

AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF BEIRUT

BETWEEN THE *NIGHTS* AND THE *ASS*: FRAME
NARRATIVE AND EMBEDDING-FRAMING STRUCTURE

by
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A thesis
submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Arts
to the Department of English
of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences
at the American University of Beirut

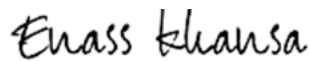
Beirut, Lebanon
November 2023

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my deepest appreciation to my advisor, Professor Enass Khansa, to my committee members Professor David Currell, and Professor Iyas Hassan who I will always be indebted to. I would also like to extend my deepest gratitude to Professor Rachid El-Daif for being my mentor. The completion of my thesis would not have been possible without his unyielding support. I would also like to extend my thanks to Professor Peter Williams, for his wisdom and knowledge have sown in me the seeds of love of literature.

Finally, I would like to thank my mother Hala, you were my source of strength and inspiration.

ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF

Bouchra Sayed Frangieh

for

Master of Arts

Major: English Literature

Title: Between the *Nights* and the *Ass*: Frame Narrative and Embedding-Framing Structure

The Golden Ass and *The Hundred and One Nights*, remain two different yet astoundingly similar books in terms of how both narratives' depiction of the relationship between frame tale and embedded tales serves the overarching purpose of the book. Through the intricately weaved thread between frame and enframed stories, *insisting* cultural affects surge. Both books' cultural projects, the present study argues, unfold through the relationship between the frame and enframed stories.

The frame narrative is, therefore, chosen as a literary technique through which the books' cultural presence and absence are revealed. Yet, when it comes to both these books, there is one main difference that needs to be addressed: when one book's moral and cultural compass centers in its frame story, the other's cultural presence remains punctuated in its different embedded tales. *The Golden Ass* focuses its different narrative and literary elements in its main story, the metamorphoses of Lucius, whereas *The Hundred and One Nights* disperses all these techniques in its inset tales. The introduction of *The Golden Ass* in parallel with *One Hundred and One Nights*, reveals the importance of the frame narrative and how the dynamic correlation between frame and embedded tales work to convey the morālis of each book. This study further ventures to highlight the inability to divorce the narrative form from its cultural milieu or the cultural imprint it leaves behind.

When it comes to the choice of bringing together these two different narratives, numerous questions can be addressed. My research will primarily address the frame narrative that encompasses these two texts, and how this narrative form unveils a cultural and moral impact. The cultural impact found in both these books can move beyond the borders of these narratives. The dynamic relationship between the frame and inset stories will be addressed separately in every book and will be further approached under a comparative lens that will connect these two narratives. The comparable approaches will reveal numerous elements of similarities and contrast such as the literary style, narrative devices, the themes, the characters, the supernatural elements, the language, the religious and spiritual elements. Yet, when it comes to the presence of these elements in both *The Golden Ass* and *One Hundred and One Nights*, the main difference is that in the former all these elements are centered in the frame story of Lucius, whereas in the latter, these elements are scattered within the different embedded tales.

One major aspect of similarity that is found in both *The Golden Ass* and *One Hundred and One Nights* is the overarching trope of salvation. In both these narratives, the frame

narrative is chosen as a literary technique to accompany Lucius, the ass and Shahrazad in their journeys. Both characters' journeys are crowned in salvation. The former is spiritually cleansed, purified and, therefore, is saved from the zoomorphic form, yet, the latter has achieved to save herself and all the women after her from the penalty of death. In Apuleius' *The Golden Ass*, salvation rather takes a more religious and spiritual connotation after Lucius has paid the price of his curiosity and desire to see and practice magic. Lucius' salvation came through devotion and conversion to the goddess Isis.

Lucius underwent a death and a rebirth: his death as an ass and his rebirth as a devotee and follower of Isis. Lucius' salvation came through his religious conversion which sets it apart from Shahrazad's journey of salvation. In *A Hundred and One Nights*, Shahrazad tells these different tales not only in the purpose of saving herself or her sister, but also in the purpose of saving others wherein no women died after her and that was because of her. Shahrazad's sole purpose might be seen as to save herself from being murdered the next day as it was the king's habit to murder his wives the next day, yet her journey to salvation becomes a social journey that takes on a broader approach wherein it becomes a salvation from injustice. Hence, despite the trope of salvation that is found in both narratives, it differs greatly between Lucius and Shahrazad, wherein one represents spiritual salvation and the other embodies a social salvation.

In *The Golden Ass*, Apuleius writes following the Milesian style. He writes in a style that reveals a set of short stories or fables or even folktales that feature themes of love and adventure. Yet, most importantly, these tales have a deeply erotic and promiscuous nature that often titillates the reader. His book remains a mixture of these promiscuous and overtly sexual tales, yet, with more philosophical approaches. Through his unique literary style, Apuleius manages to, smoothly and subtly, bring together the different ends of the spectrum: he mixes the carnal with the philosophical, the promiscuous with the religious, the human and the divine. Additionally, this unique style adopted by Apuleius is also strongly reflected in the framed story: the story of Lucius, the ass, on his way to find salvation. In *A Hundred and One Nights*, a rather different style is adopted. This style is not reflected in the main story of Shahrazad, but rather in the different tales that are narrated. There are repetitive patterns and motifs that the reader cannot fail to notice such as the missing brides, the caves, the secret nocturnal visits. Yet, most importantly, the style reflected in this narrative is rather joyous. The pleasure of its different tales resides primarily in their style, their happy endings, and often fast-paced actions (Fudge xxvi). The styles adopted in these two books remain quite different wherein one reveals a style that is gory, bestial and spiritual whereas the other reveals an optimistic, and happy tone. Additionally, these two books present two different narrative techniques or devices. In *The Golden Ass*, Apuleius adopts the narrative device of "double take" - in both the main story and the embedded tales - wherein the audience often applauds only to find that the applaud came a little too soon, and something happened that has changed - sometimes dramatically - the course of events (Graves xviii). When reading the different tales that Lucius hears, there are always turning points that are least expected which consequently leave the reader in a state of perplexity and excitement.

Sometimes the change would take a funnier tone or it can get more macabre and somber than expected. Whereas, in *The Hundred and One Nights*, the exact opposite unfolds: the reader is rarely surprised. Often, the end is given at the beginning of the tale. The actions

follow the pattern of “stock scene” whose outcome is known ever since the beginning of the tale (Fudge xxvi). The element of suspense is therefore not as prominent in these tales as a happy ending is always in sight: the hero reunites with his beloved and they live happily ever after. Whether in an adventure or a romance, there is a great commonality between *A Hundred and One Nights*’ tales: “all the stories end well, with the hero wealthy and happy” (Fudge xxiv). Whereas, in *The Golden Ass*, the tales’ endings rarely end on a good note, leaving the reader in a state of puzzlement.

There are numerous and various themes in both narratives. Yet, in Apuleius’ *The Golden Ass*, these themes are quite familiar, and operate within a world that rests on familiar premises, whereas in *A Hundred and One Nights*, the central themes are taken from unfamiliar worlds; taken out of the imagination. In *The Golden Ass*, Apuleius talks about sex, promiscuous behaviors, bestiality, adultery, lovers, cuckolded husbands, undiscerning husbands, mythology. All these themes are also part of the main narrative wherein Lucius commits adultery, almost gets involved in bestiality, meets and hears smart wives narrating how simple-minded their husbands are while boasting their young lovers. He is even mythologically and spiritually metamorphosed back into a human, when he reaches the sacred lake at the end of his journey and experiences the apparition of Goddess Isis.

These different themes are found within the embedded tales in *The Golden Ass*, yet they remain heavily centered in Lucius’ tale. In *A Hundred and One Nights*, the themes adopted abstain from addressing such overtly carnal or even erotic topics. The tales are often based either on a “somber morality” or a “manic humor” (Fudge xv). The themes are often centered on adventure, romance, conquering evil forces and reaching happy endings. Yet, there is a refrain from mentioning sex or sexuality. “Sex is brisk, if it happens at all, and there is more emphasis on food and drink” (Fudge xi). Such themes and the absence of other themes might reflect each books’ cultural milieu wherein one includes many sexual references whereas the other refrains from such themes, and rather focus on “eating and drinking to [their] heart’s content” (Fudge xi).

The supernatural elements and characters figure prominently in both narratives. In *A Hundred and One Nights*, there are several supernatural characters such as genies, spirits, malevolent demons, and old monsters. These fantastic elements and characters are always found in its different embedded stories. These characters are often surmounted and conquered by the hero in the different tales. However, the elements of the supernatural do not figure in the frame story of Shahrazad and Shahrayar, nor in the frame story of Shaykh Fihras it only takes part in the embedded tales. On the contrary, in *The Golden Ass*, the supernatural elements only figure in the framed story of Lucius’ metamorphosis. All the embedded tales - whether the story of Thelyphron, the jealous husband, the fuller’s wife, the wife’s tub, the tale of the oppressive landlord, and the jealous wife - do not include fantastic or magical elements. They are all taken out of real events. Except for the tale of Cupid and Psyche, all the magic, potions, wizards and talking animals are found in the central story of Lucius who metamorphoses into an ass. Hence, the supernatural elements are reversed in these two narrative frames wherein in one they figure prominently in its diverse tales, whereas in the other, they are gathered in its frame tale. Both *The Golden Ass* and *A Hundred and One Nights* navigate through moralistic and didactic pursuits. Such pursuits are often reflective of and reflect to both book’s cultural

milieu. *A Hundred and One Nights* targets different significant themes, draws on different characters, presents a style and adopts different narrative techniques in order to reveal a set of moral codes and tactics. The ineffability of death, the perishing of material wealth, the respect of elderly, power and its misuse, punishment and justice, the consequence of imperious decisions, and the empowerment of women - all are different approaches that are to be considered when it comes to *The Hundred and One Nights*. What I would like to further pursue in my study is how these approaches might be reflective of the cultural background out of which *A Hundred and One Nights* comes out of and how moral questions can be raised consequently.

In *The Golden Ass*, a different set of moralistic pursuits is perceived. Apuleius aims to highlight more the miseries the less fortunate people tend to go through. This clearly reflects the background out of which Apuleius comes from wherein some scholars even mentioned that "*The Transformations* was to be read as literal truth" (Graves xvii). Additionally, Apuleius tends to present a deeper, and philosophical perspective of life wherein he emphasizes the transgression of the soul towards salvation. He even highlights the importance of virtue in the pursuit of one's afterlife, and he attempts to reject and ridicule the Olympian mythology. Yet, most importantly, Apuleius attempts to communicate three different beliefs: Men are far from equal in the eyes of the Heavens, bad luck is catching, and never meddle with the supernatural (Graves xii-xiii). Yet, the main difference between what is communicated in *The Golden Ass* and *A Hundred and One Nights* is the fact that in the former all these moralities are communicated through the main story whereas in the latter all of these didactic approaches are scattered in the different embedded tales. Yet, whether these comparable points of departure happen to be centered in the main narrative of the story, or scattered in the different tales that it encompasses, one essential aspect is to be considered: how all of these didactic morals and pursuits can reflect the different cultural premises?

How can they come out of culture, and end up giving back to culture? Consequently, I would like to further investigate how it becomes impossible to divorce the narrative form from its cultural form. My research tackles different academic disciplines, it addresses comparative literatures, the frame narrative, the different narrative devices that can be adopted, how intricately linked is the cultural milieu to the actual narrative, and how the actual narrative gives back to, not only, its cultural space but also moves beyond such borders. Additionally, my research addresses how the narrative choices which are centered in the frame tale of *The Golden Ass* and scattered in the embedded tales of *The Hundred and One Nights*, can tell us about the epistemological or cultural trends and values in the respective communities out of which both these works were produced.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	1
ABSTRACT	2
<i>APULEIUS' THE GOLDEN ASS: THE FRAME AND EMBEDDED TALES</i>	23
A. Narrative Techniques and Style.....	24
B. Themes and Motifs	33
C. Language	37
D. Characters.....	39
E. Description of Meroe	40
F. Description of Pamphile.....	41
G. Messages, Morals and Didactic Pursuits?.....	45
<i>THE HUNDRED AND ONE NIGHTS: THE EMBEDDED TALES AND THE FRAME TALE</i>	51
A. Narrative Techniques and Style.....	53
B. Themes and Motifs	69
C. Characters.....	73
D. Language	77
E. Messages, Morals and Didactic Pursuits?.....	78

<i>THE GOLDEN ASS & THE HUNDRED AND ONE NIGHTS ...</i>	81
CONCLUSION	91
A. Beauty, appearances and transformations	91
REFERENCES	95

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In *Metamorphoses* better known as *The Golden Ass*, Apuleius narrates the transformation of Lucius into an ass and composes his work by compiling a string of tales. Apuleius intricately weaves popular tales in his narrative. Lucius is the narrator through whom the different tales are introduced: the tales are either witnessed by Lucius or are transmitted through what he has heard in his journey. Yet, the embedded stories and the frame story entwine together to create an oscillating relationship that punctuates and reflects the various narrative techniques, themes, subjects, messages and even philosophical approaches Apuleius aims to address in his narrative.

Mi'at laylah wa-laylah or *One Hundred and One Nights* is a collection of tales whose motifs and themes are drawn out of various cultures. This book opens with Shaykh Fihras, a philosopher who was called out to the court of King Darim to narrate the tales of *The Hundred and One Nights*. Following this first frame, there is the introduction of the second narrator, Shahrazad, who narrates these different stories to her King. In this collection, a number of embedded tales were included which consequently reveal a set of techniques, themes, subjects, and messages that are woven into the narrative.

The Golden Ass and *One Hundred and One Nights* remain two different narratives, with remarkable similitudes and coincidences, yet they share one important form: framing-embedding structure. Both books unfold through the adoption of the frame narrative, and the relationship between the frame and enframed stories.

In my study, I will look into the literary form of both Apuleius' *The Golden Ass* and *The Hundred and One Nights* as they both adopt the literary practice of the frametale¹. I have chosen this unusual twin in order to study the frame narrative that serves as a literary or formal device that was adopted by both narratives. Upon reading these texts, one cannot help but note the similitudes, the recurrent motifs and elements that are found that are quite remarkable regarding the different milieus out of which both texts emerge. This study, thus, places both narratives next to each other to allow their foreignness to open a new perspective through which both texts' framing-embedding relationship is explained.

The study I am presenting started as “an approach of perception which has grown and matured into an intuition” which has further “inspired the investigation” of both these literary texts' adoption of the frame narrative as a literary form or technique (Mallette 32). This is how Karla Mallette describes a philological reading or approach of a text in her book entitled *European Modernity and the Arab Mediterranean*. In this book, Mallette explains that there are two sets of approaches through which ancient texts can be addressed; there is one that “seeks to make the ancient world live again, assuming its undimmed relevance and unproblematic accessibility” and another that “seeks to put the ancient texts back into their own time, admitting that reconstruction of the past is difficult and that success may reveal the irrelevance of ancient experience and precept to modern problems” (6). My study is not completely a philological one, but it does, however,

¹ In his book *Framing Iberia: Maqamat and Frametale Narrative in Medieval Spain*, David A. Wacks explains the evolution of the use of “frametale” without hyphens as opposed to how it was historically written as two separate words “frame tale”, or hyphenated “frame-tale” (18). In this study, I have adopted both “frametale” as one word, and “frame tale” as two separate words. The first one is used to signify the genre of frame narrative. The second one, however, is used when addressing the main story in both narratives as opposed to the embedded tales. In *The Hundred and One Nights* the frame tale is the tale narrated by Shaykh Fihras and Shahrazad. In *The Golden Ass*, the frame tale is the journey of Lucius.

include an “interpretive schizophrenia” which denotes the reading strategy that can “either distance the reader from the text or [annul] the distance between the text and the reader”, yet it can as well “perform both of these operations at one” (Mallette 37). My approach towards both these literary narratives put them in their contexts, yet, at some point, takes them out of it and treats them as ahistorical classics.

Considering a more holistic approach to both narratives, in this study, I will primarily consider Ansgar Nunning’s approach to understanding and analyzing narratives. In his book, Nunning explains the importance of merging both a formalist approach as well as a historical contextualist approach in the study of narratives. While the former primarily addresses and advances the importance of the structure and the aesthetics of a text, the latter focuses on the historical and cultural backgrounds out of which the narrative emerges. In this study, both approaches will be merged together to reach a cohesive and holistic understanding of the literary works chosen. Hence, in the chapters that follow both the formal elements, the narrative structure and techniques as well as the cultural and historical circumstances of both narratives - *The Golden Ass* and *The Hundred and One Nights* - will be thoroughly addressed.

Numerous definitions, explanations and even interpretations of the term “frame”, “frametale” and even “frame narrative” emerge. The first person to mention the term “frame” was John Colin Dunlop in his book *The History of Fiction* which was published in 1814 (Mallette 4). He used this word in order to refer to the narrative structures of works such as *Kalila and Dimna*, and Chaucer’s *Canterbury Tales* (Mallette 5). In *Framing Borders in Literature and Other Media*, Wolf reveals that the concept of “frame”

has become more famous with the study of Erving Goffman *Frame Analysis* which was published in the mid 1970s (2).

In his article “Framing in Oral Narrative”, Lee Haring explains that the concept of framing is “more than a mechanism” it has become a “human habit and a cultural universal” (230). He adds that frame stories have become “frequent enough for scholars to designate several as standing alone and establish a genre” (Haring 229). Another definition of the frametale is set by Wacks in his book *Framing Iberia: Maqamat and Frametale Narrative in Medieval Spain*, wherein he explains that a frametale or a frame narrative is a “type of prose narrative fiction in which a series of unrelated tales or episodes is narrated by characters in an overarching story that provides a context and presence for the narration of the tales” (22). In this study, I adopted this definition which accurately describes both *The Hundred and One Nights* and *The Golden Ass* as two frametales or frame narratives. Both narratives present a narrative in which “unrelated” stories and tales are told by different characters/narrators forming one overarching story. In addition, both Wacks and Haring present the frametale as a genre that has “traveled widely, adapting itself to extremely diverse environments and cultural realities” (Wacks 24). Similarly, Lee Haring establishes that framing has become a “cultural universal” (230). This universal aspect that has been attributed to the frametale or the frame narrative will be further addressed and described following the study of frame narrative and the framing-embedding structures in both *The Golden Ass* and *The Hundred and One Nights*.

Carolyn Boidin has published several papers on Apuleius’ *The Golden Ass* and *The Arabian Nights*. In her article entitled *The Ass goes East: Apuleius and Orientalism*, Boidin reveals that the purpose of her study is to address why “commentators have so

frequently compared *The Golden Ass* with famous collections of oriental tales” (47). Boidin asserts that the oriental tale was invented by “European literate circles, as an archetypal literary genre that was believed to have its origins in Antiquity, in an attempt to trace the history of modern fiction and to give it some cultural legitimacy” (48). Hence, both the concept of the orient as an early modern occidental construction and the reverse cultural process of the occident and how it stems back from the orient, have created “new aesthetic and intellectual values” as well as a “range of cultural traditions of very different natures” (47). Starting with Pierre-Daniel Huet, in 1669, who reflects back on the European novel and how it has burgeoned out of the oriental fables with their different messages of wisdom and fantasy. According to Huet, Apuleius has “found inspiration in a specific vein of oriental writing known as the *sermo Milesius*” (qtd. in Boidin 50). Starting with Huet and multiple other scholars, the orientalization of *The Golden Ass* has ultimately become a “way of addressing the peculiar status of the narrative, a status that was relatively new in the history of its reception” (Boidin 50). Boidin asserts that scholars have worked on the orientalization of Apuleius’ text to the point of exhaustion. On the other hand, different other scholars and folklorists have focused on taking *The Golden Ass* back to its Indo-European existence (Boidin 52). Hence, *The Golden Ass* has had references and studies that take it back to different origins whether North-African, Latin, Greek, Indo-European, or Arabic and Islamic.

Similarly to what Boidin has described when it comes to the orientalization of *The Golden Ass*, there are other scholars who connect *The Arabian Nights* to the occident. In *Scheherazade’s Children*, Philip F. Kennedy claims that the eighteenth century European novel was influenced by *The Arabian Nights*. He explains that “the *Nights* licensed

fantasy and a breaking away from classical constraints; it provided a precedent for the eroticism of the libertine novels; contrariwise, it also spawned a lot of moral and didactic tales; its plots were borrowed” (145). Yet, what Kennedy mentions, yet forgets to address, is how all the elements mentioned above: the fantastical elements, eroticism, and morality, are all present in *The Golden Ass* which according to Kennedy “can be characterized as a novel” (144).

Malette, when addressing the interrelationship and the influence between Arabic, Greek and Roman texts, explains in her text *Scheherazade Among Philologists* that orientalist often “trace a modern European national genius to a spark kindled by the Arabs” (2). Yet, Malette further admits that the Mediterranean history constitutes a “complex whole made up of many parts” (3). In his lecture entitled *Great Voyages Lecture: The Odyssey, Nostalgia, and the Lost Home*, Peter Struck explains that the cultures that are situated around the Mediterranean are of historical importance not in isolation, but in their collectivity - for “something magnificent takes place” (06:11). According to Struck, all these different cultures “cross-fertilize each others, and ultimately create cultures that are interconnected” (07:20). In his article *What is Arab Islamic Rhetoric? Rethinking the History of Muslim Oratory Art and Homilectics*, Philip Hallden reveals a similar notion which focuses on the variant nature of the Greek and Mediterranean civilizations, he explains that “the presupposition that ancient Greece was a “Western” society has lost its former credibility” (28). Hence, both Apuleius’ *The Golden Ass* and *The Hundred and One Nights* refer back to a long and extensive history of influence that links both texts to different “cross-fertilized” milieus that stem back

from North-African, Persian, Indian, Latin, Greek, Indo-European, Arabic and Islamic cultures.

In *Archetypes and Motifs in Folklore and Literature*, Jane Garry and Hasan El-Shamy present in-depth essays that tackle the most important motifs and archetypes that are found repetitively in literature and were first addressed by Stith Thompson his book *Motif-Index of Folk Literature*. According to El-Shamy and Garry, a motif is defined as a “unit of interest in a tale” whereas an archetype is “a pattern of primary significance with deep psychic resonance that also occurs in various literary genres” (xv). Regis Boyer goes back in the chapter “Archetypes” to Jung who explains the existence of a whole treasury of “organic, pre-existing mental elements” (116). He explains that the archetypes are translated into an “expression of the fundamental fascination” found in the thinking and writing human (117). According to El-Shamy and Garry, many famous writers “have mined the troves of traditional myth and tales” such as Homer, Shakespeare, Chaucer and Milton (xvi). They explain that the profound influence and resonance of their works is due to the presence of the ancient motifs and archetypes. Additionally, both scholars address how folklorists and anthropologists have attempted to answer the question whether “cultural universal” exists by admitting that “the distribution of myths reveal that while there is no myth that is truly universal, so is there no myth that has ever been found to be limited to a single culture” (El-Shamy and Garry xviii). In addition, they admit that “transcultural similarities and potential universalities” should not be precluded while adopting a cultural approach to a text (El-Shamy and Garry xviii). Hence talking about universalities and similarities across cultures remain crucial in this comparative study. In addition, it remains permissible, if not necessary, to allude to the ancient motifs,

archetypes, recurring and pre-existing mental elements and fundamental fascinations that impose themselves in the discussion of *The Golden Ass* and *The Hundred and One Nights*: two literary texts, from two different places, with numerous points of concurrence.

Both El-Shamy and Garry address sixty-six motifs and archetypes in mythology and literature which they believe to be of primary significance. However, they address these motifs and archetypes without any reference to the reasons as to why these motifs and archetypes are recurrent and consequently appear in cross-cultural literature. In their research as well as in other books and anthologies there is no explanation of the reason behind the repetition of motifs, topics, structures, characters and even elements in different tales of different contexts. Similarly, in *The Oxford Companion to Fairy Tales* the editor Jack Zipes documents an extensive list of entries that seek to provide as much information about all the authors and researchers that have worked on the rise of the literary fairy tale in literature. In this study, I present a similar approach to what El-Shamy and Garry present by addressing the similar tropes, motifs and elements in both *The Golden Ass* and *The Hundred and One Nights*, however, I refrain from adhering to the same structure in listing these motifs and archetypes as followed in *Archetypes and Motifs in Folklore and Literature*, and venture to address the points of similarities, shared motifs, characters, elements and coincidences in a different scope and sequence.

In *Folk and Fairy Tales*, Martin Hallett and Barbara Karasek draw attention to the insights of some of the critics, researchers who across multiple domains: folkloric, psychological, feminist, historical and cultural, have addressed how “fairy tales have a complexity belied by their humble origins” (12). They present the fairytales in three different comparative aspects: themes, chronological and juxtapositions which offer a

direct comparison (Hallett and Karasek 13). In this current study I intend to mix the three approaches together in my comparison of *The Golden Ass* and *The Hundred and One Nights*. I will juxtapose both narratives and present their different chronologies while uncovering the different themes as well as the other elements that constitute the narratives.

In her book *The Interpretation of Fairy Tales*, Marie-Louise Von Franz, psychologist and scholar, claims that the basic motifs of the written tradition date back to three thousand years and “they have not changed much” (21). She explains that the same themes in various variations “came up again and again in French, Russian, Finnish, and Italian collections” (Von Franz 25), she describes this phenomena as the Brothers Grimm refer to it as “a broken crystal whose fragments you still find scatted in the glass” (25). She presents in her chapter “Theories of fairy tales” the history of the science of the fairy tales and lists the names of the ethnologists, folklorists, specialists in mythology and the comparative histories as well as the different schools and the literature that addressed this topic: starting with Apuleius with “Psyche and Cupid”, Winckelmann, Hermann, brothers Grimm, followed by more historical and scientific interests such as Alfred Jensen, Antti Aarne, H. Winkler, Otto Huth, Robert Graves, and Erich Fromm. The previous scholars have had various, sometimes opposite, opinions and intakes when it comes to the fairy tales in general, and in particular, the repetitive motifs and recurrent themes in all those tales across literature. Carl Jung with his theories and hypotheses on the archetype is central to Von Franz’ study (25). Jung believes that “the intellectuals overlook the emotional and feeling factor, which is always connected with the archetypal image” (Von Franz 26). The unconscious mind is often the center of the repetitive motifs

and archetypal images found in the different literature. Von Franz asserts that the repetitions in the folktales and fairytales are due to “invasions from the collective unconscious in the form of waking hallucinations” (38). Yet, the different approaches highlighted when it comes to the presence of concurrences or repetitions of motifs and elements in different tales of different cultures either veer too close to or too far from scientific evidence. The studies started with an investigation to see where was the spot all the fairy tales have originated from and how they migrated, and other studies ventured to go back to the collective unconscious or the common human psychic structure. Choosing a theoretical side to embed my study in is not an approach I would like to adopt in my study, for elements of the unconscious mind and scientific existence manifest themselves in different instances of *The Golden Ass* as well as *The Hundred and One Nights*. What is to be expected in this study is not to focus on one approach and impose it on the texts, but to seek out the elements that constitute these texts and follow the patterns that these elements divulge in order to see and claim where do they fall in this theoretical scope.

The Power of Myth is a book based on conversations between Joseph Campbell and Bill Moyers. Campbell asserts that there is literature or “bits of information from ancient times, which have to do with the themes that have supported human life, built civilizations, and informed religions over the millennia, [and which] have to do with deeper inner problems, inner mysteries, inner thresholds of passage” (Campbell 31). In his conversation with Moyers, Campbell describes that in his years of research and comparative studies that the same motifs were found in his Roman Catholic faith, the American Indian stories that he researched, Arthurian medieval materiel, Hinduism, there were all “the same stories” (Campbell 48). In addition, Campbell answers Moyers that

“[Moyer] can’t tell [him] that they’re not the same stories. [He has] been with them all [his] life” (Campbell 49). He further explains that all the stories “take the same universal themes” but apply it in different ways (Campbell 50). Campbell claims that myth and its different repetitive elements and themes fall under four different dimensions: “the mystical function” which highlights the wonder of the universe, “the dimension of mystery” which he believes that it underlies all form, “the cosmological dimension” which also accentuates the mystery of the world because even the scientists do not have all the answers, and “the sociological dimension” which validate a certain social order (Campbell 88). He believes that the last dimension, the sociological one, has taken over the world today despite it being “out of date” (Campbell 89). Hence, according to him myth and its different elements create an element of wonder and mystery that moves beyond the sociological function.

The theories and studies of the recurrent motifs, characters, themes and elements in cross-cultural literature often stem from the social sciences (anthropology, sociology, psychology) or the humanities (literature, religious and philosophical studies). In *Myth Analyzed*, Robert Segal distributes the theories of myth as answers to three main questions “what is the origin, what is the function, and what is the subject matter of myth?” (Segal 12). He believes that myths are connected to science, philosophy and religion. When it comes to the recurrent motifs and elements found in different literature texts from different cultures, Segal explains that there are two main explanations to such similarities “transmission and independent invention” (12). He states:

“Similarities via transmission are the product of circumstances: one culture happens to come in contact with another. Similarities via theories are the product of something universal: human nature, society, or the external world.” (13)

Segal further reveals that both approaches “independent invention and transmission are at heart akin: both seek the similarities, not the differences” (14). In this comparative study, I will rectify this claim by choosing to address the differences as well as the similarities because as Segal explains “to compare phenomena is necessarily to find differences as well as similarities” (16). Additionally, Segal reveals an important aspect of analysis which is how the “comparison of phenomena can never yield identity, only similarity” (17). I am adopting this comparative method because as he explains “the comparative method never claims to be seeking more than similarities. It does not claim that any two myths are identical, only that they are sufficiently alike to be explicable the same way.” (17). Hence, in this study I will not attempt to mask the differences, but I would rather focus on the importance of the similarities in both narratives in order to show how both narratives share elements that reveal interesting similitudes. Finally, Segal ends his introduction with the idea that comparative studies and comparison “serves to spur not merely broader explanations but also new ones” (27), which is an ultimate goal of this current study.

In his book *Why Fairy Tales Stick* Jack Zipes attempts to answer the questions “why do particular fairy tales stick with us as replicating memes?” (xi). An important part of his book addresses Vladimir Propp’s *The Morphology of the Folktale* which presents a structural analysis of the tales and in which Propp analyzes the constituent elements, patterns and structures of the Russian folk tales as a narrative system. Most important

aspect in his study focuses on how the tales with great cross-cultural appeal tend to transcend their particularity and reveal instead “universal motifs and experiences that writers borrow consciously and unconsciously from other cultures in an endeavor to imbue their symbolical stories with very specific commentaries on the mores and manners of their times” (Zipes 41). This perspective leads me to see both narratives as a space where both the author/s of the *Hundred and One Nights* and Apuleius were able to escape the rigidity of influence or “transmission” as explained by Segal and have instead ventured into this universal experience of conscious and unconscious behaviors.

This last section of the introduction serves as the most important part, for it constitutes a funnel that accurately depicts my approach. Looking at a unifying explanation to address the recurrent motifs, elements, and even structure in both chosen texts is a very interesting approach to adopt, but as I ventured on this journey, I risked to overlook the particular qualities that are found in *The Hundred and One Nights* and *The Golden Ass*. If I adopt the previous approaches, I will risk losing the peculiarities that can only emerge out of those two unique texts presented together. I, therefore, attempted to choose an approach that is more grounded in comparative literature with all the challenges that comes with it. Jonathan Burton’s article *Christopher Sly’s Arabian Night: Shakespeare’s The Taming of the Shrew as World Literature* serves as an excellent example that highlights my approach. In his study he has highlighted the same concerns as mine, particularly as he tackled concepts such as the comparison of two texts from two different cultures, the west/east discussion, as well as the possibility of universalism and universality away from parochialism. Burton presents his comparative work in order to negate other comparative studies in literature which have modeled a critical practice that

shows how “East and West continue to be seen in terms of their allegedly irreconcilable traditions and values” (3). Such a comparative stance is reflective of the penchant I want to take in my study; by adopting both *The Hundred and One Nights* and *The Golden Ass*, I want to take this study as a chance for me to refute, once more, the false concept of East and West as discrete, independent entities, and like Burton has mentioned, prove how there are “cultural pathways that cut across crude geospatial and ideological partitions” (Burton 4). Burton asserts that the focus of his research is on the textual elements such as the theme, tone, and purpose and how their presence in “divergent transitions” makes a case where borders become as “fluid spaces of cultural exchange, adaptation, and collaboration” (ix). He states:

“I am making a less explicitly causal argument that does not depend on direct engagement and views the sprinkling of early modern texts with oriental commodities not as a narrative strategy but as a reminder that goods are transported by merchants and travelers who disseminate along with them the ideas and stories that they encounter”

What Burton describes in his own approach is reflective of my own approach in this study. I aim to highlight how all the different details mentioned above are embedded not in an argument of causality but in a phenomenological approach of correlation.

Equally, I am interested in the concurrent, transformative passage of ideas from one culture to another, from one geographical space to another, from one time to another. Most importantly, I am interested in, like Burton describes, how both texts I chose are separated by disciplinary protocols and tradition, yet share “a line of sight” (12).

In my research I will present both texts separately at first, then together. The first chapter will focus on Apuleius’ *The Golden Ass* and the frame narrative structure that

constitutes it. The second chapter will focus on *The Hundred and One Nights* and how the framing-embedding structure works in this narrative. The third chapter will bring both texts together and reveal all the similarities that are found in both texts. The final chapter will attempt to answer the question of how can two texts that different share similarities, particularly in their framing-embedding structure, and how the embedded tales seem to connect and serve the overall purpose of both texts. By presenting both texts together in a sense of correlation and not causality, a wide range of possibilities, of divergence, exchange, influence, adaptation and connection open up which *hopefully* will create a route worthy of further research, discussion and analysis.

CHAPTER II

APULEIUS' *THE GOLDEN ASS*: THE FRAME AND EMBEDDED TALES

'Ça sent l'encens et l'urine, la bestialité s'y marie au mysticisme'

Gustave Flaubert

This first chapter will include primarily a thorough study and analysis of the different elements, formal characteristics or devices that constitute the frame narrative in Apuleius' *The Golden Ass*, and how these elements fit in or serve the overall purpose of the framing-embedding structure in this text. In addition, this study will shed light on these formal elements and how they remain covertly yet intricately linked to the cultural milieu and traditions out of which the text has emerged. As previously mentioned, these devices and elements mainly include the themes, tropes and messages that are adopted and delivered in this narrative, the language and style chosen, the narrative techniques adopted by Apuleius, the choice of characters within the tales with a particular focus on the movement set between these characters and the narrator/s in this text. These elements relate to both the form and the content of this narrative, as well as the cultural context out of which they emerge.

Before working on the framing-embedding nature of Apuleius' literary text and the establishment of its different devices, it remains crucial to note that, as Stephen Harrison has already proclaimed in his article entitled "Constructing Apuleius: The Emerge of a Literary Artist", the critical research and literary works on *The Golden Ass* "are

necessarily affected by contemporary ideological prejudices, which change over time as scholarship develops” (13). Hence, here comes in handy the philological, schizophrenic approach I attempt to portray in my study; wherein I am trying to balance both the *then* and *now* perspectives of *The Golden Ass*.

A. Narrative Techniques and Style

While considering the different critical and literary responses that have taken the frame narrative in Apuleius’ *The Golden Ass* as a central trope of study, it remains crucial to mention some of the different perspectives which veer from but emphasize still the framing-embedding nature of Apuleius’ literary text. *The Golden Ass* for so many scholars was often studied in a segregating approach wherein books I till X are often studied separately from the last book². Some scholars focused only on the string of embedded tales whereas others took the frame story of Lucius as the center of their research and studies while disregarding the embedded tales. For instance, one rather remarkable study was conducted wherein Peter Singer, an Australian ethical and political philosopher, recently released a new abridged version of Apuleius’ *The Golden Ass* that excludes all the embedded stories as he sees them as “digressions” that disrupt the main narrative. In his essay “Why a New Edition of The Golden Ass?”, Singer reveals that the story in its original form is “far too complex” and by removing all these disruptions he was able to “uncover the still beating heart of the text” (1). In his book entitled *Auctor and Actor: A Narratological Reading of Apuleius’ The Golden Ass* John J. Winkler, sets

² Check for example John J. Winkler “Auctor and Actor: A Narratological Reading of Apuleius’ *The Golden Ass*”; Robert H. F. Carver “The Protean Ass”.

two different readings of Apuleius' text: a Lucianic reading and a religious reading; while "the former takes the frame tale of the *Asinus Aureus* as an extra text, an independent work found both outside the Latin *Asinus Aureus* (the Greek *Lucius*, or *the Ass*) and inside it as a skeleton. The latter takes the concluding book of the *Asinus Aureus*, the part that is in strongest contrast to the Lucianic frame, and gives it a privileged status in rereading the once comic, now religious ass-tale" (7). This current study will neither focus on the frame story of Lucius alone, nor focus on the last book alone. It will rather attempt to prove the opposite of what Singer advanced which serves to be a poor approach. The inset tales and the frame story, dynamically linked together, do not create a "disturbing" and "complex" environment, on the contrary, their interconnectedness creates a rich milieu that ought to be further discovered.

In his article James T. Svendsen covers the different literary and narrative techniques that were adopted by Apuleius in his writing of *The Golden Ass*. He explains that Apuleius' most obvious narrative strategy is the use of "interpolated tale-within-a-tale" (24). This definition of "tale within a tale" alludes to a definition of the frame narrative by David Wacks that indeed accentuates the frame nature of *The Golden Ass* as "a series of unrelated tales or episodes" under one overarching story (Wacks 22). Additionally, Svendsen reveals how Apuleius' techniques are "highly traditional and have analogues not only to earlier Greek and Roman fiction but even in the Homeric epics themselves" (23). Yet, most importantly, Svendsen, in his essay, touches upon Apuleius' "manipulation and arrangement of [these] traditional materials" (23). Hence, right from the beginning, a rather intricate and interesting connection is established between the narrative techniques used by Apuleius in the construction of his text, and the traditional

and cultural milieu out of which he emerges; wherein Apuleius - as will be further revealed - succeeded in manipulating and arranging the cultural and traditional materials.

Starting with the style of the text, *The Golden Ass* can be summed up as follows: the audience applauds too soon. In his introduction of *The Golden Ass*, Robert Graves, explained how Apuleius adopts the “double take device” in his writing wherein “the audience applauds but finds that it has applauded too soon, the real point, wither funnier or more macabre than anyone expected, was yet to come” (xviii). Winkler in his book explains that there are different readings when it comes to *The Golden Ass*: the first reading is a non-linear reading whereas the second reading is a synchronous one. However, he then explains, similarly to Graves, that “neither style of reading will explain why the secret [in the book] was kept so long, so well, and so elusively” (11). He further reveals that this delay in the information given is rather “a thing given by the author” and not a “thing won by the reader” which consequently asserts Apuleius’ rather peculiar style. In addition, Winkler shows how the readers with their innocent pleasure of laughing, often find themselves “puzzled by a story” and sometimes they “leap to a wrong conclusion” (13). Another major stylistic reference in Apuleius’s text is the element of suspense, curiosity and surprise. In the chapter entitled “Time and Space” in *The Cambridge Companion to Narrative*, Teresa Bridgeman explains that surprise often “arises from the gap between what we have been told so far and what we anticipate lies ahead” and surprise is defined as a “twist” through which events are concealed in the narrative which are subsequently revealed” (54). In the chapter “Framing Borders in Frame Stories” Werner Wolf explains that “the structure of a frame story can also be used in order to enhance suspense” (191). He shows that this is done by following a particular

strategy of announcement and delay. Wolf continues on to describe that this strategy is when “the framing announces something terrible or enigmatic, while it denies its explanation and postpones it to an often much larger stage in the embedded story” (191). However there is a major difference when it comes to *The Golden Ass*: in Apuleius’ text the suspense is created when the embedded stories announce or even allude to something enigmatic that is denied explanation and ends up being showed or revealed in the final stages of the frame story or Lucius’ story. Hence, the suspense in *The Golden Ass* is created in the movement between the embedded tales and how they touch upon the story of Lucius.

Following what was portrayed in the previous section, it seems important to address how the framing-embedding nature structures *The Golden Ass*. In his book *Framing the Ass: Literary Texture in Apuleius’ Metamorphoses*, Stephen Harrison sheds light on the importance of the dynamic relationship between the frame tale and the embedded tales wherein he explains how modern scholars view the embedded tales as not only important and relevant to the frame story, but they are “essential to its conclusion and its philosophy of human life” (25). Hence, right from the start there is an important role that the embedded tales play in relation to the development and *dénouement* of the frame tale in Apuleius’ text. In addition, in his book Winkler explains that numerous scholars have studied the embedded tales in *The Golden Ass* “not only in relation to possible sources but for their use in the *Asinus Aureus* to illustrate aspects of the narrator’s world - as warnings of what lies ahead of him, as *exempla* of the moral world he inhabits, or as riddles of his own salvation” (26). In addition, Winkler describes the embedded tales as “among the most marvelous creations in the history of narrative legerdemain and are

often singled out for admiration” (24). However, he continues on to reveal that this opening sentence “But I would like to tie together different sorts of tales for you in that Milesian style of yours, and to caress your ears into approval with a pretty whisper, if only you will not begrudge looking at Egyptian papyrus inscribed with the sharpness of a reed from the Nile” (Book I.2), is actually one of the most misleading sentence for it directs the attention to the embedded tales “as if they were the novel’s real substance and *raison d’être*” (24). The studies that single out the embedded tales in Apuleius’ text often, differently, aim to imply “that the separate excerptible tales are to be the focus of our attention, and the manner of their introduction is an irrelevance, a mere device” (Winkler 25). The present study rather traces a position that insists on the frame story and how it serves as essential if not crucial to the structure of *The Golden Ass*. In his book entitled *Witches, Isis and Narrative*, Stavros Frangoulidis explains in the first chapter “The *Onos* versus Apuleius’ *Metamorphoses*” how both the *Onos* and Apuleius’ *Metamorphoses* seem to have numerous points of similarities, yet it cannot be deduced that “the former served as a model for the latter, since there are significant differences at numerous junctures in their respective narratives” (13). Both these texts are believed to derive from a third narrative entitled *Metamorphoses* that is attributed to Lucius from Patras (Frangoulidis 13). Frangoulidis explains that “the numerous additional episodes and tales in the *Metamorphoses* are not inserted arbitrarily but serve a larger design and goal: they help readers to anticipate Lucius’ imminent misfortune and subsequent salvation” (14). Hence, contrary to the approach adopted by Singer, it is important to acknowledge how the embedded tales seem to serve the overarching frame story of Lucius, and how the frame tale builds its importance through the other embedded tales. To argue such a claim,

the present study will examine both the frame story and the embedded tales and how they operate together within the narrative. In the chapter “Framing Borders in Frame Stories”, Wolf describes the web of relationships of similarities and contrasts that can be detected when it comes to the framing-embedding nature of a narrative and how they can operate in two different ways: *mise en abyme* and *mise en cadre*. The former describes the framing-embedding structure when “the embedded stories shed light on the framing”, the latter consists of “some discrete phenomenon on the framing level that illustrates some analogous lower-level phenomenon of the embedded level” (Wolf 198-199). Apuleius’ *The Golden Ass* exemplifies a *mise en abyme* relationship as defined by Wolf wherein the embedded stories not only “shed light on the framing”, but also end up serving Lucius’ metamorphosis.

Another important aspect to consider in the study of *The Golden Ass* is also the prominent presence of foreshadowing, parallelism and repetition when it comes to the embedded tales and how they relate to the frame story. Whether in dreams, oracles or astrological incidents in the story, a potent sense of foreshadowing exists. In book II, there is the reference to Astrology and how for instance Sibyl can “scan all heavens affairs, and the sun too” (Book II.11). Following this discussion with Milo, Lucius remembers, while in Corinth, the Chaldean visitor who has “marvellous oracular responses” and who throws “public announcements of fate’s secrets” (Book II.12). This same person has predicted Lucius’ journey: “on the one hand [his] reputation will really flourish, but on the other [he] will become a long story, an unbelievable tale, a book in several volumes” (Book II.13). Additionally, right before metamorphosing into an ass, Lucius hints in his description of Photis to his foredooming transformation; “whereas hers was a willing

metamorphosis brought about by her powerful arts, I, who had not been enchanted by any spell, yet was so transfixed with awe at the occurrence” (Book III.22). In *The Protean Ass: The Metamorphoses of Apuleius from Antiquity to the Renaissance* Robert H. F. Carver explains how the ending of Lucius’ journey is also foretold right at the beginning of the text wherein “the seemingly casual reference to Egyptian papyrus and Nilotic reed in the opening sentence is found to contain a coded allusion to the finale” (3), to Isis, the Egyptian goddess. On top of that, several are the examples in the book wherein the dreams serve as a tool that reveals the future³. When it comes to the parallelistic aspect of the embedded tales and the tale of Lucius; and how these embedded tales seem to parallel or even allude to future events that will happen with Lucius, it seems crucial to address the tale of Psyche and Cupid in books IV and V. The reason as to why I aim to focus particularly on this embedded tale is because of the strong parallelism and link to Lucius’ metamorphosis’ journey. In *Narrative Techniques in Apuleius “Golden Ass”*, Svendsen asserts that this particular tale has both a “summarizing and anticipatory function for the frame narrative” (27). Winkler also detects a sense of parallelism not only between the characters of Psyche and Lucius, but also between the introductory words of the prologue speaker and those of the old lady who narrates the tale of Psyche and Cupid to Charite (53)⁴. Hence, *grosso modo*, the embedded tales, particularly the tale of *Psyche and Cupid*, seem to act as a foretelling device of what is to happen in the frame tale. Even these tales

³ Book IV.27; Book IV.1; Book VI.3

⁴ Auctor and Actor: A Narratological Reading of Apuleius’ *The Golden Ass*: The old woman moves directly from the interpretive principle to the beginning of her tale: “But I will distract you here and now with a delightful story, an old wife’s tale.” Her introductory words to her narrative are virtually those of the prologue speaker to the entire *Asinus Aureus*: “But just for you I will thread together various tales in this Milesian style and sooth, I say, your receptive ears with an enchanting whisper.” Whether the similarities are due to formula or to conscious design, they are very striking.” (p. 53).

were not only aiming to foretell the future and salvation of Lucius, but they were also repeatedly aiming to send warnings about magic and its dangers; whether it be the story of Socrates, the story of Thelyphron, the story of Lamachus, the story of the miller's wife (Frangoulidis 30).

One important narrative characteristic in Apuleius' text is the presence of Lucius as the sole narrator: all that is narrated in *The Golden Ass* is either witnessed or heard by Lucius (both in his human and asinine forms). Despite the polyphony of voices and the presence of multiple tales and numerous characters, only Lucius serves as the point of knowledge. In his book Stephen Harrison moves even beyond the notion of Lucius as a narrator, to acknowledge how "Apuleius has adopted a meta-fictional strategy where Lucius - several times - came out of the narrative and addressed the reader" (36). Hence, not only are the tales narrated through the eyes and ears of Lucius, but Lucius even moves beyond the scope of the text to address the reader without barriers or *frames*. In addition, Frangoulidis admits that the first person narrator in *The Golden Ass* was able to "construct an imaginary dialogue between the narrator and his audience/readers" (42). While this is considered as a meta-fictional approach by scholars such as Harrison, or even Frangoulidis, it can also translate as a sense of limitation of the narrator, for even Lucius himself claims that "what I did not know, I cannot report to you" (Book IV.23). For instance, in book IX, Apuleius writes:

But perhaps as a careful reader you will find fault with my story, reasoning as follows: "How did it happen, you clever little ass, that though you were shut up in the confines of the mill you were able to find out what the women were doing in secret, as

you insist?” So let me tell you how I, an inquisitive man under the guise of a beast of burden, discovered all they did to bring about my baker’s destruction. (Book IX.29).

This quote remains indicative of the limitation that comes with Lucius being the only narrator, the only point of view, for, as described in *The Cambridge Companion to Narrative*, the notion of perspective or point of view in a text often includes “indications in the text of both physical angles of view and the subjective attitudes and emotions of individuals; further, the former can often signal the latter” (56). While it is an important structuring device in *The Golden Ass*, the presence of the physical and psychological point of view of *only* Lucius creates, indeed, a sense of limitation which can also be seen in the moments where Lucius in his asinine form wanted to talk but failed⁵.

What follows will address how Apuleius’ style and narrative structure has taken from its surrounding cultural milieu, yet not without a little bit of *manipulation* and *arranging*. Apuleius was able to take from culture, the different elements that constitute its text, primarily its content, i.e., themes, style, and even the choice of characters, yet he took from culture and altered, enhanced and shaped it into something else, something new that was manifested in the embedding-framing structure of the text. This chapter will develop this argument. Starting with Robert H. F. Carver, in his book *The Protean Ass* who summarizes Apuleius’ *The Golden Ass* as a “work which fuses ten books of witches, slave-girls, bandits, aristocrats, [...] with a final book in which a sublime vision transforms the asinine narrator into a devout disciple of the goddess Isis” (18). He explains that Apuleius’ text is an attachment of a “sublime rapture of Isiac revelation to a scabrous collection of Milesian tales” (19). Hence, right on, it is clear how Apuleius, in his framing

⁵ Book III.29; Book VII.3; Book VIII.16

and embedding form, has added more to the simple Milesian tale; he has added a frame tale to the Milesian tales, creating, thus, a new form. In Paula James' review of Harrison's book *Framing the Ass: Literary Texture in Apuleius' Metamorphoses*, she asserts how "culturally complex" *The Golden Ass* is (129), as Apuleius has displayed a "cultural capital [that] he can draw upon for his narrative" and he has managed to use the "low-status Milesian tale structure for his template" (James 133). Later on in this study, I will dedicate a section to show how Apuleius' text not only derives from his milieu, but also takes part in a series of common practices already present and established in his context. However, the claim can not stop at this, for Apuleius has given culture a new form: a frame and embedded tales. As once more Carver has claimed, "the abrupt shifts between titillation and Platonic allegory, between pornographic love-scenes and epiphanic paeans, placed the work beyond the limits of traditional literary theory" (7), and I would like to add: beyond the limits of its culture.

B. Themes and Motifs

The themes and motifs found in *The Golden Ass* constitute an important scope of study that needs to be addressed while taking a content-based approach to this narrative. I will start this chapter by addressing one major theme in Apuleius' text: curiosity. The story of Lucius begins with his "thirst for novelty" while listening to Aristomenes and Socrates' story as he is the sort "who wants to know everything, or at least most things" (Book I.1). This curiosity seems to continue on and thrive throughout the episodes of the story wherein even Lucius admits that his curiosity leads to anxiety that ultimately turns into an "excessive passion to learn the rare and marvellous" (Book I.1). The theme of

curiosity resurfaces with acute and intense precision to become “incurable” in Psyche and Cupid’s tale. Yet, it seems that the theme of curiosity recedes in the final book where the tables turn and Lucius “ill-starred curiosity” is sated (Book XI.14). In *Narrative Techniques in Apuleius “Golden Ass”*, Svendsen presents a study that reveals the “artistic integrity, the repeated themes and motifs and the narrative patterns which underly and unify the disparate episodes of the novel” (23). Svendsen acknowledges that the repeated themes and motifs chosen by Apuleius in his text not only strengthen the links between the embedded tales and the frame tale but also unify it and, thus, create a oneness: *The Golden Ass*. Focusing on central paired yet opposing and even antithetical themes: eroticism and piety, or in Frangoulidis terms “the erotic and the religious” (16). In *Witches, Isis and Narrative*, Frangoulidis explains how Apuleius uses careful narrative strategies in order to reveal the two major themes: the erotic and the religious (16). He shows that right from the introduction: there is the mention of the Milesian⁶ aspect of the narrative and that of Egypt⁷. The eroticism in the narrative is revealed not only in Lucius’ sexual encounter with Photis, but also in the adultery, bestiality, criminality, incest, parricide and pornographic moments within the text. Theme of adultery is prominently present in book IX with the woman who cuckolds the poor workman, the miller’s wife who is “crazy for men and wine” and “enemy of fidelity and foe to chastity” (Book IX.15), the fuller’s wife, the young woman who cuckolds Barbarus the servant of Myrmex, and the adulterous stepmother. The theme of adultery also expands to the men

⁶ “But I would like to tie together different words of tales for you in that Milesian style of yours”

⁷ “if only you will not begrudge looking at Egyptian papyrus inscribed with the sharpness of a reed from the Nile, so that you may be amazed at men’s forms and fortunes transformed into other shapes and then restored again in an interwoven knot.”

in the narrative such as the miller who engages in gay sex, the eunuchs who raped the man, the slave who played at home “the role of communal concubine” - despite it being clear that it is the nature of women that is vile and not that of men⁸. In addition, another interesting scene is the stepmother’s sexual desire to fornicate with her stepson who refuses to engage with her. The sexual and treacherous nature of women is also translated into bestiality wherein in book X, Lucius is confronted with a woman who desires his asinine form. Yet, impressively, the incessant sexual scenes are often paralleled by an abundance of contradicting religious attitudes. Winkler reveals that a rather major theme in *The Golden Ass* is “the restless quest for wisdom” (257). The XIth book remains proof of this journey of Lucius. Yet, all throughout the narrative there are references to this rather spiritual, pious or even religious quest. Right from the start and after Lucius’ transformation into an ass, he reveals in book III that his salvation is in a goddess who, then, was the goddess Epona that has been “carefully decorated with garlands of roses, fresh roses” (Book III.26).

Apuleius’ *The Golden Ass* was translated to Arabic by three different translators. The first one was “تحويلات الجحش الذهبي” by professor Ali Fahmi Khashim, a Libyan scholar and professor, who translated the text from English in 1980. The second version entitled “الحمار الذهبي أو التحويلات” was translated by Omar Al-Jalassi, a Tunisian scholar, from Latin in 2000. The most recent version is the one by Abu Al Eid Doudou, an Algerian author,

⁸Book IX.20: ”The woman, true to her sex’s fickleness, immediately hired out her honour in return for that abominable metal.”

Book IX.28: “Reluctantly the boy followed; and the miller, locking up his virtuous wife in another room, lay alone with the boy and enjoyed the most gratifying revenge for his ruined marriage.”

Book IX.29: “whores and witches: “She returned to her old tricks again and was roused to use arts natural to women. After a careful search she found an old hag who was believed to be able to accomplish anything with spells and witchcraft.”

professor and literary critic, who translated it from French and gave it the title “الحمار الذهبي” in 2001. A final theme that I would like to further address in this study, is the theme of magic and how central it is to - without it there would not be - *The Golden Ass*. Numerous studies elaborate on the centrality of magic and the supernatural elements in Apuleius’ narrative. Conversely, Abu Al Eid Doudou reveals the centrality of magic in Apuleius’ life and consequently his narrative. Al Eid Doudou narrates how Apuleius himself was in his own life accused of sorcery and witchcraft: he succeeded in bewitching the mother of his friend Pudentilla to marry her, in addition, he always buys fish and hides dark sortilege (8). Carver in his book revealed, as well, how Lactantius who is a Christian apologist was “distressed by Apuleius’ fame as a magician, rival-ling to surpassing Christ” (18). Winkler addresses Apuleius’ background and claims that Apuleius’ *The Golden Ass* is often interpreted as a kind of autobiography, yet what is more importance to acknowledge is how “the discourse of Apuleius impersonating Lucius is discovered to have been both a fictions life-history and a true life-history” (13). Hence, Apuleius has added aspects of his own experiences into Lucius’ story who was also found questioned in a trial amidst a book full of magic. Frangoulidis asserts that “magic is a central theme in the *Metamorphoses* and received considerable and varied discussion” (1). In addition on how magic was a central theme in Apuleius’ life, Frangoulidis shows how “magic and mysticism” were also characteristics of the later 2nd century AD (1). Numerous were the incidents in the text that revealed magical aspects: the metamorphosis of Lucius into an ass, the witch Meroe and the sponge-heart of Socrates, the summoning of the dead thanks to Zatchlas the Egyptian prophet, Thelyphron’s spell, the chicken that gave birth to a fully-developed chick with feathers and claws, the frog jumping out of the mouth, the

metamorphosis into a frog and a bird, and finally the transformation of Lucius back into a human. Whether the embedded tales or the frame tale of Lucius, the text is full with magical moments. Magic, thus, has become a central trope that enriches the framing-embedding nature of *The Golden Ass* and which reflects back to the cultural context out of which the text has emerged, and to Apuleius' personal encounters with magic and its accusations.

C. Language

The language adopted by Apuleius constitutes a rather important asset to study and focus on while considering the framing-embedding structure of *The Golden Ass*. According to Winkler, it is a mixture of slang and *recherché*, "Gadzooks! and Goddamits!" (18). He adds that by adopting both the vocabulary and the words of daily life and the "realien of middle - and lower - class", Apuleius succeeds in creating an "impression of familiar realism" (20). Similarly, Harrison asserts what Perry has mentioned that Apuleius' "most original contribution to literature" is translated in his style and language which is "so highly colored, fanciful and rococo, so studiously piquant and *recherché*, and so picturesque, varied and opulent", this style is largely based upon Apuleius' "own romantic outlook on the world" (27). Interestingly, even the introduction of the literary text includes an important reference to the language adopted:

Soon afterwards, in the city of the Latins, as a newcomer to Roman studies I attacked and cultivated their native speech with laborious difficulty and no teacher to guide me. So, please, I beg your pardon in advance if as a raw speaker of this foreign tongue of the Forum I commit any blunders. Now in fact this very changing of language

corresponds to the type of writing we have undertaken, which is like the skill of a rider jumping from one horse to another. We are about to begin a Greekish story. (Book I.1)

Hence, right from the start language stands out as an important aspect that even the writer admits to. In the chapter entitled “The poetics of fiction: poetic influence on the language of Apuleius’ *Metamorphoses*”, Harrison claims that the mixture of both the poetic and prose aspects of Apuleius’ text “is now considered one of its most subtle and valuable aspects” (270). In addition, Harrison links the language to the culture by explaining how Apuleius’ adoption of extensive poetic allusion has displayed “the socio-cultural status of [the] author as one who has experienced and drawn from the classic élite literary education” (285). However, it was till the twenty-first century that scholars started approaching the poetry in Apuleius’ text as more than “a sign of his cultural decadence” and rather a positive feature “which represents a central aspect of the whole literary culture of the high Roman Empire” (Harrison 284). The inclusion of poetry is particularly detected under the praying forms; whether in Psyche’s prayers to Ceres⁹ or Juno, or even Lucius’ prayers for goddess Cenchreae. According to numerous scholars, including Harrison, the inclusion of such language has contributed to highlight rather “impressive and heightened scenes in the novel” (278). Additionally, Harrison reveals that Apuleius has created out of the poetic allusion “a rhetorical strategy deployed at crucial moments in the plot of the *Metamorphoses* to engage the attention of its intended learned readers” (Harrison 285). *The Golden Ass*, therefore, becomes a mixture of genres which consequently highlights the ancient novel as a medium that displays multiple and flexible genres (Harrison 288) - as claimed by Bakhtin who sees in the different interpreters of

⁹ Book VI.2; Book VI.4; Book XI.2

the ancient novel a focus on revealing the different levels of language adopted in the same work. Through the referral to this poetic language, Apuleius has created a particular tone to the *Metamorphoses* (Harrison 279). Apuleius has managed to not only refer back to existing poetic terms but has, once more, added to what was offered by creating new poetic nuances by analogy with other poetic models. Hence, once more, Apuleius succeeded in his attempt to take from what was commonly prevalent at the time in terms of language and poetic, and add new nuances and aspects to it, reinforcing, thus, the originality of his writing.

D. Characters

When approaching *The Golden Ass* under academic or scholarly lens, an important lens to consider is the choice of characters in the narrative. From witches, to goddesses, bandits, priests, princesses, queens, slaves, whores, aristocrats, husbands and wives, women turning into men¹⁰, men turning into women and playing the role of women¹¹, children, parents, flora and fauna, all serve as essential characters in Apuleius' story with their different tales, journeys and motives of sorcery, bestiality, adultery, fornication, murder, jealousy, revenge and storytelling (Carver 18). Yet, Apuleius insisted on writing and narrating - as revealed in previous sections - *his* story through the person of Lucius

¹⁰ Book VII.2: "became her husband's comrade in exile and companion in calamity. She cut her hair short, transformed her appearance to look like a man, and wrapped the most costly of her jewels and gold coin round her, packed into her girdle. Fearless amid the bands of military guards and their bared swords, she shared all his dangers and took upon herself a sleepless concern for his welfare, bearing constant tribulations with manly spirit.

¹¹Book VII.2: "I put on a woman's flowery robe with loose billowy folds, covered my head with a woven turban, and wore a pair of those thin white shoes that ladies wear. Then, disguised and under cover of the weaker sex, and riding on the back of a donkey loaded with ears of barley, I passed right through the lines of hostile soldiers. Thinking I was a donkey-woman, they allowed me free passage, for even then my beardless cheeks glistened with the smoothness of boyhood.

which scholars and theorists claim to have promoted a sense of authenticity and credibility as the limitations of such approach contrast with the effort and focus to portraying “the perspective of the experiencing narrator” (Svendsen 271 - 275). Hence, the various characters walk, talk, act and react through the eyes and rather enormous ears of Lucius - particularly in his asinine form. These characters offer an amalgamation of serious and amusing presences within the narrative, at once “simple folktale” and “psychological paradigm” (Svendsen 28). All these characters, however, seem to serve a broader purpose when it comes to the frame tale of Lucius and his journey of metamorphosis. A strong parallelism is detected between the characters: a parallelism that foretells, disrupts and even anticipates what unfolds in the frame story. Hence, the characters in the embedded tales serve the overarching story of Lucius. Starting with the first embedded tale that interrupts the narrative in the first book, a strong similitude is detected between Socrates and Lucius. The story of Socrates and his involvement with magic and witches, as if this inset tale comes as a warning of what is to come for Lucius who “suffers a less dire fate than that of Socrates” (Frangoulidis 48). The embedded tale of Socrates has served its purpose: it protects Lucius from his death (Frangoulidis 49). In addition, what was very interesting was how the description of Meroe, the witch in Socrates’ tale, and the description of Pamphile Milo’s wife, and, technically, the witch in Lucius’ tale whom he was introduced to magic through, are the same.

E. Description of Meroe

A witch, he replied, ‘with supernatural power: she can lower the sky and suspend the earth, solidify fountains and dissolve mountains, raise up ghosts and bring down gods,

darken the stars and light up Tartarus itself.’ ... ‘The fact that she makes men fall madly in love with her—not just local inhabitants but also Indians and both kinds of Ethiopians¹⁸ and even Antipodeans—this is only an elementary part of her art, mere trivia.’ ... Because one of her lovers had misbehaved himself with another woman, she changed him with one word into a beaver, because when that animal is afraid of being captured it escapes from its pursuers by cutting off its own genitals, and she wanted the same thing to happen to him since he had intercourse with another woman” There was also an innkeeper near her place, and thus a competitor, whom she transformed into a frog (Book I.8)

F. Description of Pamphile

She is considered to be a witch of the first order and an expert in every variety of sepulchral incantation, and by breathing on twigs and pebbles and stuff of that sort she can drown all the light of the starry heavens in the depths of hell and plunge it into primeval Chaos. No sooner does she catch sight of some young man of attractive appearance than she is consumed by his charm and immediately directs her eye and her desire at him. She sows her seductions, attacks his soul, and binds him with the everlasting shackles of passionate love. If any do not respond and become cheap in her eyes by their show of repugnance, she transforms them on the spot into rocks or sheep or any other sort of animal; some, however, she completely annihilates. (Book II.5)

Other embedded tales, through the unfolding of the events of their characters such as Charite, Thrasyllus, Milo, Thelyphron, Photis, the old woman, even the goatskins that came alive with magic, shed light as well on Lucius’ journey. However, what I would

like to focus on is the resemblance between Lucius and Psyche, and how Psyche's journey, unlike Socrates', ends up predicting the fortunate and rather favorable ending of Lucius (he was not found dead). According to Frangoulidis in the section in his book entitled "The Wanderings" he particularly focuses on the story of Cupid and Psyche. He reveals that both Lucius and Psyche share striking similarities that are mainly translated in both characters' incapability to resist the "Strong desire for forbidden knowledge" which ultimately led to "put their lives at risk" (33). In addition, both Psyche and Lucius have touched salvation through the worship of and devotion to a goddess whether Venus or Isis. Another anticipatory example of parallelism between Psyche and Lucius is not only their curiosity but also their courage as Lucius' talk on courage "why not display courage like a man" mirrors Psyche's words in Book V. Most importantly, Frangoulidis acknowledges how the embedded tale of Psyche and Cupid served as an anticipation to the frame tale of Lucius and presents a "representation of Lucius' story in a form of a myth" and where "the author aims to give the readers a clue as to how his reformation will come about, and how he will find release from his troubles and eventually save his soul" (33). The aforementioned examples assert what was previously mentioned on the importance of the characters that walk, talk, fight, cheat, love, hate, murder and go on quests in the embedded tales, and how these characters, consequently, come not only to postpone or disrupt the narrative, but to give an overarching view on what is going to happen with Lucius.

One very important supernatural character within the narrative that seems to transcend the framing-embedding nature of the novel is *Fortune*. In his narrative, Apuleius presents Fortune as a character - woman- who thinks, acts and even attacks, and

does not really forsake anyone. Fortune or Fortuna is described as having “slippery windings and shifting attacks and alternating reversals” (Book I.7). Fortune is also portrayed as giver and provider for “Fortune provides [people] with the gift of the pen” (Book II.1). Even in the final book, the goddess Isis asserts that Lucius has endured greatly and was “driven by Fortune’s great tempests and mighty storm winds” before, at last, seeking and finding salvation (Book XI.15). In book VII, Lucius sums fortune as a *woman*, a *she/her*, that “attributes to [us] various - or rather, contrary - reputations, so that both the bad man glories in the good man’s fame and, au contraire, the most innocent man is entangled in hateful rumor” (Winkler 107). Winkler acknowledges in his turn the role of Fortuna as “the ultimate director of action” (107). Most importantly, Winkler sets a perspective that takes from Lucius his centrality and assign to Fortuna the “responsibility for the amazing concatenation of events, making Lucius a correspondingly passive pawn” (108).

Yet, other than Fortuna, what remains interesting about Apuleius’ characters is also their attire, looks and clothes, and how they are being portrayed and presented - knowing the fact that the whole narrative was primarily based on the change of Lucius’ attire and form from a human to an ass. It seems that there is a strong correlation between the characters’ clothes and, not only their financial statuses, but also their morals and values. One aspect of it is how, previously mentioned, the clothes were exchanged by women and men who wanted to identify differently. Hence, this shows how Apuleius linked together people’s attires and how they wanted to be portrayed, seen or even identified. Another example shows how the characters’ clothes reveal a person’s culture as how Milo understood Lucius to be a “cultured fellow” just based upon “his clothes and

manners” (Book I.20). In addition, Milo says to Lucius “in itself your attractive personal appearance and your quite virginal modesty would lead me to conjecture, and quite rightly, that you come of a noble family” (Book I.24). Hence, Milo assumed Lucius’ culture, nobility and characteristic traits just from his appearance. Just as how Lucius has detected the status of the woman walking the streets just from the “gold entwined in her jewelry and woven in her clothes” (Book II.2). A similar example is stated when in Book II, Lucius demonstrates the importance of a woman’s hair wherein “no matter how finely attired she may be when she steps out in her gold, robes, jewels, and all her other finery, unless she has embellished her hair she cannot be called well-dressed” (Book II.9). Hence, the characters in Apuleius’ story present a plethora of perspectives that can be studied, yet, the most important feature these characters seem to have is how they serve the story of Lucius, and how they seem to shed light on what is to happen next in his journey. According to Abu Al Eid Doudou, *The Golden Ass* is based on Apuleius’ own experiences that were added which makes this frame story - contrary to the embedded tales - more personal than cultural (20). Hence, the display of characters in the story remain proof of how Apuleius has merged together what is cultural and what is personal and autobiographical, and how he has managed to let the cultural aspects embedded in the traits of the characters unfold and, in consequence, serve what is personal - the journey of Lucius. This is where the originality of Apuleius resides. Frangoulidis acknowledges that Apuleius has succeeded in moving beyond the what belongs to the “Milesian tradition” and went beyond the borders of the genre by “placing greater emphasis on Lucius’ sufferings as a result of his involvement with Photis and witchcraft, and in adding the benefits he receives from Isis” (13). Hence, Apuleius, through the different elements

that have constituted his narrative, went beyond what was culturally known and traditional, he rather chose Lucius and his frame story as a way through and then out of the borders of the “erotic and titillating” Milesian traditions.

G. Messages, Morals and Didactic Pursuits?

Getting to this particular section while studying *The Golden Ass* is inevitable. Through what was perviously portrayed, culture has been intricately linked to what Apuleius has presented, particularly in the embedded stories, for the frame story of Lucius does have a moralistic asset yet it seems to have more autobiographical nuances to it rather than cultural or traditional. Yet, it is of utmost necessity for me to address how Apuleius not only takes characters, techniques, particular language and words, style and examples, themes and motifs from culture, but he also gives back to it, creating, thus, a dynamic relationship that resembles the one established between the embedded tales and the frame tale. Numerous are the messages that Apuleius attempts to deliver. Whether through the tales embeddedly narrated or the frame tale of Lucius itself, both approaches have an overarching didactic pursuit. Starting from within the text, Apuleius reflects on the moralistic judgements and cultural approaches prevalent during his time, he alludes to these morals through the sequence of events that take place in the narrative and that happen to and with his characters - whether Lucius or any other character in the story. Going back to the first embedded tale, it is revealed that Socrates deserves his punishment and doom just because he “preferred the pleasures of Venus and a leathery old whore to [his] own hearth and children” (Book I.3). This example consequently asserts that following carnal desires and abandoning ones home was something frowned upon,

deserving of a punishment like the one Socrates faced. Another quote in Book VII transmits a similar sense of moralistic judgements and consequences when Apuleius was describing Plotina:

“Yet this age was not so barren of virtue that it did not display noble examples. Mothers accompanied their children in flight; wives followed their husbands into exile; relatives displayed courage, sons-in-law firmness, slaves a fidelity which defied even torture.” (Book VII.10)

Such instances are numerous within the book which come as a reflection to the heuristic and moralistic approach adopted by Apuleius as a way of making his messages be heard. Such examples assert what Frangoulidis and other scholars explain in regards to this: “in the *Metamorphoses* the author goes beyond [the sexuality of the ass fits well with the exclusively Milesian character of the narrative] to multiply the misfortunes suffered by the poor beast, and thus bring out the didactic aspect of his narrative” (29). Hence, the examples cited alongside numerous others particularly shed light on the Apuleiusian moralizing effect. In *Framing the ass book: “Constructing Apuleius: The Emerge of a Literary Artist”*, Harrison goes back to an eighteenth century scholar, Huet, who matter of fact does over-centralize the importance of the moral impact of *The Golden Ass*, but rightfully and factually claims how the “Literary entertainment and pleasant style” presented in “a Lucretian-style argument” seem to show how, indeed “literary honey is needed to sweeten the moral cup owing to human pride” (19). Hence, it shows how the narrative techniques, the style, the characters, the themes often inspired and taken from the cultural milieus were needed in order to convert an overarching moralistic and

culture purpose. Once again, Harrison comes to the rescue by this following claim that summarizes Apuleius' didactic pursuit:

“ to publish for sheer entertainment a lengthy work of fiction in the form of dramatically spun-out witch stories, fairy tales and tales of sensational or scandalous adventure, all of which types of prose-narrative were looked upon with disdain by his contemporaries as trivial old wives' tales, or tales fit only to be told on the street corner, was something that Apuleius really wanted to do, but did not dare to do, without qualifying his work in such a way that would leave the impression that he had, after all, something of serious importance to convey by it, which was instructive, and high-minded, and thereby worthy of an educated writer.” (26).

Hence, through the elements of the narrative, and particularly the story of the metamorphoses of Lucius, Apuleius succeeded in not only giving back moralistic nuances to culture, but to move even beyond it and settle among the current discourse. Apuleius' narrative serves as a “philosophically sensitive comedy about religious convictions”, which consequently opens up existential and even cosmic questions (Carver 4, protean ass). In the preface of *Auctor and Actor: A Narratological Reading of Apuleius' The Golden Ass*, Winkler admits that the journey of Lucius and his devotion to goddess Isis have created an experience “that would have a central place in the conflict of Western religious and political ideologies” (viii). What was previously said encompasses a broader scope of study that goes beyond the frames of this current study and which might form a solid ground to continue what has been discussed so far.

The cultural effect on Apuleius' literary narrative is limited to the content, the elements and devices that constitute it: the themes, the messages communicated, the

choice of characters, the language chosen, yet not the frame narrative form and structure. The originality of Apuleius arises through this particular notion of bringing the framing-embedding structure to the Milesian tale; to the story of Lucius. Apuleius has been regarded as a “late and non-canonical writer of barbarous style”, particularly because of his originality which is translated in what he has accomplished “in a genre which was barely intellectually respectable” (Harrison 23). On top of that, all the aforementioned devices that are heavily culturally driven, are in fact marked by personal imprints of Apuleius. Hence, an additional focus on the personal experiences of Apuleius is added to the cultural aspect of his narrative. What I aimed to prove in this chapter is that culture has had a central effect on *The Golden Ass*, yet, when it comes to the framing-embedding structure, Apuleius has chosen a non-traditional approach: Apuleius has created from what was culturally prevalent an unorthodox literary masterpiece.

This study has shown how the themes or tropes adopted, the language and style, the narrative techniques, the choice of characters; all these devices fit and serve particular purposes in the frame narrative structure of Apuleius’ *The Golden Ass*. All these elements are intricately linked to the cultural milieu and context and to how they remain a reflection of the personal experiences of Apuleius. Yet, most importantly, these elements which reflect aspects of Apuleius’ culture remain intricately linked to the framing-embedding structure adopted which in itself emerges as a rather peculiar or unfamiliar device in Apuleius’ cultural context. Hence, an interesting union is set between what is cultural and what is unorthodox, between the content and the form, wherein both feed into one another and become strongly interconnected despite having one derive from and one veer off the cultural milieu and context.

Finally, in this section I want to go back to the start, to where the story of Lucius has started. I want to address the framing-embedding structure adopted by Apuleius and how this structure swerved of what was prevalent as I conclude this chapter. Frangoulidis has shown that Apuleius' *Metamorphoses* stands from all the different previous versions such as The *Onos* or even *The Metamorphoses* of Lucius from Patras through how "Apuleius expands the narrative outline of Lucius' adventures, as presented in the *Onos*, by inserting a considerable number of episodes and embedded tales, all of which may be attributed to authorial originality" (Frangoulidis 15). Similarly, Abu Al Eid Doudou, with his lengthy introduction, considers Apuleius' creation of a new literary genre "نوعاً أدبياً جديداً", which includes a series of tales under one broad story (7). The core difference between Apuleius' text and the *Onos*, thus, is the the series of tales that were inserted in *The Golden Ass* which are not found in the *Onos*, in addition to Apuleius' personal experiences which he has "thrown upon" Lucius (Al Eid Doudou 20). This claim follows his claim on how both both texts derivate from a third text the *Metamorphoses* by Lucius from Patras, and this discovery was established by the Byzantine scholar Photius who is believed to have read all three texts (21).

Hence, by the addition of the various tales and the incorporation of his personal experiences, Apuleius' text seem to veer off what was offered and has created a new genre that does not resemble what was culturally prevalent. On a final note, I want to reassert my claim by confirming what Edward John Kenney, a British Latinist and professor, who, in his his introduction of the Penguin edition of *The Golden Ass*, declares that Apuleius touches upon his culture wherein the reader of Apuleius becomes "in contact with a late flowering of a tradition of free-flowing discourse that goes back to the very beginnings

of Latin culture” (25). Yet, he continues on to reveal the originality of Apuleius when it comes to the insertion of Apuleius’ personal experiences as well as the addition of the different tales within it:

There is no solid reason to withhold from our author the credit of originality as regards the way in which he chose to round off his book. Whether the result of combining this and the other disparate elements – the cautionary tales and Milesian stories, Cupid and Psyche, and the rest – in the framework of the ass-narrative can be considered successful is another matter.” (E. J. Kenney 27)

CHAPTER III

THE HUNDRED AND ONE NIGHTS: THE EMBEDDED TALES AND THE FRAME TALE

The second chapter will focus on the book of *Mi'at laylah wa-laylah* or *One Hundred and One Nights*, henceforth referred to as *The 101 Nights*. I will present a detailed analysis of what constitutes the framing-embedding nature of the book of *The 101 Nights*. The elements or devices that constitute this narrative, which will be addressed in this chapter, are primarily related to the narrative techniques, the style, the themes and motifs, the choice of characters and consequently the different narrators, the peculiar language adopted as well as the presence of lessons and morals that are communicated - in a covert way.

Yet, unlike what was discussed in the first chapter on culture and traditions, I believe this whole discussion emerges can be quite challenging when it comes to *The 101 Nights*. This chapter will not be limited to the much debated questions of origin, nor the overlapping of *The 101 Nights* with *The 1001 Nights*. The focus will be set on the role the aforementioned devices play in the structure of the book itself. Additionally, I will reveal how these elements relate to the form and content of the text, and attempt to shed light on with the hope of suggesting a route back to its cultural context and milieu. In this study I refer to Bruce Fudge's English translation that is accompanied by the arabic text that uses Manuscript "A", which is also the one adopted by Mahmud Tarshunah¹².

¹²The seven manuscript are listed in detail in "A Note on the Text" which figures in the English translation of *The 101 Nights* by Bruce Fudge (p. xxx - xxxii).

Numerous are the scholars that assume an absence of connection or even homogeneity between the inset tales and the frame tale in *The 101 Nights*. Starting with Chraibi and Marzolph, in “The Hundred and One Nights: a recently discovered old manuscript”, both scholars argue that there is no relation established between the frame story of Shahrazad and the tales that she narrates in *The 101 Nights*. According to them, Shahrazad is only a narrator who simply narrates “attractive and instructive stories in order to entertain the king and arouse his curiosity so that she may live on to the following night” (Chraibi & Marzolph 302). What Chraibi and Marzolph described as a lack of homogeneity between the frame tale and the embedded tales is partially correct and cannot be negated or neglected. When it comes to the stories and how they are placed within the work, there is a sense of confusion or a questioning in terms of why these stories were added the way they are. Fudge asserts that the tales often bring confusion not only because of how some of the tales start in one direction, then veer into another one without any explanation, but also because of the the confusion when it comes to the names, the changes in narrative voices, and particularly the confused geography (xxvi). However, as I have discussed the absence of homogeneity or link between the embedded tales themselves and between the embedded tales and the frame tale, as well as the sense of confusion that seems to prevail, I want to dedicate this chapter to portray a different approach.

Before I start with establishing the embedding-framing nature of the text and portray how the different devices serve the frame narrative structure of this text, I would like to note that this study does not include, and can not be included in the vast repertoire of research and studies dedicated to *The 1001 Nights*. In Bruce Fudge’s words “On the

face of it, *A Hundred and One Nights* may appear merely a condensed version of the *Thousand and One Nights*. Beyond the shared form and genre, though, the two works are quite distinct. *A Hundred and One Nights* is a short work with a very pronounced character” (xv).

A. Narrative Techniques and Style

This first section will focus on the different narrative techniques and the style adopted in *The 101 Nights*: a text with an embedding-framing structure: frame tale and embedded tales. In her article entitled “Re/Writing the Orient: Ludovico Ariosto’s Orlando Furioso, the Thousand and One Nights, and the Hundred and One Nights”, Mallette sums up the “birth” of *The 101 Nights*. She claims that *The Nights* are characterized by polygenesis, possessing “multiple births across a multitude of cultural boundaries” and “across the divide between the Arab world and the West” (12).

The question regarding the origins of *The 101 Nights* is a valid debate that is still ongoing. According to Robert Irwin in his foreword to the English translation of *The 101 Nights*, the collection of the tales were discovered and acquired through a series of North African manuscripts that date back to the Tenth century or even earlier (ix). On the contrary, in his introduction to *The 101 Nights*, Fudge claims that all the manuscripts date to the the late eighteenth or even nineteenth century, only the one at Agha Khan is older, but does not go back to “the seventh/thirteenth century as has been suggested” (xxii). There are seven different manuscripts of *The 101 Nights*. Yet, with these seven manuscripts numerous claims were made on the origins of *The 101 Nights*. For some scholars, this narrative is of Maghrebi origins and that’s because of the language of all

the manuscripts¹³. However, some scholars such as Fudge, refute this claim because the Maghrebi dialect does “creep into a tradition over time, but is not definitive indication of the collection’s regional origins” (Fudge xxii). In his article “Tales of Dreaming Men”, Paulo Lemos Horta, a scholar of world literature, explains how scholars tend to attribute the origins of *The 101 Nights* according to the different linguistic characteristics as well as the content and other different elements that constitute the discovered manuscripts (211). He then adds that the scholars tend to agree that *The 101 Nights* are “conceived in the western part of the Muslim world, North Africa, or even Spain” (212)¹⁴. There are also other scholars who suggest that *The 101 Nights* originate from places like Syria, Iraq and even Egypt (Fudge xxi). In their article entitled “The Hundred and One Nights: A Recently discovered Old Manuscript”, Marzolph and Chraibi explain that in the year 2005, a new manuscript of *The 101 Nights* was acquired by the Agha Khan Museum which was attached with another text entitled *Book of Geography* compiled by Muhammad b. Abu Bakr azzuhri (299). Andalusian origins of *The 101 Nights* were also debated among scholars such as Claudia Ott, who discovered the manuscript of the Agha Khan Museum and who translated *The 101 Nights* to German. In one of her interviews, when asked if *The 101 Nights* was produced in “the occident of the orient”, Ott answers that the manuscript was found in Andalusia, Spain. She assumes that it was written in Andalusia, but she adds that it might of been produced in North Africa as well, and dates

¹³There are seven manuscripts which are all in Maghribi scripts, and five out of these seven manuscripts contain the same sixteen tales which figure in identical order, starting with the frame story, The Young Merchant Muḥammad ibn ‘Abd Allāh al-Qayrawānī, Najm al-dīyā’, The Camphor Island, Zāfir ibn Lāḥiq, The Vizier and His Son, Sulaymān ibn ‘Abd al-Malik, Maslamah ibn ‘Abd al-Malik, Gharībat al-ḥusn, The Young Egyptian and His Wife, The King and His Three Sons, The Young Man with the Necklaces, The Four Companions, The Seven Viziers, The King and the Serpent, and The Ebony Horse. (Fudge xxix)

¹⁴see Irwin 91–92; Marzolph and Chraībi 303; Ott (interview: 101 Arabian Nights: Erotic and existential”

back to the first half of the thirteenth century. Yet, according to Amir Lerner, other researchers “doubt this early dating” but they do still agree that the manuscript is perhaps the “oldest of all extant manuscripts of the collection” (346)¹⁵.

The mention of *The 1001 Nights* seem inevitable in this current study. Consequently, I dedicated this short section to address such recurrent notions and to clarify the major differences between the two narratives. Despite the fact that scholars have started studying *The 101 Nights* almost 150 years ago, In contrast to *The 1001 Nights*, it has not received much attention and “remained largely unknown among aficionados of folktales and legends worldwide” (Lerner 459). *The 101 Nights* like *The 1001 Night* “share essentially the same frame story” (Fudge xiv), except that in *The 101 Nights* starts before Shahrazad with Shaykh Fihras, a philosopher who was called out to the court of King Darim to narrate the tales of *The 101 Nights*. Additionally, both texts recount tales that are taken from the same milieu of medieval Arabic narratives (Fudge xiv). Most importantly both works are “intended for entertainment and [are] excluded from the canon of “classical” or learned literature of the court and the scholars” (xiv). Out of the seventeen tales found in *The 101 Nights*, there are several ones that are shared with *The 1001 Nights*: particularly the stories of “The Ebony Horse” and “The Prince and the Seven Viziers” (Fudge xxi). Additionally, there are other tales that share similar elements, characters, themes or even endings with the ones in *The 1001 Nights* (Fudge xxi). However, one rather interesting aspect to consider is the current, ongoing debate on the possibility of having *The 101 Nights* dating earlier than *The 1001 Nights*. For instance,

¹⁵See Marzolph and Chraïbi, “The Hundred and One Nights”, p. 307-310; Horta, “Beautiful Men”, p. 195; Fudge, *A Hundred and One Nights*, p. xxx-xxxiii.

Robert Irwin refuses to categorize *The 101 Nights* as the little brother of *The 1001 Nights*. He claims that there are mainly two reasons as to why *The 101 Nights* is actually the older sibling compared to Antoine Galland's version of *The 1001 Nights* (x), and that the frame story of *The 101 Nights* is older than *The 1001 Nights*. The first reason is the resemblance of the frame story to the supposed Chinese/Sanskrit original, the second reason is the theme of the beauty contest which "provides a much stronger motivation for setting the story in motion" (xxi). Similarly, several scholars including Fudge acknowledge that the earliest manuscript of *The 1001 Nights* contains only 282 nights, and it was Antoine Galland's version that rendered the work "complete" in the late eighteenth or early nineteenth centuries (xix). Additionally, Marzolph and Chraïbi address this particulate issue in their article, they claim that "considering the fact that the oldest unambiguously dated manuscript of the *Hundred and One Nights* known so far dates from 1190/1776, and that the oldest preserved manuscript of the *Thousand and One Nights* dates from the fifteenth century, the recently discovery manuscript deserves particular attention" (299). On the contrary, Lerner claims that there is no actual sources that assert the claim of the previous scholars "who have argued that the collection existed in the tenth century, or even earlier" (458). He continues on that besides the short mention by Kātib Čelebi, the Turkish bibliographer Muřafā b. 'Abd Allāh Ḥājjī Khalīfa (d. 1657), there is no mention of the collection in other medieval sources (459). However, in order to conclude this section of the debate in what current information we have, I like to subscribe to how Fudge has seen to this debate by claiming that "the first part of its frame tale is almost certainly of great antiquity as Cosquin claimed. However, the versions that we possess to

date are probably not so ancient: they share a suspicious number of motifs with later recensions of the the *Alf laylah* frame” (xxiii).

When it comes to the narrative techniques and devices adopted in *The 101 Nights*, it is important to mention the notion of authorship. Marzolph and Chraibi both agree that “the specific relation between the embedding frame narrative and the early embedded tales suggests the conscious design of an author” (302). Additionally, in his article “Popular Andalusí Literature and Castilian Fiction: Ziyad Ibn ‘Amir Al-Kinani, 101 Nights, and Caballero Zifar”, David Wacks addresses the authorship of *The 101 Nights* under the notion of a compiler who “was drawing on a live, multi-lingual storytelling performance tradition in which performers told tales alternately in Andalusí Arabic or in Castilian, and likely at some times some combination of both” (18). In his introduction to *The 101 Nights*, Bruce Fudge claims that the motif of repetition in the narrative “conveys a sense of an author or compiler with limited resources reworking the same material to fashion are and different narratives” (xvi). However, like the origins of *The 101 Nights*, the subject of its authorship remains a difficult subject that would need further research. Yet, going back to the style of *The 101 Nights*, I would like to start with addressing the power this narrative holds in the practice of storytelling. Even Fudge acknowledges this power held by the narrative wherein, according to him, both the king in the tale and the reader remain captivated by the tales narrated “which prove a testament of the power of narrative and storytelling” (xiv). But, surely, the power of storytelling is not limited to captivating the interest of the king, let alone the reader, for a different purpose emerges: storytelling saves lives. On one hand, Fudge tends to address this notion wherein he claims that the tales of *The 101 Nights* tend to explore themes of “power,

justice, and fidelity” and not to mention “the importance of narration, as storytelling frequently saves lives in these tales” (xv). On recurrent instances within the narrative, a whether on the level of the frame tale itself or the embedded tales, narration does save lives. However, Fudge then contradicted what he previously said and saw that “Shahrazād has no pretensions of saving her community or reforming the king, and the implicit invitation to reflect on moral issues is absent. She tells her tales merely to save her own life (and that of her sister)” (xvi). I would like to contradict what Fudge has advanced, for, first of all, he had two opposite claims on the matter and, second of all, the saving power of narration is not only found on the level of Shahrazad but also in other instances in the embedded tales that I will further address.

Before addressing the parallelism, or sometimes lack of, between the frame tale of Shahrazad and the embedded tales. I will present in this section a detailed analysis of the narrative devices and the style adopted within the embedded tales. Starting with the different tales scattered in the narrative, one very important aspect to consider is: all the stories end well, and it seems that the hardships or challenges faced by the characters before the happy endings always come one after the other. Fudge claims that whether the prominent theme within the story is romance or adventure there is one particular link that brings all the stories together “all the stories end well, with the hero wealthy and happily united with a suitable partner” (xxiv). Hence, a parallelism is detected when it comes to the unfolding of the stories narrated. Irwin acknowledges this by explaining how there is a “paratactic style of storytelling” wherein multiple storylines and parallel developments are eschewed” (xi). He further asserts the notion previously mentioned that the second danger only comes after the first challenge has been resolved (xi). This is not the only

pattern detected in the embedded tales of *The 101 Nights*, for another aspect emerges: the ending is foretold before it actually happens. Whether the frame story of Shahrazad or the embedded tales, the ending is already known. For instance right at the beginning of the text that is what is found:

“And thus every night, she told her stories, until a hundred and one nights had passed and Dīnārzād had become pregnant by the king. He assured both of them of their safety and security, and Shahrazād ceased to come to him. (23)

Bruce further adds that nothing is really “superficial” or wasted in this narrative for it turns out that “all we have [here] are absolutely essential elements of the tales” (xvi), and according to him this is “the primary quality” of *The 101 Nights*. Hence, in addition to Shahrazad’s narrative techniques and the different elements that constitute the tales in this narrative, a rather prominent aspect of suspense emerges. Additionally, Bruce then acknowledges that, not only all the elements found in the narrative are important, but he also claims that there is a pleasure that is created out of these happy endings as well as the fast-paced actions within the text (xxvi). The happy ending is not the only commonality among the tales of *The 101 Nights*. Fudge talks about three main components that constitute the narrative of the embedded tales (xxiv). Starting with the “romance element” wherein all the stories figure elements of love and the protagonist always ends up living happily with their beloved. The second element is the “adventure element”; most of the tales revolve around particular adventures that need to be lived by the heroes of the tales: the hero faces monsters, jinns, cannibalistic women, demons, stormy seas, among others. Finally, there is the “element of cleverness” that the protagonist resorts to in order to be able to achieve their goal. However, what I would

like to add, t what Fudge seems to have overlooked, is that the three main components adopted to the tales narrated by Shahrazad, are significant to Shahrazad's frame story. In the frame story of *The 101 Nights*, like in its embedded tales, there are elements of romance, adventure and cleverness. Starting with the element of romance; that tends to veer sometimes towards the involvement of more than two elements and by that I acknowledge the possibility of the involvement of both sisters, Shahrazad and Dinarzad, with the king: wherein even Shahrazad tells her father to inform the king that "the girls enjoy each other's company, so take both of them" (21). This rather shocking approach is not limited to Shahrazad and Dinarzad within the story of it also takes place in the story of Gharibat al-Husn and the young Egyptian whom "drunkenness got the better of them, and the young Cairene went to bed with Gharibat al-Husn and Rim al-Qusur, the sister of al-Mu'tasim, all of them having had their fill of wine" (171). In addition, the element of adventure and suspense remains the driving force behind the frame story of Shahrazad who needs to face her king and escape her death and the death of her sister. As for the elements of cleverness, the book of *The 101 Nights* serves as a proof enough of the cleverness and astuteness of the protagonist - Shahrazad- who has used storytelling to escape her death, and find her and her sister's happy endings. Not is much known about the frame tale of Shahrazad, Dinarzad and the king except these following sentences that are repeated more than fifty times "And here the dawn reached Shahrazād so she ceased to speak. Shahrazād said: And at that, my master", and one instance where Dinarzad appeared and told her sister "Shahrazad, my sister, won't you tell His Majesty another of your excellent stories?" (151), and another instance where the king himself spoke "Then the King said, it's all over unless you tell me more of your amazing stories" (183). But

the three components mentioned are prominently reflected in this frame story as shown before.

Two constitutional aspects of *The 101 Nights* are parallelism and repetition. In this section I will attempt to show how both notions intricately link not only the embedded tales together, but also Shahrazad's frame tale and the tales she narrates. These two aspects are not limited to the narrative techniques and devices adopted. Repetitions and parallelism will also be detected on different scales such as in the themes, motifs, and choices of characters in the narrative. Numerous are the themes and motifs that were recurrent and repeated in the different embedded tales of *The 101 Nights*. Starting with the style and narrative techniques, a lot of the sentences and the vocabulary used for description in the tales are the same and recurrent in more than one tale. For instance, the simple sentence that describes the morning "When the blessed morning came" figures in more than eleven tales¹⁶. The sentence "Full moon at night or a gazelle in flight" was used to describe a woman or multiple women in five different tales¹⁷. Additionally, whenever the hero finds himself wondering, he was described "wandering like an ostrich" which was used in two different tales¹⁸. As for the description a knight or warrior coming from afar; the sentence "cloud of dust on horizon" would be used, which has figured in five tales¹⁹. Similar lines of poetry "A lonely stranger recalls and remembers; there's fire in his heart like the hottest of embers. If my Lord has decreed my isolation then let me be patient in tribulation" were used in two different tales²⁰. The torment endured by the hero

¹⁶ See 1.39, 2.4, 2.17, 5.16, 6.2, 11.4, 12.7, 13.18, 15.10, 16.28, 17.25, 18.5.

¹⁷ See 4.14, 7.11, 9.1, 12.4, 16.24

¹⁸ See 5.2, 8.2.

¹⁹ See 3.3, 41, 5.8, 7.1, 15.5

²⁰ See "The Story of the Young Merchant" and "The Story of Najm al-Diyā' ibn Mudīr al-Mulk

was described in three different tales as "seven seas could not put out the fire that burned in his heart"²¹. References to religion and God also appear in a couple of sentences that were repeated throughout the tales such as "God is Wise and All-knowing of the unknown" which figured in the first and second tales, "Master of the Unknown does as He wills" which figured in tales nine and tale fifteen, "May God show them mercy" was repeated in five different tales. Finally, one rather striking sentence that was repeated numerous times within the fourth and the fifth tales in order to describe gates, castles and vestments was "defied description". Numerous repetitions figure in the tales. Even Fudge admits that "the reader cannot fail to notice the repetition of motifs, both within individual tales and throughout the collection itself" (xvi).

However, these repetitions do not only appear on the level of the sentences used in order to describe the beauty of women, or the appearance of a knight, or the power of God; the repetitions are also detected in the choices of motifs and themes that in the tales. In addition to romance, adventure and cleverness, other themes and motifs emerge and are repeated and paralleled in multiple tales. For instance, starting with the journeys that the hero embarks on, almost every story contains the theme of departure on a journey.²² Another prominent theme is the festivals that take place in the first, second and sixteenth tales, "Feast of Joy" and the "Feat of the Autumnal Equinox". The presence of far away islands that appear out of nowhere, the distance voices that echo throughout the tales, the heroes that get lost, the theme of forgetfulness wherein the protagonist has to go back home to get what was forgotten, all these themes exist in multiple tales. Additionally, one

²¹ See 2.17, 7.5, 9.2

²² See 2.1, 3.7, 9.9, 11, 15, 16.4.

very important and striking theme that recurs in six tales, is the presence of strong female warriors²³ who were able to overcome their adversaries and succeeded in staying undercover and hidden up until they fought with the hero of the story. Similarly, the women in the story were also involved in abductions, disappearances and attacks in almost all of the tales, only to be later on found and saved by the heroes. Similarly, battle scenes, dead bodies, and writings on tombs also figured in four tales. Finally, one important, recurrent theme within the tales narrated by Shahrazad was the sexual desires that arose among the heroes and were consequently satisfied when their beloveds were found. And the theme of virginity remains prominent in more than three tales: “The story of the Vizier and his Son,” “The Tale of the Ebony Horse,” and “The Story of the King and the Gazelle”. Moreover, it is important to mention that repetitions do not occur across the embedded tales, but also within the scope of one single tale. For instance, in “The Story of the Young Merchant”, his names ““Muḥammad ibn ‘ Abdallāh al-Qayrawānī” is repeated more than three times, by the same girl, under the same circumstances, and he was repeatedly punished for his lusty behavior towards her. Similarly, in “The Story of Maslamah ibn ‘Abd al-Malik ibn Marwan (God Show Them Mercy)”, the protagonist several times went and came back only to find that their companions were gone. Whether these repetitive instances were unintended or planned is a question that needs further research. However, what is important to acknowledge is that this sense of repetition and parallelism that clearly figures among the embedded tales, does create a sense of unison

²³ See 2.25, 3.11, 5.17, 7.

or even attempt to mend the homogeneity that was claimed to be missing among this narrative.

But before moving on to detail the parallel themes, motifs, characters and notions between the frame tale of Shahrazad and the embedded tales, I would like to share one surprising discovery that can open up doors for future researches and studies. Based upon what was displayed above in terms of repetitions and parallel motifs, events, descriptions, words and sentences; the tales - *generally* - seem to resemble one another. However, the last tale in the collection, “The The Story of the Vizier Ibn Abī l-Qamar and ‘Abd al-Malik ibn Marwān” which only figures in manuscript A, stands as quite different and distinguished from the rest of the tales. Starting with how this tale is introduced, a different introduction is immediately detected. While all the other stories start with “And here the dawn reached Shahrazād so she ceased to speak. Shahrazād said: And at that, my master”, this last tale starts with “Shahrazad said: Mighty monarch, courageous king”. This was the first instance in the narrative where a description of the king of the frame tale was noticed as he was described as mighty and courageous (18.1). Thus, right from the start, a different thread appears. The tale is also distinct in how it unfolds: there are no supernatural elements: jinns, sorcerers, jinxed palaces, and female warriors, there is only a person who is in a crisis and goes back to a friend for help. Unlike the other tales in the collection wherein the twist in the plot and the challenge the hero faces comes as a jinn, a monster, a demon, another king, a ghoul, or an ogress, in this final tale the surprise is in the plot itself and that is how this last tale differs from the rest of the tales that Shahrazad narrates.

Foreshadowing is an important aspect to consider in the narrative techniques of *The 101 Nights*. The first aspect of similarity or parallelism between the embedded tales and the tale of Shahrazad is seen in how the happy ending of the tale is preordained. Fudge describes the end that is given at the beginning as a “surprising” aspect of *The 101 Nights* wherein in both manuscripts (T, B1) “the narrator tells us that [Shahrazad] successfully kept the king’s attention until he, seeing that one of the sisters was pregnant, decided to spare them both” (xxv). He continues on to assert that “many such examples occur throughout the individual tales” (xxv). Hence, the narrative techniques and the approach adopted in the frame tale is reflected, on a larger scale, in the embedded tales. In “The story of the prince and the seven viziers” there is also the mention of the astrologers who can “read lines in the sand” (217). Those astrologers were able to foretell the future of the son wherein he “will have a long life, but when he is twenty years old, a terrible thing will happen to him and you will fear for his life” (219). In addition, there are particular tales that I would like to look into, that not only show parallel motifs and tropes with the frame story, and allude to it, and serve as covert messages that serve the overall purpose of the frame story. Starting with the motif of storytelling, Shahrazad was able to save her life, her sister’s life and other women’s lives by narrating stories to the kings. Yet, she was not the only one. In “The story of the prince and the seven viziers” the slave narrates the stories to the king in order to kill the prince, but each of the seven viziers tell a story to the king in order to save the life of the prince. In addition, in “The story of the four companions” a very important role is shed on the storyteller, one of the four companions - the thief - who awoke the king from his slumber and was asked to “tell [him] a story” (207). Because of his storytelling, the king “could only rule in favor of the

thief” (211). Another example in “The Story of Najm al-Diya Ibn Mudir al-Mulk” shows how the girl saves her life and the life of her lover because she revealed to the demon that only the shepherd came into the palace, and the shepherd “looks after [the demon’s] sheep” and “comes at night to keep [her] company and tell [her] strange and wonderful stories” (69). In addition, in “The Story of Camphor Island”, in these lines, on the tomb of Imlaq, there is sense of warning to the king that Shahrazad is narrating this story to:

I am ‘Imlāq the Younger. I have ruled and I have vanquished; I have given gifts and I have withheld them; I have lived a noble and comfortable life; I have freed slaves and deflowered virgins. All this I did until the Almighty God decreed that my time had come, and look at me now. Let this be a lesson to all who would take heed: Do not be seduced by the world. It will only dupe and deceive you.” (4.2).

Out of the tales mentioned, there is one particular tale that resonates with the frame tale of Shahrazad: the story of Sinbad that figures in “The story of the prince and the seven viziers”. In this tale, not only the power of storytelling is revealed in terms of how a life is saved - the prince’s life and that of Shahrazad and her sister - but also in this tale an overt message is revealed to the king, for Sindibad says “I have been told, Your Majesty, that monarchs are like fire: keep your distance, and you’ll be safe; get close, and you’ll get burned. If a man gets close to a king, he will always fear for his life; if he keeps his distance, he’ll live a pleasant life” (14.9). In his article, “The Golden Rule in *The 101 Nights*’ Version of *The Book of Sindbād*, the Question of Literary Context and a Possible Solution Formulated in Later Arabic Versions”, Lerner reveals that the purpose of this claim uttered by Sindibad can serve a larger impact on the frame story of Shahrazad. According to him Shahrazad brings the death of the slave, she manages to escape her own

death by “brining about the death of another individual” (340). In this instance, the embedded tales and the frame tale in *The 101 Nights* share similarities that might allude to a sense of cohesiveness and continuity in the text. Whether the narrative technique of revealing the happy ending right at the beginning of the tale, or the indicators that figured in the embedded tales on the powerful role of storytelling in saving lives, and the unpleasant ending of whomever betrays the king; the embedded tales seem to serve the frame tale of Shahrazad, even if it were on a minimal scale. I would further like to wrap this discussion - for now - by agreeing with Fudge:

It is hard not to believe that Shahrazād ’s tales contain lessons for the murderous king. These tales ’explorations of power, justice, and fidelity (not to mention the importance of narration, as storytelling frequently saves lives in these tales) add a degree of complexity to the suspense, romance, and humor of the stories themselves. (xv).

Hence, after what has been said, I would refer back to Werner Wolf who presents in his book *Framing Borders in Literature and Other Media*, the two different ways the embedded tales and the frame tale can relate to one another: *mise en abyme* and *mise en cadre*. After the section presented above, I can claim that *The 101 Nights* exemplifies a *mise en abyme* relationship because the embedded stories *do* shed light on the framing and end up reflecting back on the frame tale of Shahrazad. Hence, despite the important presence of the embedded stories in *The 101 Nights*, the previous examples came as a proof on how the role these embedded stories play in regards to the frame tale.

In order to refer back to culture and the narrative techniques and the style of *The 101 Nights*, and despite the difficulty of this subject, I attempted to point out some threads that might serve as starting points to consider. First of all, it is important to mention that

The 101 Nights as a literary text was considered among “Arab literati” as “aesthetically inferior and unworthy of serious attention” as this literary text does not figure in the “high literary tradition” (Fudge xiv). This is what Bruce Fudge saw when it comes to the cultural milieu that *The 101 Nights* came out from. Fudge even asserts that *The 101 Nights* was excluded from “the classical canon” (xv). In addition, Wacks argues that despite the fact that *The 101 Nights* was set at court (in the presence of a king), yet it “was in no way courtly product” (4). He continues on that this literary text rather “reflected the values of mercantile society” (4).

In addition, if we were to agree with Wacks and Ott on the Andalusian context of *The 101 Nights*, it is important to mention that they believe *The 101 Nights* shares several traits with other Andalusī literary texts: Ziyād ibn ‘Amir and *Bayād and Riyad* (2). Wacks then adds that the three texts constitute a small corpus that “challenges some of our assumptions about the Arabic literature of the Peninsula, particularly during the thirteenth century, and also about interactions between medieval Iberian Arabic and Romance narrative practice” (2). Yet, and due to the fact that the origins of the text are debatable still, similar claims might be *speculations* still. Wacks, does however describe some important criteria of what was prevalent in the thirteenth century. He explains that the *sīra* reflects “tales of later heroes of Islamic expansion and their struggles with enemies in the Islamic world, Byzantium, and against the Franks (Latin Crusaders)” (Wacks 15). As Wacks alluded to this, in what follows I will dedicate a rather small part in an attempt to expand on the relation of *The 101 Nights* and religion.

B. Themes and Motifs

The themes and motifs represented in the story are various yet repetitive. The tales narrated by Shahrazad include themes that are recurrent in the different stories such as the presence of warriors, knights, the battles with monsters, the abduction of the hero or his beloved, the presence of romance, the treasures buried deep, the theme of beauty, sexuality, the cunning nature of women, the adventure and the journey. *The 101 Nights* start with the theme of beauty: “Do you know anyone more handsome than me?” (1.2). The motif of beauty contest is what sets the story into motion: the king invites to search for beauty or the most beautiful person in order to hold his annual beauty contest. However, it is not the only instance wherein the search for beauty or the most beautiful person is present throughout the collection. In “The story of Najm al-Ḍiyā’ ibn Mudīr al-Mulk”, the king assembled his people in order to inform them to search for “the most beautiful princess ever created by God” in order to marry her to his son Najm al-Ḍiyā (3.2). In addition, in “The Story of King Sulaymān ibn ‘Abd al-Malik”, Sulaymān was searching for “the most beautiful woman in the world. She’s the daughter of a king, and kept out of sight—so she’s out of reach” (7.3). Similarly, in “The Story of the prince and the Seven Viziers”, the prince claims that he wants to marry and gives the bath keeper a dinar so that he can “bring [him] a beautiful woman” so that he can marry her (14.56). In “The story of the King and the Gazelle”, every single year the demon would come to the island and the people would “put out for him the most beautiful young woman they had” (17.12). Hence, the theme of beauty, beauty contest and the search for a beautiful wife to marry or even a beautiful man is a recurrent theme in the collection.

In his foreword Irwin claims that the emphasis in the stories is on the food and drinks and “sex is brisk, if it happens at all” (xi). The mention of hospitality, tables spread with food and drinks, is a recurrent motif in multiple tales. However, I do not particularly agree with Irwin that sex is brisk in *The 101 Nights* for even if it was implicit, the sexual element in the text is quite prominent and it is alluded to in almost all of the tales. Sex in the tales is not only shown in how the protagonist and their beloved “ate and drank together, and lived their lives in the palace for a long time, eating and drinking to [their] heart’s content” (3.13). There are multiple other sexual references within the stories that do not necessarily include a “happy ever after” ending. For instance, sexual violation, threats and rape happen in more than one tale in the collection. In “The Story of the Young Man and the Necklaces”, a black slave dragged the girl into a room he “threw her to the floor, and pinned her down, sitting on top of her chest”, he even threatened her that she “doesn’t let [him] take [her]” she won’t live to see the light of the day (12.4). However, the slave did not succeed in raping the girl for the young man came and saved her. Another violent scene is described when in the story entitled “The Wiles of the Old Woman”, the old woman drags an innocent woman to a man who “approach her, clasped her in his arms, and had his way with her”, the woman was even “too embarrassed to scream and so stayed silent until he has finished” (14.78). An even more violent scene is narrated in the tale of “The Elephant” wherein a scene of collective tale is presented: the wife of a farmer went one day to bring him food when on her way thieves abducted her and took her to a place where “they enjoyed her one after the other” (14.91). This gory scene is also followed by other scenes where the protagonist sleeps with a sleeping virgin, specifically in “The Story of the King and the Serpent”, the young man taken by his desire, embraced the

sleeping girl but “she was in such a deep sleep that she felt nothing” (15.32). The young men then took her and when he found that she was a virgin “an unbroken filly, an unpierced pearl”, deflowered her, satisfied all his desires while she was asleep still. Hence, the motif of sex in *The 101 Nights* is not absent, and it is definitely not joyous and cheerful in all of the tales. When it comes to women, a very obvious focus is set on their sexuality - particularly their promiscuity. In “Re/Writing the Orient: Ludovico Ariosto’s Orlando Furioso, the Thousand and One Nights, and the Hundred and One Nights”, Amanda Bataresh claims that the “cunning of women” is a very recurrent motif in *The 101 Nights* (8). She adds that this motif is often succeeded by unexpected discoveries of adultery, treachery, concealment, and infidelity (Bataresh 9). Similarly, Fudge explains that whether Shahrazad or other characters in the tales she narrates, the women are assumed to possess “an insatiable heterosexual desire that will cause them to betray their menfolk at any opportunity” (xxv). Right from the start, the promiscuity of women is shown in the characters of the queen who betrays the king with his slave and the wife of Zahr al-basātīn who was found next to a black man. In this story, even poetry is used to reveal the vile nature of women²⁴.

²⁴ See 1.21,
Woman, even if described as chaste—
who tested by life’s affairs does not understand?—

Is meat that hungry dogs circle round,
so guard her, or she will go from hand to hand.

Today her secret and her story belong to you, tomorrow another will have her mouth and bond.

She is like a house you live in; you never know
who’ll live there next, when empty it’s left to stand.

Yet, this theme moves from the frame tale to the embedded tales where we are presented with more examples of promiscuous women. Women were described as enchantresses, sirens, vile, promiscuous and treacherous. In addition, in “The story of King Sulayman ibn ‘Abd al-Malik”, the mistress of the house tells Sulaymān “be patient and you will see what can be born of women” (7.25), which reinforces the strength of women that is portrayed in the tales. There is one particular tale that focuses with great intensity on the vile nature of women: “The Story of the prince and the seven viziers”. Every single one of the tales narrated by the viziers aims to prove women’s ability to mobilize opportunities to their service and their goals. For instance, in the story of “The Husband and the Parrot”, the woman was introduced as a promiscuous wife that cheats on her husband. Even one of the viziers claim that he is narrating the story to the king so that he “would know that the wiles of women are great” (14.26). In addition, in another story there is a reference to a wife who entreats the man to sleep with her because her “husband has not touched [her] for years” (14.99). There is also one instance in this tale; in the tale of “The Three Wishes” wherein the woman requests for her husband to wish for more penises (14.95). Numerous examples in the narrative attempt to attribute this aspect to the women. However, it is important to mention that lust and desire do not only figure among women but also among men, who were often driven to impulsively act based upon their lust and sexual desires. The men are often portrayed lusty and full of desire to the point where they even engage in sexual acts with women who are asleep, with married women, and with jinns. In some tales the man force the women to sleep with them, in other tales the protagonist is punished for his lust and desires. There are other times where the men end up having sex with more than one woman such as “The

story of Gharibat al-Husn and the Young Egyptian” (9.18). A similar example is in “The Story of the king and the gazelle” wherein after being bored from ruling, the tale ends with the king going back to his own country with his wives. Hence, the motif of sex, adultery, treachery, desire and lust are quite prominent in *The 101 Nights*. A final note is how it remains interesting to see the contrast in *The 101 Nights* wherein on one hand women are presented as promiscuous, insatiable and treacherous, and on the other hand, there are women who lead wars, defend themselves and their castles and are presented as honorable and strong warriors and faithful princesses and wives.

C. Characters

The women in the text are portrayed through various lens. Despite them being promiscuous and treacherous in some of the tales, oftentimes they are found dressed up as men, as knights, ready to fight and protect themselves. It seems as if there is an obsession with women who are introduced as warriors only to be discovered later on that they are women. “The Story of the Young Merchant” reveals a naked girl that reveals herself later on to be a warrior, as well as a group of forty girls that were in fact “girls dressed as warriors” and their hair and locks “like camels’ tails” exposed them (2.24). Similarly, in “ The story of Najm al-Ḍiyā’ ibn Mudīr al-Mulk,” eighteen locks escaped the turban so that the hero discovered that the horseman was actually a girl (3.11). Numerous other examples present the women as warriors within the stories.²⁵ However there are characters in the narrative that do the opposite: men dress up in the clothes of women. In “The story of the Hundred and One Nights”, the king asked from eunuchs to

²⁵ See 5.17, 7.33.

wear “clothes of silk brocade and purple belts adorned with pearls and coral” and to hold in their hands “fly-whisks and fans” (1.23). In “ The story of Gharibat al-Husn and the Young Egyptian,” the young man was given “some women’s clothing” and he had to go out disguised as a woman (9.11).

The presence of the magical or supernatural characters is also a very important aspect to consider in this study. In all the embedded tales, characters of the supernatural world appear, some of them as good characters, some of them as evil characters who want to challenge the protagonist. However, there is an exception: the final tale. In the frame tale of Shahrazad and in the final tale there is no presence of supernatural characters. In the other stories, there are monsters, jinns, half-jinns, sorcerers, demons, statues that wail, ghouls, ogres and ogress. For instance, in “The story of the prince and the seven viziers”, the jinn “felt sympathy” towards the king’s son and decided to help him get his beloved back (14.5). However, in other stories such as “The Story of Njm al-Ḍiyā’ ibn Mudīr al-Mulk”, the demon who lives in the valley of Jinn causes so many problems and creates challenges that the hero was forced to overcome.

Other characters that were prominent in the narrative and that figured in more than one tale: the presence of old men, as mature, sage and ready to give advice. Starting with Shaykh Fihras who narrates the story of Shahrazad, we discover the presence of old men at the court of the king. Similarly, in The story of the Hundred and One Nights, it was the elderly man of state who revealed to his majesty the king that there is a young man in the city of Khorasan who is more handsome than the king (1.3). This elderly man was also courageous enough to advise the king to “beware of being too self-satisfied” (1.3). Similarly, in “The story of Najm al-Diya Ibn Mudir al-Mulk”, there was an old man who

turns out to have traveled all around the world, and was acquainted with everything (3.2). In “The Story of the Young Merchant”, it was the old man who saved the young merchant from all his debts (2.6). Other tales present old man as characters that symbolize good advice, that assist the hero and help him overcome his challenges. Yet, the questions, therefore, becomes if in all the tales in the collection, there is advice and clever remarks that were shared by old men in particular, why, then, wouldn’t *The 101 Nights* take part in the canon as one form of mirrors for princes?²⁶

Important motifs that have played a powerful role in the narrative are the voices and the echo. In “The Story of Najm al-Diya Ibn Mudir al-Mulk “, the prince heard “a voice” that he could not see the speaker of and this voice recited poetry verses that brought relief and peace to the prince (3.14). Another important supernatural character in the narrative is *Fate*. In *The 101 Nights*, Fate is presented as a character that plots and changes other characters’ lives. In “The Story of Najm al-Ḍiyā’ ibn Muḍīr al-Mulk”, the prince read the verses on the tomb “and fear what fate will bring further down the line” (3.18). That is how fate is introduced: as a power that is able to alter one’s journey. The prince then continues on and said “Fate be damned! How wickedly it seduces!” (3.18). But, what is interesting is that *Fate* is presented as a woman. Fate is a woman who “lets her arrow loose in flight and clips both its wings, without a fight” (3.19). In “The Story of Zāfir ibn Lāḥiq” fate is resented as a tormentor wherein no one was able to “brave the waves of the seas and the ups and downs of fate” (5.12). In “The Story of King Sulaymān ibn ‘Abd al-

²⁶ All the advice that was delivered by these elderly figures in the narrative come as a proof that what authors and scholars such as Al-Tawḥīdī claim when it comes to *The Nights* as merely stories that “provoke wonder and laughter without leading to any benefit or knowledge” is questionable. Fudge claims that the old men in the tales come to guide the young men in their adventures, and according to him their “wisdom validates the excellence of the tale” (xi).

Malik” fate is described as a deliverer of woes for “fate delivers its decrees and the world keeps turning” (7.18). Hence, fate plays an important role in the narration of events within the narrative and how these events unfold for the other characters in the stories.

Transformations, metamorphoses and talking animals take place as well in the tales of *The 101 Nights*. In “The Story of Camphor Island”, the elderly man and his group were faced by “a group of human-looking creatures with tails, covered only by their own hair” (4.22). In “The Story of the Vizier and his Son” there was a “four-legged beast” who thrust his head out of the sea (6.2). Yet, what is interesting is that the monsters and the other supernatural characters are not like the animals that figure in other tales. In the story of “The Husband and the Parrot”, the parrot is introduced with the ability to understand the question asked to him, and was able to answer it for when the man came back to his house he summoned the bird and asked him to report and “the bird informed him of what it saw” (14.24). Hence, the parrot in this story is presented as a character with a conscious mind. Similarly, in the story of “The Lion and the Thief”, the lion is presented as character who talks to himself and asks questions. The lion even voiced out his concerns to a monkey and told him that “a thief grabbed hold of [him] last night” (14.83). The serpent in “The Story of the King and the Serpent” does not engage in verbal communication, yet it was able to convey a message to the king just through its eyes which made, in its turn, the king regret what he has done. The serpent “looked at the king it had saved from the mad camel” and the serpent “did not take his eyes from him” (15.9). Another form of insolvent of the animals is seen in the metamorphoses that happened through the tales. In “The story of the King and the Gazelle”, the gazelle turns out to be the wife of the man, and the sister of a demon, who the king ends up marrying (17.24).

Another metamorphoses/punishment takes place in the story “the tears of a dog”, there is a dog who weeps and it turns out that the dog was a beautiful girl who was punished and changed into a dog because she refused the seduction of a man who fell in love with her (14.61).

D. Language

In terms of syntax, vocabulary and structure the language of *The 101 Nights* is Middle Arabic. However, the grammar rules are rarely obeyed and often disregarded. Wacks describes the language of *The 101 Nights* as similar to other popular narratives: such pieces are written in a “plain, unadorned register of classical Arabic” (2). Another notion Wacks mentions is that the authors or compilers of *The 101 Nights*, like other texts are recorded in “monolingual form” which was a tradition adopted back then where there was a practice of at least two or even three different languages (18)²⁷. Lerner describes the language used in *The 101 Nights* in one of his articles as one of “North African or even Andalusian dialects of colloquial Arabic”, he then adds that the collection contains particular linguistic features such as “rare and sometimes unknown vocabulary” (458). As previously mentioned, all the manuscripts are written in varying degrees of Maghribi dialects (Fudge xxii). The text that I chose to work on is presented in both Arabic and English. Yet, reading it in Arabic is a totally different experience. Fudge correctly describes it:

A glance at this Arabic edition will send chills down the spine of any competent language instructor. It would seem that every kind of linguistic error conceivable is well

²⁷ Ziyad, and Zifar

represented. Graphic, syntactic, and morphological peculiarities abound, and these demand some explanation.” (xxxiv).

E. Messages, Morals and Didactic Pursuits?

Despite the fact that numerous scholars have claimed that “the implicit invitation to reflect on moral issues is absent” from *The 101 Nights* (Fudge xv), this section will argue that there are indeed implicit messages that are given when it comes to morals. Amin Lerner dedicates a whole chapter to address such morals while focusing primarily on the golden rule that is found in “The Story of the prince and the Seven Viziers”²⁸. He claims that the other stories include “moral stories or example, filled with maxims, words of the wise and proverbs” (347). Similarly the other stories teach lessons not only to the protagonist in the tale but also to the king who is listening to them and perhaps the reader. For instance, whenever there is a mention of tombs or ruins in the tales, there is always a message whether in poetry or prose that communicates morals or attempts to teach something. Some of these messages warned the protagonist to be careful of what fate has to offer them²⁹. Other examples teach the protagonist that joy in life does not endure and at some point is going to be replaced by woes³⁰, another example reveals that only God

²⁸ “ Do not do unto others what you dislike for yourself”

²⁹ See 3.18,

Death has ousted me from my palace.

I had been honored then Death showed me malice.

Take heed, God’s servant, when you see this tomb of mine and fear what fate will bring further down the line.

³⁰ See 3.19

Who knows if time flees

as Fate misses a step? Time itself deceives.

is immortal and not Man³¹, yet, not only tombs talk about the inevitability of death, but as a matter of fact, death as an inescapable station is repeated in the ending of every single tale wherein it was repeated that the hero and his beloved lived happily ever after, they ate and drank, “until there came that from which there is no fleeing, and praise be to God, Lord of all being”³². Hence, the messages of morality are communicated in these tales. In addition, a strong spiritual aspect emerges in *The 101 Nights*. In multiple tales, besides the ruse, cleverness and the protagonist’s own wits, it is the hand of God or God’s intervention in the story that leads the protagonist to overcome his challenges. For instance, in one of the stories it was the recitation of verses from the Qur’an that saves the son of the vizier from the lion³³. I have already presented an extensive set of examples that reveal how religious messages and connotations were circulating within the tales. Hence, in order to conclude this section, it is important to know that one cannot claim that the series of *The 101 Nights* are devoid of messages of morals, and that the sole purpose in them is to bring pleasure to the reader - I mean the storytelling in this collection was able to cheat death and save lives.

Hence, I want to reassert the notion of homogeneity between the frame tale and the embedded tales. Despite the recurrent references and studies that have attempted to

Hopes are realized; desires are achieved, things to other things give way and cede.

The nights go on; they come together, they part, and at night the stars rise and downward dart.

You believe your joy will through time perdure? Impossible! Joy cannot endure.

³¹ See 15.20

For the mortal there is no kingship; true kingship is His alone.

³² See 2.34, 3.36, 4.23, 5.27, 6.21, 7.41, 8.12, 9.18, 10.16, 11.13, 12.14, 13.19, 18.11

³³ See 6.18.

highlight the absence of connection between the frame tale and the embedded tales, in this study, I tried to present a different approach that shows how the embedded tales are connected to the frame story and serve the frame tale of Shahrazad. As shown before, the narrative techniques and approaches of the embedded tales are reflected in the frame story of Shahrazad. All the different elements and devices that constitute and structure the embedded tales in *The 101 Nights* are reflected in and connected to the frame tale of Shahrazad.

CHAPTER IV

THE GOLDEN ASS & THE HUNDRED AND ONE NIGHTS

This final chapter in my study will present both texts together, under a comparative lens. After the studies presented in chapters one and two on the elements that constitute the frame narrative structure separately in both *The 101 Nights* and *The Golden Ass*, this chapter will merge them together to create numerous inquiries - and little to no conclusions.

In what follows, I will start by addressing the incessant issue of influence set between both texts. Despite the differences present in both narratives, I will focus in this chapter on presenting a sequence of the interesting points of concurrences or similarities. I address the differences, for any comparative approach of two different literary narratives “never yields identity, only similarity” (Segal 17). The questions that can be addressed following this chapter primarily insist on how can two texts *that* different share considerable similarities? where do such similarities emerge from? Consequently, can we talk about transcultural similarities, reoccurrences, and potential universalities? How about the universal dynamic of conscious and unconscious behaviors?

In the previous chapters I attempted to investigate the “textual puzzle”³⁴ by addressing the different elements that serve the frame structure in both narratives. The

³⁴ This notion goes back to Mallette’s philological approach to the text. In *European Modernity and the Arab Mediterranean*, Mallette explains that there are two approaches that can be adopted in order to study ancient texts. The first one seeks to make the ancient world live again, assuming its undimmed relevance and unproblematic accessibility, and the other one seeks to put the ancient texts back into their own time, admitting that reconstruction of the past is difficult and that success may reveal the irrelevance of ancient experience and precept to modern problems.

“interpretive schizophrenia” adopted by Mallette often distances the reader from the text and, simultaneously, brings him/her closer to it. However, the “interpretive schizophrenia” that I adopted in my study is not between the reader and the texts, but between the texts themselves. On one hand, I studied both texts *separately* by addressing the different elements that constitute the frame narrative structure in the narratives; i.e, I added a purposeful distance between both texts. On the other hand, in this chapter, I will eliminate this distance and bring both books together. I will venture on this journey by adopting a phenomenological approach of correlation rather than one of causality.

The 101 Nights and *The Golden Ass* emerge from two different geographical and chronological milieus. However, both texts reveal an interesting dynamic unity of narrative practices that is translated in how the relationship between the frame tale and the embedded tales diverge, and how the narrative elements and devices that constitute the text play into this relationship³⁵. Yet, as I expanded my comparative project, and after the analysis done, I have discovered that there are many points of divergence between both texts, however, the moments of convergence and affiliation are also prominent and consequently deserving to be further addressed in my study.

As portrayed in the previous chapters the narrative techniques and styles adopted in both narratives reveal a framing-embedding structure that narrates a frame story with multiple embedded tales. Both texts have adopted the frame narrative structure as a narrative technique. However, the similarities are not only limited to the adoption of the frame narrative structure. Both texts reveal similar devices that are used in the narration

³⁵ The themes and tropes, the language and style, the narrative techniques, the choice of characters, the movement between the characters and the narrator/s, the supernatural elements, the movement in space and time, the messages portrayed and delivered, the form and the context

of the texts. Elements such as parallelism - whether between the embedded tales or between the embedded tales and the frame tale, are detected in both *The Golden Ass* and *The 101 Nights*, particularly in how the embedded tales not only seem to parallel the incidents that are going to happen in the frame tale, but they also serve the frame tale: whether Shahrazad's and Shaykh Fihras' or Lucius'. As previously portrayed, both texts reveal a strong presence of foreshadowing and anticipation wherein there were dreams, oracles and even poetry that alluded to the broader frame and what is going to happen. *The Golden Ass* and *The 101 Nights* have adopted, as well, repetition as a very prominent and recurrent narrative style. Whether repetition of incidents, words, characters, or even moments, both texts develop and progress through these repetitions. Yet, when it comes to the style and technique the only difference is that in *The Golden Ass* the audience claps too soon, whereas, on the contrary, in *The 101 Nights* the ending is divulged right from the start. However, other examples in *The 101 Nights* such as *The Story of The Prince and the Seven Viziers* reveal an anticipatory sense that does lead the audience to clap too soon. Yet, despite these minor nuances, both texts' style and adoption of the frame narrative serve as a basis for narration.

In order to dig deeper into the framing-embedding structure found in both texts. It is important to mention that in *The 101 Nights* the scope of the frame tale of Shaykh Fihras followed by that of Shahrazad is not as elaborative as the frame story of Lucius in Apuleius' *The Golden Ass*. However, in both texts there is a sequence that is similar in terms of how the embedded tales are scattered within the narrative. For instance, in both texts there is a sacrifice of progression whether in time or in the sequence of events through the insertion of the embedded tales. Whether they were carefully added into the

narrative following a direct sequence, or scattered in the narrative arbitrarily - perhaps added and altered, what is important to acknowledge is how in both texts the temporal progression was delayed, and the unfolding of events was withheld in order for the embedded tales to progress and unfold. Hence, the temporal element or the conception of time in both texts was disrupted through the inclusion of these embedded tales. Another aspect of importance in both narratives other than the chronological and temporal sequence that they follow is the mathematical precision found in both *The Golden Ass* and *The 101 Nights*. Following Apuleius' stylistic approach, a mathematical precision appears. According to Svendsen, the manner of composition in Apuleius' text and the different episodes and tales within it reflect "detailed concern and almost mathematical precision" (25). Similarly, in *The 101 Nights* a precision is detected in the details that are set in the embedded tales. Numbers, however, play an essential part in the unfolding of events of *The 101 Nights*. In *The 101 Nights* the numbers three and ten are one of the most important and recurrent motifs that situate the tales in the stories. The hero sometimes had to wait three days in one particular place, in other stories the hero had to travel for three days to find what he was looking for, or the hero had to use three keys in order to open the treasure. Hence, numbers constitute an important aspect that serves the organizational and constitutional aspect of the narrative.

Most importantly, and moving beyond the similar traits in the narrative techniques, the style and the structure of the chosen texts, another point of convergence appears: the choice of characters. In both *The 101 Nights* and *The Golden Ass* the characters presented are distinctly similar to the point where they can even be interchanged between both narratives. A crucial motif that drives most of the narrative is

Fate or *Fortune*. Interestingly in both *The 101 Nights* and *The Golden Ass* respectively *Fate* and *Fortune* seem to take the reins in characters' lives, decisions and destinies. All is held in the hands of *Fate* and *Fortune*. Yet, most importantly, *Fate* or *Fortune* are introduced as a woman who in *The 101 Nights* "lets her arrow loose in flight" (3.19), and in *The Golden Ass* "fortune could not get her fill of tormenting [Lucius]" (Book VII.17). Hence, the similarity is not merely in the choice of *Fortune* or *Fate* as essential motifs that alter the course of events, but also in the fact that both *Fate* and *Fortune* are introduced as a woman who executes the same roles in both narratives. Another example of interchangeable characters, is in the first embedded tales in both *The Golden Ass* and *The 101 Nights*. In *The Story of the Young Merchant* we are introduced to a naked girl that is found hidden behind a rock, and the merchant came to help her and "gave her some of his own clothes to wear" (2.16). In parallel, in *Aristomenes' Tale*, we are introduced to the character of Socrates who Aristomenes has found sitting on the ground with a "patched cloak, baring the rest of his body from his navel to his loins" (I.7). And similarly to the young merchant, Aristomenes "took off one of [his] two garments and hastily clothes him, or should [he] say covered him" (I.7). In addition, the similarity in both these tales is also detected in the presence of a malevolent witch Meroe in the case of Socrates, and the jinni girl in the tale of the young merchant. Yet, the sequence of events in terms of how the malevolent evil woman relates to the hero in both tales is interesting, for in the case of Socrates he was punished for his lust and as "he preferred the pleasures of Venus and a leathery old whore to [his] own hearth and children" (Book I.8), and with the young merchant he was punished because he wanted "to betray the Almighty, the Omnipotent!" and he couldn't "control [himself] until it is lawful for [him] to have [his]

way?” (2.18). The characters and incidents are strikingly similar and comparable, but the only difference is that the young merchant was forgiven whereas Socrates ends up dead.

Women are very important and central characters in both *The 101 Nights* and *The Golden Ass*. In both narratives they are portrayed as both good and bad, but mostly as promiscuous, disloyal, dishonest and treacherous. Two extremely opposite portrayals of women are presented with a particular focus, in both narratives, on the abusive power held by women. In *The 101 Nights*, the whole story evolves around the king who no longer trusts women because of their treacherous nature. The narrative is introduced by a promiscuous queen who betrays her husband, the king, with a slave. This imagery of women is repeated numerous times throughout the narrative. In almost, every tale there is a reference to the treacherous and disloyal nature of women who often lust after young men, and design plans to kill them. In the *Story of the Prince and the Seven Viziers*, the whole narrative is built upon revealing the wiles of women. All the stories narrated by the seven viziers serve to portray how vile women are. Similarly, in Apuleius' *Golden Ass* the promiscuous nature of women is put on display. With most of the characters in the tales, whether witches, servants, wives and princesses, all the women are portrayed as lusty and disloyal. In addition, in the story of Charite when her fiancé came disguised to save her, Lucius in his asinine form, not knowing who the fiancé was, claims what follows:

The moment she saw the young man and heard him mention the words “brothel” and “pimp”, she became jubilant and broke out into joyous laughter. This caused me, as was only natural, to vilify the entire sex, when I saw a girl who had pretended love for her young suitor and desire for a faithful marriage suddenly show delight at the mention

of a filthy, sordid whorehouse. Indeed, at that moment the character and principles of all womankind depended on an ass's verdict. (Book VII.10)

Hence, in both narratives a very big emphasis was set on attributing a vile nature to women. However, surprisingly, in both narratives a shift appears in regards to this description of women: *women turn out to be good after all*. The striking similarity between both *The 101 Nights* and *The Golden Ass* is not only in the fact that women are portrayed and presented as lustful, promiscuous and disloyal, but, matter-of-factly, in the sudden turn of events. In both narratives, a totally different description is presented. In *The Golden Ass* Charite turns out to be loyal to the point where she plunged the sword in her heart to join her lover who was killed by his own friend Thrasyllus. And in the final book in *The Golden Ass*, the women were epitomized in the form of a goddess: goddess Isis who transcends all that is vile and evil. In *The 101 Nights*, a similar turning of events is detected within the tales. The treacherous and evil nature of women was exchanged by loyal women who fight battles, protect their castles and are protectors of their lands and properties. Hence, both narratives do include an extensive portrayal of women in their lusty behaviors, but, what is essential is how in both texts there is a shift in regards to how women are presented, and are consequently portrayed as loyal, worthy and honorable. Yet, going back to the story of Charite and Tlepolemus, in the *Story of Najm al-Diya Ibn Mudir al-Mulk*, the hero in the story like Tlepolemus, Charite's fiancé, disguises himself as an "Arab vagabond" in order to save his fiancé who was abducted. Hence, in both texts the ruse of acting as someone else in order to save a loved one is present wherein the fiancé is often presented as a vagabond or a poor person in order to save his future bride from danger. Within both tales, the future bride plays the part along

the discourse that is advanced by the fiancé with their opponents. In a different tale in *The 101 Nights*, the tale of *King and his Three Sons*, we are also introduced to a king who presents himself as a skilled thief in order to save himself which is paralleled with Tlepolemus' ruse of presenting himself as a thief to the bandits.

In addition, other interesting characters in *The 101 Nights* parallel the characters in *The Golden Ass* such as the robbers, thieves and merchants that dictate the plot in several tales in both narratives. Other supernatural elements are also found in both texts such as witches, sorceresses, but interestingly both texts include echoes and voices as characters that play an important role in the tales. In the story of *Najm al-Diya Ibn Mudir al-Mulk*, the hero, in his trials, was accompanied by a voice, an echo, that has brought him relief and has helped him to overcome his trials. In the story of *Psyche and Cupid*, Apuleius introduces Zephyr which is the name of the wind, Cupid's servant, that transports Psyche and helps her reach her destination³⁶. In addition, in her journey Psyche was constantly hearing voices that she doesn't know the source of. This unseen character plays an important part in the unveiling of the events in the different tales of both texts. The supernatural elements are not only the ones that move in and between both narratives. For instance, characters such as eunuchs, men who turn into women, and women who transform into men are targeted in different tales in both texts³⁷. In addition, the presence of animals in both texts is remarkable. In Apuleius' *The Golden Ass* the main character Lucius transforms into an ass as a punishment for his curiosity. Similarly, in *The 101 Nights* numerous are the characters that were punished and consequently transformed into

³⁶ Zephyr in Arabic is زفير which signifies "عليل نسيم" or fresh air.

³⁷ See chapters one and two for more details and examples.

animals. For instance, in *The Story of the King and the Gazelle*, the gazelle turns out to be the wife of the young man who the jinni has turned into a gazelle as a punishment because he failed to hurt her husband. In another story *The Story of The Tears of a Dog*, there is a reference to a daughter who was transformed to a dog because a man fell in love with her and cursed her. Yet, what is very interesting is that not only the presence of animals is the same in both narratives, but the consciousness that is not lost in their transformation into animals is present in *The 101 Nights* and *The Golden Ass*. In the former, we found that the dog cries, and the gazelle wants to turn back into its human form, the lion speaks, the parrot tells secrets and the snake has looks of reproach. In the latter, the consciousness of Lucius as a human is trapped in his newly found asinine form. In both narratives, first of all, the transformations into animals were punishments or curses, and second of all, all the animals transformed held on to their human consciousness.

The themes and tropes found in both texts are quite similar as both texts evolve around similar topics that are even addressed and resolved in similar manners. The themes that appear in both texts were addressed in details in the previous chapters. What I want to address in this chapter is how these themes seem to collide. Whether the tales of adultery, patricide, homicide, cannibalism, crimes, punishments, eroticism, moral pursuits, battles, abductions, challenges, these tales cover themes that drive the whole of the narratives. All of these themes and tropes are present in both literary texts. Most importantly, these themes are the driving forces behind all the different embedded tales as well as the main frame tale, whether that of Lucius or that of Shaykh Fihras and Shahrazad. In particular the theme of magic and fantastical elements remains a very

important theme in both narratives. However, what is very interesting about this theme is that magic as a central theme, and all the different fantastical elements and supernatural characters that are introduced with it, they fall into two different patterns when it comes to both texts. In *The Golden Ass*, magic with all its different elements - and here by magic I do not include the presence of the oracles and what takes place between Lucius and the goddess Isis - is only found on the level of the frame story, the story of Lucius, all the embedded tales do not include magical elements or characters, except the story of *Psyche and Cupid* that is held in the mythological realm and not necessarily in the magical one. On the contrary, in *The 101 Nights* a different pattern is detected wherein all the magical elements, the supernatural characters: the jinns, sorceresses, demons, ghouls, and centaurs appear in the embedded tales but not in the frame tale of Shahrazad or that of Shaykh Fihras. The magical element, which is central in both texts, follows two different patterns in both texts. This nuance emerges out of the peculiarities that only exist in the comparison of both texts - hence the reason why I did not partake in listing the points of similarities in both texts according to previously mentioned anthologies and approaches such as El-Shamy's and Zipes', and instead ventured on creating a new sequence of shared elements and spaces unique to *The Golden Ass* and *The 101 Nights*.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

A. Beauty, appearances and transformations

It is the transformation and metamorphosis that trigger the start of both narratives. The transformation of the youth Zahr al-basatin from the most beautiful person to an ugly, frail and unattractive person prompts the start of *The 101 Nights*. The metamorphosis of Lucius from a human into an ass starts his journey as a golden ass. These points of concurrences remain engraved in and become the driving force behind their respective narratives. Similar instances are to be found on the level of characters, themes, tropes, and interestingly, in the framing-embedding structure and how both literary works were launched. After conducting this study and revealing how the different elements that constitute the frame narrative structure serve both narratives in similar patterns particularly in how the embedded tales and frame tale remain connected and work harmoniously together in both texts, and after revealing the striking and even overlapping similarities in the tropes, themes, choices of characters, and moral pursuits, one must become even more intrigued to pursue evidences of a connection established between two texts that might have never met. Despite it being beyond the scope of this study, talking about a possibility of influence or connection between these two narratives remain necessary. Yet, once again, I assert how this study follows a different approach. This study reveals through the separate study of both texts first then by bringing them together, how despite the different historical geographical, chronological milieus out of which both

texts emerge, the different elements that constitute these narratives and the framing-embedding structure are quite linked and share remarkable similarities. That being said, and despite the presence of differences between both literary texts, the similarities remain intriguing, and once more open up the recurrent question of how can two texts that different create a space of comparable consensus? The answer to this question is a whole new quest that knocks on the vast doors of research which ultimately reveal the complexity belied by the simple study of similarities and differences.

In this study I do not merely choose a theoretical side and impose it upon my research. First of all, going back to the origins and the migration journey of both *The Golden Ass* and *The 101 Nights* as a way of establishing the relationship of influence and transmission is not part of this study for it necessitates more in-depth research. Second of all, claiming and attributing that our collective unconscious, the commonality and universality of human psychic structure are the ultimate reason behind the points of concurrences and similarities between both text does not ultimately answer this conundrum. Yet, what remains interesting out of this analogous presentation of both *The Golden Ass* and *The 101 Nights* and the framing-embedding structure in these narratives, is how, on one hand, aspects of the universal experience of the human mind are present, and, on the other hand and most importantly, how a new, seemingly impossible quest for how both texts might have happened to come in possible contact or influence has arisen. Hence the reason why I refused to adopt one single theoretical approach, impose it on the text, and abide by it, for it was only by focusing on the elements that constitute both texts and by studying the different patterns of the framing-embedding structure in both narratives that such interpretations were drawn.

My approach in this study was a quest, not to seek a unifying and conclusive explanation to explain the presence of the recurrent motifs, elements and structure in both *The Golden Ass* and *The 101 Nights*, but to emphasize instead the particular qualities and peculiarities found in both texts. In this study I aimed to bring two texts together and through a comparative lens highlight discussions of West and East, discussions of influence, transmission and concurrences, and universalism. Through this study I tried to shed light on pathways between cultures that cut through and link geographical, spatial and ideological stances together. Hence, the focus of this study juxtaposes the textual elements such as the theme, tone, characters, structure and narrative device in both *The Golden Ass* and *The 101 Nights* which highlight the presence of transitions that are divergent and fluid, and address the spaces of cultural exchange. This phenomenological approach adopted defers away from the argument of causality and focuses on the correlation and correspondence of both literary texts. This study served as a space for me to follow my interest in transformative and concurrent passage of ideas from one culture to another, from one space to another, from one time to another. The two texts which are separated turn out to share a line of sight. This line started to be paved, and some fragments of the “broken crystal” started to appear. Consequently, this signifies that new research to go more in-depth into this concurrent relation between both *The Golden Ass* and *The 101 Nights* can be followed. The analogous presentation and study of both *The Golden Ass* and *The 101 Nights* and their framing devices reveal the universal experience of the conscious and unconscious minds coupled with the seemingly dynamic relationship of correspondence and influence. Yet, most importantly, this study alludes to and opens up the quest to address how both texts integrated together reveal a universalism that has

long supported the human life, the civilizations, the generations, the diverse religions, societies, and ultimately the human mind today. Therefore, the question becomes going back to the brothers Grimm; isn't there a fragment of this broken crystal in all of us?

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