

ARTICLES

THE *ARABIAN NIGHTS* IN THE ENGLISH POPULAR PRESS AND THE HETEROGENIZATION OF NATIONHOOD: A PRINT CULTURAL APPROACH TO BENEDICT ANDERSON'S *IMAGINED COMMUNITIES*

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Rasoul Aliakbari

University of Alberta

“By no means, Madam,” replied Mr. Stanley; “but I will venture to assert that even story books should not be founded on a principle directly *contradictory* to them, nay totally *subversive* of them. The Arabian Nights, and other oriental books of fable, though loose and faulty in many respects, yet have always a reference to the religion of the country. Nothing is introduced against the law of Mahomet; nothing subversive of the opinions of a Mussulman. I do not quarrel with books for having *no* religion, but for having a *false* religion. A book which in nothing opposes the principles of the Bible I would be far from calling a bad book, though the Bible was never named in it.”

—Hannah More (1745-1833), English Evangelical writer

I. AIMS AND SCOPE

This article investigates the popular print culture of the *Arabian Nights*¹ in nineteenth-century England in order to challenge Benedict Anderson's standpoints on modern nation-building in his now-classic *Imagined Communities*. There is a growing body of research on the *Nights*, its sources, its literary character, its cultural significance, its translations, its adaptations, and its continuing popularity in contemporary cultures throughout the world. Ulrich Marzolph's website provides an extensive list of

representative scholarship on various aspects of the *Nights* in its various pre-modern, modern, and contemporary contexts (*The Arabian Nights Bibliography*). However, reviewing the literature of the *Nights* on his website and elsewhere, one notices a relative lack of scholarship on the uses of print editions of the *Nights* to converse with theories of print capitalism and modern nation-building. Responding to this lacuna, this article mainly aims to investigate publications of the *Nights* for lower-class readers in nineteenth-century England, in order to offer a heterogenized picture of the formation of modern English nationhood.² In particular, I will explore the print circumstances of Edward Lane's translation of the *Nights* as well as some reproductions of, and responses to, the *Nights* in nineteenth-century British cheap popular periodicals, to develop a critical dialogue with Anderson.³ This dialogue includes revisiting, challenging, and complicating some dimensions of Anderson's discourses on print capitalism, the formation of the modern nation as an imagined community, and official nationalism. By examining the uses of the *Nights* for and among British

440 lower classes and the expanding bourgeois readership of the time, I will demonstrate that, unlike Anderson's conception of nationhood as homogeneous, steady, and solid, the formation of modern English nationhood is heterogeneous, porous, borderly, and conditioned at the intersection of social classes and the oriental literariness of the *Nights*. In other words, rather than arguing for the impact of the *Nights* on European literary modernity or nation-building, this essay seeks to demonstrate some of the uses of this tale collection in the English enterprise of nation-building, including the dissemination of 'wholesome' reading matter and the establishment of British sovereignty over lower-class and mass readership in England during the nineteenth century.

II. ANDERSON'S PRINT CAPITALISM AND IMAGINED COMMUNITY

Anderson examines the emergence of the modern nation in the context of the decline of dynastic rule and religious orthodoxies. The weakening of religion in Europe was accompanied by a corresponding decline in the status of Latin as a unifying language of sacred and learned texts, and the proliferation of printed works in vernacular languages. The rise of printed books, which are considered to be "the first modern-style mass-produced industrial commodity," facilitated the decline of the old ethos and inspired fundamentally new ways in which the literate population regarded themselves and related to one another (34, 36). Particularly, as the market for the European elite community of Latin readers was saturated, print capitalism had to target the potentially extensive community of monoglot readers (38). Moreover, unlike the old, manuscript culture, in which knowledge circulated in arcane languages and in vertical, hierarchical, and esoteric molds, print-as-commodity culture encouraged the

massive, horizontal dissemination of knowledge in vernacular languages, aided by “peddling cheap editions in the vernaculars” (38). In this sense, Anderson continues, “the convergence of capitalism and print technology on the fatal diversity of human language created the possibility of a new form of imagined community, which in its basic morphology set the stage for the modern nation” (46).

Anderson further notes that vernacularism (as in French and English) worked alongside print capitalism to centralize states and establish the foundations of national consciousness by creating “unified fields of exchange and communication below Latin and above the spoken vernaculars” (44). As such, English speakers who previously had difficulty mutually understanding one another now shared the medium of print. The community of public readers gradually became aware of their fellow readers within their linguistic field, which also distinguished them from other linguistic collectives such as Spanish, German, or others. These shared and distinct experiences helped to germinate the nation as an imagined community. Anderson further explains, “the nineteenth century was, in Europe and its immediate peripheries, a golden age of vernacularizing lexicographers, grammarians, philologists, and litterateurs. The energetic activities of these professional intellectuals were central to the shaping of nineteenth-century European nationalisms” (71).

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Specifically, according to Anderson, the nation “is an imagined political community” that resembles “a sociological organism moving calendrically through homogeneous, empty time [...], a solid community moving steadily down (or up) history” (6, 26). The modern nation, he further clarifies, is marked by a fundamental change in the conception of time. The old perception of simultaneity, involving a Messianic and apocalyptic notion of time, has been replaced with “an idea of ‘homogeneous, empty time,’ in which simultaneity is, as it were, transverse, cross-time, marked not by prefiguring and fulfilment, but by temporal coincidence, and measured by clock and calendar” (24).

III. THE *NIGHTS* AND AN EVALUATION OF ANDERSON’S HOMOGENEOUS NATIONHOOD

There have been many discussions of Anderson’s theories, such as those of Roland Robertson, Sara Castro-Klarén and John Charles Chasteen, and Claudio Lomnitz. In addition to these critiques, Partha Chatterjee has argued that Anderson’s notion of the nation as living in homogeneous, empty time is limited, one-dimensional, linear, and utopian (927-28); by contrast, Chatterjee maintains, modern nationhood is characterized by “heterogeneous and unevenly dense time” (928). He criticizes Anderson’s conceptions based on a political approach that scrutinizes selected moments of nation-building in postcolonial India. With Chatterjee’s argument of heterogenized nationhood in mind, this article focuses on various cheap popularizations and re-interpretations of the *Nights* in nineteenth-century England, which

were intended to bolster English national sovereignty by bridging social and political divisions across a heterogeneous nation.

As a work that seems to abound in such pre-modern notions as “submission to God, submission to Fate, and submission to the ruler” (Irwin, “Political Thought” 108), the *Nights* seems to be fundamentally alien to the political revolutionary climate of post-Enlightenment Europe, in which the concepts of the nation and citizens’ rights were appearing as epistemological indicators of modernity. Shortly before gaining fame in England, the *Nights* was popularized in France. In the volatile context of the expansion of vernacular print capitalism, the French Orientalist Antoine Galland (1646-1715) introduced the *Nights* to modern Europe with his 1704 French translation. For a century afterward, this translation was widely read, inspiring translations of the *Nights* into English during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Nonetheless, this should not suggest that the *Nights* was an isolated or orphan text prior to its modern, European phase. As Aboubakr Chraïbi shows, the *Nights* belonged to a domain between ‘high’ and ‘low’ literatures; it was an example of *middle* literature that enjoyed critical and popular acclaim, and numerous imitations and adaptations, in its Arabic context (223). As such, the history of the *Nights* is complicated; thus, this article specifically deals with selected publications in English, and assesses the popularity of the *Nights* among modern English readers in light of those readers’ increasing engagement with the Orient, the expansion of print culture, and the rise of public literacy, all of which helped the *Nights* become accessible to different social classes and increasingly modernized thanks to advances in print technology. Comparing the pre-modern circumstances of the *Nights* to the reception of Galland’s French translation, Marzolph states that we know of less than a dozen manuscripts compiled before the end of the seventeenth century, and that “[n]one of these early manuscripts is complete, and even the totality of fragments does not allow a clear and unambiguous reconstruction of a standard set of narratives that might have been included in the ‘complete’ Arabic manuscripts before the beginning of the eighteenth century” (“In the Studio of the *Nights*” 43-44).⁴ While the pre-modern Oriental manuscript-based trajectory of the *Nights* might display some fragmentariness and scarcity, the modern European phase of its reception history is marked by attempts at producing ‘cohesive’ and ‘complete’ texts for mass consumption. Edward Lane’s translation of the *Nights* is a case in point, and an examination of its print circumstances sheds light on some less-explored aspects of production and consumption of the *Nights* within the nineteenth-century enterprise of British nation-building, particularly as compared to John Payne’s and Richard Burton’s subsequent editions of the *Nights*, as neither was intended for mass release on the scale of Lane’s.⁵

IV. CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE APPEARANCE OF LANE'S TRANSLATION IN PRINT

Lane's translation of the *Nights* was initially published by the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge.⁶ Founded in 1826 by Lord Brougham, a Whig MP and a Benthamite utilitarian, the SDUK was comprised of "statesmen, lawyers, and philanthropists" who were interested in expanding popular education to serve skilled working-class men and their families (Curwen 258). Brougham characterized the SDUK as "a channel through which, amongst with political intelligence and the occurrences of the day, the friends of human improvement, the judicious promoters of general education, may diffuse the best information, and may easily allure all classes, even the humblest, into the paths of general knowledge" ("ART. X-Petition from the Inhabitants of the City of London against the Newspaper Stamps" 184). In fact, the SDUK was one of the early (upper) middle-class institutions that targeted the working classes, aiming to popularize education amongst them in hopes of easing contemporary class tensions.

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While the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries were characterized by Evangelicals' and Utilitarians' antipathy toward imaginative literature, though for different reasons, by the 1830s, the Benthamites came to regard literature as serving didactic and moral purposes (Altick 136). Even prior to this, as early as the 1790s, elementary schooling for the working classes was being considered in order to reduce the risks of Jacobinist discontent. Indeed, Evangelical works such as Hannah More's *Cheap Repository Tracts* aimed to 'immunize' the lower classes against Jacobinism by upholding Christian values and English national security, encompassing the English reading public as a whole and inspiring similar future publishing endeavours to uphold the English "nation" (Altick 76-77). Given the pressing political demands by the English working class in the wake of the turbulence of the French Revolution, English elites felt the need to uphold the existing social order. Realizing that it was impossible to avert workers from reading, "they embarked on long campaigns to insure that through the press the masses of people would be induced to help preserve the status quo and bulwark the security and prosperity of the particular sort of national life that they, its upper- and middle-class rulers, cherished" (Altick 85). The SDUK was a product of this campaign. In 1825, Brougham had stated that "the peace of the country and the suitability of the government, could not be more effectually secured than by the universal diffusion of this kind of knowledge" (*Practical Observations* 5). Thus, the SDUK sought to advance political stability and ease social unrest by producing and disseminating inexpensive works of utilitarian instructional material and amusing yet edifying imaginative literature.

In the spring of 1827, the SDUK began to produce its *Library of Useful Knowledge* (1827-46), which featured mainly utilitarian and scientific subjects. Realizing their limited readership, the SDUK produced a companion series, the *Library of*

Entertaining Knowledge. Under Charles Knight's supervision, the Society also published the *British Almanac*, *Penny Magazine* (1832-45), and *Penny Cyclopaedia* (1833-46). These publication ventures led to financial trouble for Knight and the Society. Knight's other projects included the *Pictorial Shakespeare*, *Pictorial History of England*, and *Pictorial Bible*, as well as Lane's *Manners of Modern Egyptians* and the *Nights* (Altick 269-85).

444 The publication of *Penny Magazine*, beginning in 1832, was a landmark for Knight and the SDUK. *Penny Magazine* became a success, and its early issues sold more than 200,000 copies. The periodical was particularly successful thanks to its numerous woodcut illustrations, "a feature which even allowed the semi-literate to derive substantial enjoyment from its pages" (Cox and Mowatt 5). The low-priced *Penny Magazine* was intended to both educate and entertain urban industrial workers. Employing such innovations as Fourdrinier in producing paper reels, steam-driven impression cylinders, and an effective use of stereotype printing, Knight managed to integrate text and image efficiently and print the issues rapidly (Cox and Mowatt 6). Even so, Knight and the SDUK ended up running into financial difficulties sustaining the publication of *Penny Magazine*, the first of England's cheap mass-produced magazines.

Knight used similar print strategies in the publication of Lane's *Nights*. Published in 32 monthly parts between May 1, 1838 and January 1, 1841, the serial included numerous illustrations and notes and was priced at 2s.6d per issue (Thompson 410, 427). He also published the translation in three royal octavo volumes in 1840. It is probable that the installment nature of the former publication prompted Lane to drop the recurring night breaks from his edition of the *Nights* (Thompson 412). Lane's approach to the *Nights* was selective, choosing to omit stories that contained sexually or morally objectionable material. This was in line with the SDUK's agenda to produce light and 'appropriate' imaginative literature for educational purposes. Lane's translation style has been the subject of extensive scholarly debates, especially in comparison to Burton's;⁷ however, his adoption of an urbane style may well have been influenced by the medium of his translation, as the SDUK's mission was to popularize knowledge amongst less literate and less privileged sectors of the English public. Lucid language and vivid illustrations were attractive characteristics to the SDUK's everyday, and often semi-literate, readers. In collaboration with illustrator William Harvey, Knight managed to produce an edition that contained detailed and appealing illustrations and was relatively cheap (priced at £4.4s) for consumers; the cost was kept reasonable thanks in part to the use of wood, rather than metal, engravings.

The mission of the Society was to act as a "vendor for wholesome reading matter [...] [for] skilled workingmen and their families" (Altick 269). With such previous examples as the *Cheap Repository Tracts* as inspiration, Brougham intended the Society to be "eminently conducive to allaying the reckless spirit, which, in 1830, was leading multitudes to destroy property and break up machines" (Knight 310).

Anderson has highlighted the role of literacy in the formation of bourgeois solidarity, arguing that the “bourgeoisie were the first classes to achieve solidarities on an essentially imagined basis. But in a nineteenth-century Europe in which Latin had been defeated by vernacular print-capitalism for something like two centuries, these solidarities had an outermost stretch limited by vernacular legibilities” (77). English vernacular legibility was expanded by such enterprises as the SDUK in early to mid-nineteenth-century England, as the Society took efforts, successfully rather than not, to increase literacy and popularize ‘wholesome’ reading matter. A sense of imagined English solidarity was taking form as working, semi-literate classes were encouraged to see themselves as part of the bourgeoisie and of the English nation as a whole, diverting potential revolutionary energies into the maintenance of the nation. The SDUK had launched the first extensive and successful mission to expand reading across all social classes in England. Despite some shortcomings, the Society managed to produce hundreds of thousands of copies of British almanacs, encyclopedias, dictionaries, and serials for farmers and working men and their families. Particularly, as part of their enterprise, the *Nights* became a popular text among English semi-literate and working classes.

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Moreover, it should be noted that Knight (and, through him, the SDUK) capitalized on several already-existing arguments for the cheap, popular publication of the *Nights* as an entertaining and instructional text. Before the mass popularization of the *Nights* via the SDUK, *Leigh Hunt’s London Journal*, whose mission was “To assist the Enquiring, Animate the Struggling, and Sympathize with All,” featured an account of Arabic folklore, discussing afreets, peris, divs, and other examples, with numerous references to the *Nights*. According to the journal, “the utility of a work of imagination indeed must outweigh the drawbacks upon it in any country” (“Genii and Fairies of the East, the Arabian Nights, &c.”). Pursuing such a path, the SDUK both popularized the *Nights* on a mass scale thanks to its cheap printing, and commercialized these publications through responses and references to it addressing lower-class readers. For instance, *The Penny Magazine* issued installments of *The Lost Senses*, an autobiographical account by John Kitto (1804-54), a self-educated British missionary. During his recovery from a hearing impairment, he had access to various reading materials, which he considered “a source of interest and a means of information” (“Deafness” 155), including *Robinson Crusoe*, *Pamela*, *Henry, Earl of Mooreland*, and *The Arabian Nights Entertainments*. As such, the popularity of the SDUK’s *Nights* as reading matter for the expanding bourgeois and lower classes was due not only to its lucid language, but also to its combination of edification and entertainment, an effective integration that was reinforced by Harvey’s illustrations and Lane’s annotations. As Knight himself stated of the publication, “its instant popularity, as well as its permanent utility, was commanded by the designs of William Harvey—the most faithful as well as the most beautiful interpreters of the scenery and costume of the stories” (*Passages of a Working Life* 258).

The combination of utility and mass appeal in the *Nights* was also noticed and

perpetuated by other periodicals that aimed to popularize reading matter among the lower classes. For example, *New Sporting Magazine* (1831-70), which mainly covered hunting and field sports, but occasionally discussed the arts, presented a review of the SDUK edition of the *Nights* (“A New Translation of the Tales of a Thousand and One Nights”). Although the review did not appreciate the copiousness of Lane’s notes (437) or his unusual spelling of some Oriental words (such as *jinnee* for *Genie*) (438), it considered Lane a qualified English translator of the *Nights* (437). Also, the review emphasized the appeal of Harvey’s illustrations, and Lane’s personal familiarity with the East (437-38). Similarly, the London-based *Bell’s Life in London and Sporting Chronicle* (1822-86), a popular sports newspaper intended for the lower classes but also read by middle and upper classes, referred to the *Nights* in its discussion of the corn-law debate as featuring “Sultana’s romances [which] were amusing and instructive” (“The Westminster Election” 2). As late as 1880, *Young Folks* (1871-97), an inexpensive children’s weekly (initially priced at a halfpenny) whose motto was “To

446 Inform, To Instruct, To Amuse,” compared the suspenseful breaks in the *Nights* to those of *Oliver Twist*, and called the SDUK’s publication “the largest, the best, and the most popular collection of stories” (“Arabian Nights” 115). In addition, in 1882, an advertisement for Knight’s *Nights* appeared in *The Fishing Gazette* (1865-1966) (“Multiple Display Advertisements”), a publication that was devoted to angling and sea fishing and which tried to appeal to all classes. Therefore, it seems that the SDUK’s re-appropriation of the *Nights* was perceived and amplified as ‘wholesome’ reading matter for lower-class readers thanks to its blend of edification and amusement.

Regarding the English reception of the *Nights*, Kamran Rastegar has found “the transformation in this group of tales into a coherent text, organized, printed, and consumed in an expanding market for books, remarkable” (37). Rastegar has called the English publication history of the *Nights* a *transformation*; however, given the popularity of the book among medieval Arabic readers, this might imply an Anglocentric reading of the *Nights*’ trajectory and create an inconsistency between pre-modern Oriental and post-Enlightenment European phases of the work’s history. Moreover, far from being a coherent body, the *Nights* appeared in the form of chapbooks, collections of children’s stories, installments, and Oriental tales in periodicals. As such, and to be specific, one might describe Lane’s translation as an Anglicization, domestication, re-appropriation, or modernization of the *Nights* intended to commercialize literary interests and to incorporate the English working classes into the bourgeois framework of the modern English nation.

The proliferation and commercialization of the *Nights* for a working-class readership, as suggested by the intentions of the SDUK and references in popular periodicals, reveal that the conception of Englishness in the years after the Napoleonic War was far from constant, ‘solid,’ or ‘steady’ among all social classes. In this changing site of forces and counterforces, the low-priced, educational, and amusing editions of the *Nights* were intended to help the lower classes assimilate into the bourgeoisie and the nation as a whole. The mass publication of the *Nights* was part of the rise of English

literary print capitalism, which capitalized on the rise of vernacularism, exploited cheap popular editions, and contributed to the formation of a reading public that strived to engender a collective national imagination (Anderson 40). In this agitated climate of nation-building, in which English literary capitalism aspired to incorporate more consumers within the expanding ideology of nationhood, the *Nights* was cleansed of 'inappropriate' content, modernized in printed installments and books, illustrated, commercialized, and advertised to the lower social classes in order to participate in negotiating and expanding the formation of the English national bourgeois identity.

As such, while Anderson highlights the simultaneity of reading experiences and the solidness of the imagined community as integral to the formation of the modern nation, this examination regards the emerging English subjectivity in the nineteenth century as a juncture of class struggle with social and political interests, mediated by, amongst a host of other materials, easily-accessible publications such as the SDUK editions of the *Nights*. The role of the *Nights* in the formative nationalist enterprise of nineteenth-century England is particularly important, since cheap editions of the work for lower-class readers both preceded and followed upon the SDUK's popularization of Lane's *Nights*.

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V. OFFICIAL NATIONALISM AND THE *NIGHTS*

According to Anderson, the solidification of a national bourgeois identity through vernacular print capitalism in the first few decades of the nineteenth century was a precursor to the emergence of official nationalism in the latter half of that century. Official nationalism "willed merger of nation and dynastic empire [...] developed after, and in reaction to, the popular national movements proliferating in Europe since the 1820s" (*Imagined Communities* 86). Combining naturalization with the maintenance of dynastic power, official nationalism operated by "stretching the short, tight, skin of the nation over the gigantic body of the empire" (*Imagined Communities* 86). Anderson discusses the emergence of nationalism in Britain as well as Russia and Japan, among others; however, "Victoria von Saxe-Coburg-Gotha, Queen of England and, late in life, Empress of India," is a particularly striking example, as her title "represents emblematically the thickened metal of a weld between nation and empire" (*Imagined Communities* 88).

Official nationalism was mainly an aristocratic and dynastic reaction against marginalization and exclusion at the hands of, and in response to, the bourgeois vernacular print nationalism of the first few decades of the nineteenth century. Though Anderson emphasizes the aristocratic aspect of official nationalism, one should also take account of the reproduction and marketing of otherness toward the lower classes as they were being incorporated into the national framework. Ian J. Barrow has shown how SDUK publications helped create conceivable and consumable images of

India for the British working-class public: the SDUK's detailed and well-drawn maps of India were the first multi-sheet maps intended for and sold to non-elite British audiences (Barrow 677). The British proprietorial claims were marked by number-coding and red ink, respectively, on black-and-white and colour maps, transforming India into an extension of British national territories at a time when the East India Company was still in charge (Barrow 689). Similarly, reproductions and re-appropriations of the *Nights* by the SDUK as well as in previous and later popular editions show the employment of this work, its imagery, its metaphors, and its tales in forging British official national subjectivity amongst lower-class and mass readership. Promoting the image of Britain as empire would encourage working classes to view themselves as, rather than a distinct social and political class, a part of the larger *national* and *imperial* communities, in opposition to cultural and territorial Others.

448 This image of Britain as an empire positioned against cultural Others was popularized through inexpensive reading material, including the *Nights*, even before the appearance of the SDUK editions. In 1826, *The Literary Chronicle and Weekly Review* (1819-28) released "Story of Ali, the Son of the Jeweler, Hassan—423-433rd night," prefaced with an account of translations of the *Nights* by various European Orientalists including Galland ("Arabian Nights Entertainments"). The periodical was offered at the low price of 6d, making it accessible by all classes of society, although it was contemptuously regarded by, and considered inferior to, more established periodicals, particularly the *Literary Gazette* (1817-62) (Sullivan 230-31). In 1824, the *Literary Chronicle* issued a review of a recently published and engraved *Nights* consisting of 1001 stories and priced at 6s.6d ("The Arabian Nights' Entertainments; Consisting of One Thousand and One Stories"). Though this edition of the *Nights* was priced higher than the SDUK edition, it received a positive review that particularly approved of its low price and use of engravings. The review ends by declaring the work a "new era and a new feature in literature, which must be of incapable benefit to society, and we hope that the Arabian Nights' Entertainments, which even without its 150 engravings would be the cheapest work ever published, will be followed by a reprint of standard works in every department of literature" (555). The "incapable benefit" of the cheap edition of the *Nights*, as later reproductions of and responses to the collection showed, was to edify and to entertain its readers in order to alleviate socio-political unrest and encourage nationalistic images. More importantly, the review explicitly notes that both polished European society and "the Arab in the Desert" admired the *Nights*, thus developing a binary model of the communal European self as opposed to the exotic other. Through commercialization of the *Nights*, producers and distributors of inexpensive books tended to project and ultimately naturalize a communal *us-versus-them* binary, creating possibilities for the assimilation of lower-class readers into the collective national image of Britishness.

Projecting a communal imagination of the English self, *The Eclectic Review* (1805-68) published a lengthy review of the SDUK's *Nights*. Some "public-spirited gentlemen," a group of evangelical leaders, started *The Eclectic Review* with the main

objective of bringing literature to the public (Hiller 179). The magazine covered science, art, and historical writing as well as literature. While aimed at educated readers and priced at 2s.6d (Hiller 181), the monthly gradually broadened its range to include self-educated lower-middle classes, and managed to secure both urban and rural subscribers. *The Eclectic Review*'s article on Lane's *Nights* appeared in 1840, before the SDUK had completed the publication ("Art. II. The Thousand and One Nights"). The review inserts Lane's translation of "The Merchant, the Ass, the Bull, and the Cock," which "deserves to be called the prince of all 'Cock and Bull' stories," along with a few anecdotes from Lane's notes (651-56). *The Eclectic Review*'s report highlights Lane's *Nights* as a source of amusement and instruction. Where other notes in the popular press of the time referred to these benefits merely in passing, this review describes various educational merits of the SDUK edition, including information about Oriental cultures, a better understanding of the peculiarities of the Bible, and its literary style (650).

Moreover, *The Eclectic Review* speaks especially highly of Harvey's engravings. The review not only prefers Lane's translation over Galland's, but also praises Harvey's illustrations for their "sedate gravity" and greater aesthetic appeal than the French designs ("Art. II. The Thousand and One Nights" 660). The review notes, "in the purely dramatic part of this task noting is more worthy of praise than the absence of the exaggerated and theatrical in attitude and expression, which marks these designs, and contrasts them very favorably from the kindred efforts of French illustrators" (659-60). The review further contrasts the realistic engravings in the English text to the exaggerated, even grotesque, illustrations of the French edition. In fact, *The Eclectic Review* includes the SDUK *Nights* in the contemporary ethos of English nation-building, especially its valuing of realism. A critical generic coding of French literariness as "foreign," "uncontrolled," "uncontrollable," and "romance" was already part of the discourse of English literary subjectivity (Siskin 431-32). Though on the surface a debate on translation and re-creation, the review's valuation of the SDUK's edition over Galland's reinforced the association of French culture with pre-modernity and romanticism, and bolstered the perceived superiority of English culture and nationhood. Most importantly, the review opens with a delineation of the national character of the *Nights* as different from the English. As *The Eclectic Review* informs its readers, "the further we go from home—the more distant the nations whose literature is submitted to us, the more striking do the diversities of national taste appear" (644). Although the review speaks of "a nature [...] common to all men, which obeys the laws of general criticism" (642), it further observes that the "literature of different nations [...] are marked by endless diversities" (641). As such, *The Eclectic Review* projects national differences through the discourse formed around the *Nights* and employs the SDUK edition as part of the definition of English national subjectivity in contrast to both the Oriental and the French.

Regarding the formation of a national consciousness, Anderson highlights the emergence of the novel and newspaper as modes associated with modern nation-

hood.⁸ Bringing together news from different parts of the globe on an ongoing basis, the newspaper helped to solidify the collective imagination of nationhood amongst community members, since all participants read the same material simultaneously. The newspaper as “an ‘extreme form’ of the book, [...] sold on a colossal scale but of ephemeral popularity, [...] creates this extraordinary mass ceremony: the almost precisely simultaneous consumption (‘imagining’) of the newspaper as fiction” (*Imagined Communities* 35). “The newspaper reader,” Anderson continues, “observing exact replicas of his own paper being consumed by his subway, barbershop, or residential neighborhood, is continually reassured that the imagined world is visibly rooted in everyday life” (35-36). Anderson’s notion of simultaneous and communal experience can be safely extended to monthlies, weeklies, and magazines; however, in order for these media to provide a simultaneous nation-wide experience, legal and technical difficulties had to be resolved. These changes gradually materialized as the government reduced and ultimately removed its expensive newspaper stamp tax in 1836 and 1855, respectively, as the Hoe rotary press was introduced in 1843, and as railway newspaper trains began to operate.⁹ These changes led to the extensive growth of the popular press aimed at large readerships. *Reynolds’s Newspaper* (1850-1900) and *Lloyd’s Weekly Newspaper* (1842-1902) were amongst the commercial offshoots of these changes. These new publication circumstances also affected the publication of the *Nights*, as well as responses and references to it in popular outlets targeting mass and lower-class readers.

Reynolds’s Newspaper, a popular Sunday newspaper, is a case in point thanks to its numerous notices of publications of the *Nights*. For example, in 1868, *Reynolds’s Newspaper* announces J. Dick’s publication of *Dick’s Arabian Nights: A New Translation with Illustrations by F. Gillbert*, priced at 6d.¹⁰ The notice claims that this new edition is the cheapest one ever issued globally and, as a “perfect marvel of Cheap Literature,” makes the tales available to “the very humblest reader” (*Reynolds’s “Advertisements and Notices”*). The uses of the publication are further described in relation to its editorship and its readership. According to the notice, this collection of tales, cleansed of “everything at all offensive or indocile,” is meant to provide families, schools, and male and female youths as well as “the very poorest classes [...] with enjoyment of a delightful, innocent, and instructive course of reading.” Particularly, the notice recommends this edition as an example of “the *cheapest* of CHEAP LITERATURE [...] as such reprints may possess a national interest or a world-wide celebrity.” The notice points to both the European popular readership (“world-wide celebrity”) and the development of an English “national” interest in relation to the *Nights*. This national interest was not feasible without legal modification, advancements in print technology, and the wide scope of public readers that had been established over the course of the past few decades. The new circumstances would render the *Nights* more accessible across all social classes in England.

The republication of the *Nights* in accessible editions continued in the 1840s, as exemplified by *Lloyd’s Weekly Newspaper*. In 1846, *Lloyd’s* Christmas cheap penny

weeklies, “Lloyd’s Pictorial Library of Standard Works,” began with the *Nights* and continued with installments of William Shakespeare’s works and *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (Lloyd’s “Advertisement and Notices”). The proliferation of the *Nights* in cheap print coincided with the popularization of knowledge concerning its history. In 1863, in a lucid piece on this topic, *Lloyd’s Weekly Newspaper* presented a brief report on French and German translations of the *Nights* as well as editions produced in Calcutta and Bulaq (Lloyd’s “The History of Arabian Nights in England”). The report notes that while “Aladdin,” “Ali Baba,” and several others are excellent stories, “they form no part of the genuine ‘Arabian Nights;’” thus, the article expressed “serious objections” to Galland’s translation. The report ultimately praises the SDUK’s publication of Lane’s translation as “the only faithful representation of the original,” dismisses criticism of Lane’s edition, and praises Harvey’s engravings. In fact, *Lloyd’s* promotes the superiority of the English translation, and Englishness in general, over the French.

Cheap popular periodicals, as a whole, reinforced a distinction between *us*, the English reading community, and *them*, the cultural and geographical other. This distinction was further perpetuated in media such as *Lloyd’s Weekly Newspaper’s* news column “Epitome of Foreign and General News,” which used the imagery of the *Nights* as part of its characterization of the foreign as opposed to the general and national in its enterprise of nation-making and imagination-making among lower-class readers. As late as 1890, one “Epitome of Foreign and General News” juxtaposes short news pieces about England, France, India, Japan, United States, Canada, Russia, and Iran. The column describes the Iranian Qajar Shah’s festival to commemorate a recent court appointment, which “in its splendor [has] surpassed even those mentioned in the ‘Arabian Nights.’” As such, the by-then-familiar imagery of the *Nights* sets up a picture of cultural otherness for the newspaper’s reading community, a point of emphasis in Anderson’s view. Employing the *Nights* in reference to Persia might sound straightforward; nonetheless, *Lloyd’s Weekly Newspaper* also used the collection of tales to report on the British monarchy. For example, “The Queen’s Visit” is an 1855 commentary on Queen Victoria’s upcoming visit to Paris. The report inquires whether “the visit of the constitutional Queen to the absolute emperor may have some political result in France” (“The Queen’s Visit”). Moreover, Queen Victoria is hailed as “a sovereign of a free people—of a people able to impose their will upon their government,” and France’s sovereignty is described as “a potentate who holds the strings of the press tightly between the imperial fingers” (“The Queen’s Visit”). The significance of the visit, as reported in the article, is such that the festivities will “bring the imagination of the ‘Arabian Nights’ to the level of reporting” (“The Queen’s Visit”). In this case, the *Nights* is not exclusively used to construct an image of non-European otherness, but is also invoked to foster an impression of British sovereignty as ‘grandiose’ and ‘liberal’ vis-à-vis its European counterparts. This portrayal of British sovereignty also helped to reinforce the necessity of accepting and upholding the British power structure, especially among lower- and

middle-class readers.

Lloyd's Weekly Newspaper also used the *Nights* to recommend a “national policy” concerning the conflict between Britain and Russia after the Crimean War (1853-56) (“The War of the Peace-Makers”). The article claims that “the political horizon is dark” and considers the Liberals’ peace-seeking a “mischievous policy” at a time when England should demonstrate “cool courage” and “resolute strength” and protect Constantinople against Russia (“The War of the Peace-Makers”). Although the English are “peace-loving, [...] law-abiding and a loyal people [...] the dogs of war, indeed, are chafing at their chains in every part of the Continent” (“The War of the Peace-Makers”), which made active opposition against Russia and its European allies all the more important. This pro-war argument is made with a reference to the *Nights*, as the author accuses peace campaigners of portraying Prime Minister Benjamin Disraeli as a “political wizard, a figure whisked by Fortune, in one of her jocund moods, from the pages of the ‘Arabian Nights’ to the official residence in
452 Downing-street” (“The War of the Peace-Makers”). This statement refers to pro-peace campaigners’ attempts to foreground the Prime Minister as a mysterious and devilish figure “with a guilty desire to plunge us into the horrors of the war” (“The War of the Peace-Makers”). In fact, at the centre of its pro-war argument, the article capitalizes on some of the popular associations of the *Nights* as a world run by wizards (such as the Moroccan magician in “Aladdin”), whose superhuman power and haphazard appearances (“whisked by Fortune”) could disrupt everyday life and lead to the loss of sovereignty. The *Lloyd's* article incorporates pop-cultural references to the *Nights* to counter the peace advocates’ image of England’s Prime Minister as a devilish war-hungry wizard ‘whisked’ into high political office, and in contrast, to show him as politically qualified as well as straightforward and clear-minded on the necessity of the British imperial presence in the Ottoman territories. The rhetoric developed by and around the *Nights* in the article is intended to consolidate lower-class readers’ perception of both the fact and the necessity of British nationalist expression in order to deter Russian imperialist activity that could further the war. The reference to the *Nights* is very brief, but it is still integral to the argument in the *Lloyd's* article. It thus appears that the English pop-cultural knowledge of the *Nights* and its major tales, such as “Aladdin,” had developed, thanks to the many readily-available print editions, over the preceding decades, to the point that these references were instantly recognizable.

Comparing the translations/publications of the *Nights* in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Robert Irwin has stated that the latter demonstrate the visualization of British imperialism. He points to the frontispieces and illustrations of the *Nights*, and maintains that in the eighteenth century, there was little sense of the otherness of the Arab world, and “until the publication of the *Description de l’Egypte* and then of Edward William Lane’s *Manners and Customs of Modern Egyptians*, there were very few sources to fuel the Western visual imagination” (Irwin, “The *Arabian Nights* and the Origins of the Western Novel” 149). Building on this observation, an examina-

tion of the popular press and their various re-appropriations of the *Nights* indicates that British imperialism was not necessarily constituted vis-à-vis non-European otherness; rather, it included European powers. Moreover, the *Nights* was not merely used to project an Other in order to rationalize British colonial missions, a conventional postcolonial scholarly approach. Rather, the *Nights* was also employed to promote British official nationalism across the lower social classes in order to affirm British sovereign subjectivity and incorporate these classes within the expanding frame of the nation, sometimes against their class loyalties. The possibility of social revolution was still considered a threat, and although the 1867 Parliamentary Reform Act had extended the franchise to some sectors of working men, the lurking potential for revolution required a counteragent in the form of imperialism (Gilligan 37). Imperialism, it was believed, had the benefit of tackling “the twin perils of socialism and foreign competition” (Gilligan 37). The justification was that through “imperialism the working class would benefit from advancing prosperity and the colonial peoples would be ‘civilized’ by the white man” (Gilligan 37).¹¹ Examining the re-appropriations of the *Nights* in the popular press for the working classes indicates its use, not to develop a distinct class consciousness, but to foster among the lower classes a consciousness of Britain as an empire, thus affirming English national subjectivity and encouraging acceptance of the status quo.

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Describing the operations of official nationalism, Anderson has delineated the process by which British colonial otherness is simultaneously domesticated and estranged within British imperial projects: “No matter how Anglicized a Pal [i.e., an Indian subject disciplined in British schools] became, he was always barred from the uppermost peaks of the Raj” (93). As such, Anderson shows that official nationalism marks otherness as inherent, essential, and permanent. Nonetheless, as far as the re-workings of the *Nights* in the popular press of England are concerned, cultural otherness is also re-appropriated and domesticated for internal consumption and affirmation of the native British national order. The national enterprise became feasible through, among other things, the cheap re-printing of ‘useful’ material for the lower classes. Additionally, a nationwide collective and simultaneous imagining of otherhood seems to be as integral to the construction of modern English nationhood as is the collective simultaneous imagining of the self. To deliver the former, the *Nights* was constantly re-created, popularized, re-appropriated, and extensively distributed across the expanding English nation. The proliferation and incorporation of the *Nights* marked the English popular press, and through that the British project of official nationalism—far from solidly English, as Anderson theorizes it—as heterogeneously comprised of cultural and national otherness.

VI. CONCLUSIONS

This article does not deny Anderson’s notion of a simultaneity-oriented community

of readers. Rather, my purpose has been to examine some of the circumstances of the English popular publications of the *Nights* to demonstrate how the *Nights* produced a heterogeneous reading experience, both through the appropriation of Orientalia and through its appearances at the juncture of divergent class affiliations. This article has demonstrated some of the significant aspects of the commercialization and reprinting of the *Nights* to encourage working-class readers to become part of the bourgeois framework of the English reading community. In contrast to Anderson's notion of a regulated and solid nation of readers, Englishness in the nineteenth century seems to be characterized by heterogeneity on a number of levels. First, Englishness was not monolithic or unified across classes; second, it involved incorporation and domestication of the literary and cultural otherness of the *Nights*; third, the popularization of the *Nights* helped to mark British official nationalism by ultimately re-affirming the domestic status quo among the lower classes, diverting possible inclinations toward revolutionary socialism, and encouraging assimilation into the bourgeois platform of English citizenship.

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Furthermore, this study does not suggest that the *Nights* was not considered apt reading material for higher-class, or elite, readers. Readership of the *Nights* among the latter groups and literary elites is evident from references to the book and its tales in *The Academy*, *The Edinburgh Review*, *The Athenaeum*, *The New Quarterly Magazine*, *The Dublin Review*, and several other higher-class periodicals of the time. Reproductions of, and reactions to, the *Nights* for higher classes are outside the immediate scope of this article. Moreover, while one might be able to extend the results of this study to the circumstances of those tales of the *Nights* that were printed in separate collections rather than in editions of the *Nights*, further study is required to identify the multifarious uses of these tales in contemporary nation- and empire-building projects in England. Such tales as "Ali Baba and Forty Thieves," "Aladdin," and "Sinbad," for instance, recurrently appeared in the popular press of the time. As another example, *Sharpe's London Magazine*, which was devoted to supplying entertainment and instructional materials for a general readership, published "A Stray Leaf from One Thousand and One Nights: Abou Hasan of Khorassan" in 1863. The discussions in this article should also open new avenues of research into reproductions and re-formations of the *Nights* in nineteenth-century English women's periodicals as well as the theatrical adaptations of the *Nights* and its tales for mass audiences of the time. In 1849, for example, *Lloyd's Weekly Newspaper* published a positive review of H.S. Edwards's *Noureddin and the Fair Persian*, a reworking of "Anis al-Jalis" from the *Nights* (*Lloyd's* "Eastern Amusements"). An investigation of the consumption of this type of theatre would illuminate more of the public re-workings and utilizations of the *Nights* in the time under discussion.

This article has examined some important aspects of the popular print culture of the *Nights* in nineteenth-century England and demonstrated some of the uses of the *Nights* for the English nation-building enterprise, including its 'usefulness,' a perceived and amplified blend of edification and instruction—in order to 'unthink,'

challenge, and complicate Anderson's modernist account of nation formation as solid and homogeneous. I hope that my argument has also indicated some potential areas of research on the print history of the *Nights* and its insights into the formation of modernity and modern nation-states across national and linguistic boundaries.

NOTES

1. Hereafter referred to as the *Nights*.
2. In this essay, I am working from an economic understanding of class. The *OED* defines class as "[a] division or stratum of society consisting of people at the same economic level or having the same social status." ("class" 4. a.)
3. For a different example of fiction-based critical engagement with Anderson's theory of modernist nation-building, see Huang.
4. Marzolph and Chraïbi's "*The Hundred and One Nights: A Recently Discovered Old Manuscript*" is a representative example of the relative dispersal characterizing the manuscript culture of the *Nights* in comparison to its treatment in print. 455
5. See the Appendix for a listing of major editions of Lane's *Nights* in nineteenth-century England.
6. Hereafter cited as SDUK or the Society.
7. On these statements, see Venuti and Schacker.
8. Though Anderson associates the rise of the modern nation with the emergence of both the novel and the newspaper, explications of this theory have highlighted Anderson's views of the novel to the exclusion of the equally important form of the newspaper. On Anderson's theory of the novel, for instance, see Culler. Moreover, the influence of the *Nights* on the European novel has been explored at length. For instance, see Irwin, "The *Arabian Nights* and the Origins of the Western Novel"; Ali; and Caracciolo. Rather than pursuing this well-trodden path, I am demonstrating the re-appropriations of the *Nights* in popular periodicals and the participation of these re-appropriations in the enterprise of the imperial construction of Britain for and among lower-class readers.
9. For a detailed account of these changes, see Berridge.
10. Coincidentally, the same issue of *Reynolds's* announced the publication of Brougham's one-penny biography.
11. This is not to ignore working classes' resistance against narratives of British imperialism. For an account of forging nationalistic and imperialistic sentiments among the working classes, see Porter.

APPENDIX

The Appendix lists, in chronological order, major editions of Lane's *Nights* in the nineteenth century, as extracted from *OCLC WorldCat*. *OCLC WorldCat* recording format has been mostly kept in presenting the entries.

The thousand and one nights, commonly called in England, the Arabian nights'

entertainments: a new translation from the Arabic, with copious notes. By Edward William Lane; William Harvey; F. C. Loring; Gordon Norton Ray; Charles Knight & Co. London: Charles Knight & Co. Ludgate Street, 1838-1841.

Arabian tales and anecdotes [“being a selection from the notes to the new translation of ‘The thousand and one nights,’ by E.W. Lane.”]. By Edward William Lane. London, C. Knight & Co., 1845.

The thousand and one nights, or, The Arabian nights’ entertainments: translated and arranged for family reading, with explanatory notes. By Edward William Lane; William Ford. 2nd edition. London: John Murray, William Clowes and Sons, 1847.

The Arabian Nights Entertainments. By Edward William Lane. London: J. Murray, 1850. <http://www.mdz-nbn-resolving.de/urn/resolver.pl?urn=urn:nbn:de:bvb:12-bsb10249701-2>

- 456** *The Arabian nights’ entertainments.* [“translated by Edward William Lane, esq., with six hundred woodcuts by William Harvey”]. New edition. London, J. Murray, 1853.

Arabian nights entertainments: the thousand and one nights. [“new tr. from the Arabic ... by E.W. Lane ... ed. by E.S. Poole”]. London: Murray, 1859.

The thousand and one nights, commonly called in England the Arabian Nights Entertainments, a new translation from the Arabic with copious notes [Vols. 1, 2, and 3]. [“by Edw. Will. Lane, new illustr. edit. by Edw. Stanley Poole.”]. London, 1865.

The thousand and one nights: commonly called in England, the Arabian nights’ entertainments: a new translation from the Arabic, with copious notes. By Edward William Lane; Edward Stanley Poole; William Harvey; W.H. Lewis; C.S. Lewis. A new edition. Edited by Edward Stanley Poole. London: Routledge, Warne, and Routledge, 1865.

The Arabian nights’ entertainments. [“A new ed. in one volume”]. By Edward William Lane. London: George Routledge and Sons, 1866.

The thousand and one nights: commonly called, in England, the Arabian nights’ entertainments. [“a new translation from the Arabic, with copious notes by Edward William Lane. Illus. by many hundred engravings on wood, from original designs by William Harvey ... A new ed., from a copy annotated by the translator; ed. by his nephew, Edward Stanley Poole]. London: Bickers, 1877.

Arabian society in the middle ages; studies from the Thousand and one nights. By Edward William Lane. Edited by his grandnephew Stanley Lane-Poole. London, Chatto & Windus, 1883. <https://archive.org/details/arabiansocietyin00laneuoft>

The thousand and one nights: commonly called, in England, the Arabian nights’ entertainments. By Edward William Lane; Edward Stanley Poole. A new edition.

London: Chatto and Windus, 1889.

The thousand and one nights: or Arabian nights entertainment. [“translated by Edward William Lane”]. London: Gibbings and Co., 1896.

The Thousand and One Nights commonly called in England; The Arabian Nights’ Entertainments Translated from the Arabic by Edward William Lane. By Edward William Lane; James Donaldson. [“Reprint of the first edition of Lane’s Translation from the Arabic”]. London: Bliss, Sands, and Foster 15, Craven Street, Strand, W.C., 1896 (?).

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