورشوا علينا الماورد الممسك.

2- تلك الليله قدموا لي خونجه طعام، من جملة الطعام خافقيه فيها زيرباجه مختره بقلب الفستق المقشر مجلبه بالجلاب والسكر المكرر.

They may be translated as follows:

1. It did not take long before she provided me with a khunja of excellent colors: skbaaj, tabahga, fried qarmoosh [i.e. catfish] dipped in bee-honey, chicken stuffed with sugar and pistachio. We ate until we had enough. Then the dining table was removed; we washed our hands and musked rose-water was sprayed on us.

2. That night they provided me with a food khunja. Among the food

was a khafqiyya in which there was zirbaja, covered with peeled pistachio kernel and treated with julep and refined sugar.

An Arabic storyteller, well-informed of the connotative levels of food and feast descriptions in his own or in a related society, can cue his own performance of these passages in such a way that he manages to create a common plane on which his listeners can interact. Many of the food and feast descriptions in the "Story" are closely associated with amorous adventures and the pursuit of sexual lust. This is one more reason why such passages can be used to cue performance: their availability both to the upper classes and the populace. A storyteller, ignorant of the utilitarian aspect of these descriptions, may well miss a handy instrument to raise expectations and enhance interpretations. Further, and within the narratological significance of the ransom-tale framework, such passages prolong narration and prevent narrative closure, which is what the *Nights*, in a very restricted sense, are about.

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