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Abstract
Book review

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throughout the period. In the course of an informed and well-paced account that details the development of notions of literary property in the long eighteenth century, Stern provides his reader with a sweeping but still scrupulously comprehensive survey of the issues raised in the course of the period's myriad debates over copyright law—many of which debates, amazingly, yet have the power to resonate today. Manoeuvring his way gracefully through a mass of material that extends from the background provided by the work of John Locke, to the Licensing Acts of the mid- and late seventeenth century, through to the more explicit debates concerning copyright law that flourished in the first several decades of the century that followed (and Stern nicely emphasizes "the limited scope of legal protection and the correspondingly wide reach of the public domain" [72] at the time), the essay wraps up its historical coverage with a discussion of the "parodic and imitative writing" (88) that was "allowed to flourish" (72) under the legal regime that was in place by (at least) the middle years of the eighteenth century. In his closing pages, Stern reiterates a fundamental question that asks "why modern scholars might find a greater emphasis on aesthetic originality [among the writers active in the literary culture of the eighteenth century] than the contemporaneous legal discussion seems to support" (88). He concludes (as part of his response) with an acknowledgment that "theories of aesthetic originality have been so massively influential since the early nineteenth century that, to modern eyes, any reference to originality seems necessarily to include some element of creativity" (88). The essay possesses the virtue of emphasizing once again for the volume's readers just how relevant, how timely, and how truly fascinating the seemingly "historical" material and contexts examined throughout this collection actually remain.

Robert L. Mack, senior lecturer at University of Exeter, is the author of *The Genius of Parody: Imitation and Originality in Seventeenth- and Eighteenth-Century Literature* (2007).

Saree Makdisi and Felicity Nussbaum, eds. *"The Arabian Nights" in Historical Context: Between East and West*. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2008. xiv+318pp. CAN$139.50. ISBN 978-0-19-955415-7.

A heterogeneous entity of no single determinate origin, *The Arabian Nights* presents something of a scholarly mystery. Saree Makdisi and Felicity Nussbaum's remarkable collection of essays goes a long way towards dispelling the mystery—although not the enchantment—of the text's evolution, as the contributors trace the labours, literary

currents, and historical vicissitudes that shaped and were shaped by this fantastic, mercurial body of tales. From the early Arabic oral tradition to the fourteenth-century Syrian manuscript used by Antoine Galland in his 1704 French translation to the tales' circulation across Europe and their eventual return to the Arabic novel, the global travels of *The Arabian Nights* rival the extravagant wanderings depicted within the tales themselves.

The editors' introduction describes the extraordinary popularity and influence of *The Arabian Nights* as it crisscrossed the globe (eighty versions and twenty different editions in Britain alone in the eighteenth century). The text, or cluster of texts, is the offspring of numerous editions, translations, compilations, redactions, imitations, parodies, rewritings, and forgeries. The vertiginous instability of the text proper does not, however, cancel out its agency; in the language of the argument, the book seems to possess a kind of magical autonomy, not unlike the supernatural powers attributed to the enchanted objects contained within it: "*Alf layla wa layla*," the editors declare, "changed the world on a scale unrivalled by any other text" (1).

The introduction grapples with the legacy of Edward Said's influential *Orientalism*, using the *Nights* to reorient the enduring antithesis of East and West. If the *Nights* at times depict the East as a sensual, violently despotic, irrational culture to be pitted against western modernity—a vision of the Orient readily harnessed to imperial projects—the novelty and enchantment of the tales also offered a space of freedom and fantasy, a counter-narrative to Enlightened modernity. The tales alternately enabled Europeans to disavow aspects of their own culture by projecting it onto an Other and served as a means of attacking western culture under an exotic guise; they offered modes of reading and writing that superseded the mimetic promises of realism and the empathetic models of identificatory reading. The word "between" in the collection's subtitle (*Between East and West*) thus goes—and potentially allows us to have it—both ways, marking out the separation of Orient and Occident even as it locates *The Arabian Nights* as a mediating form that refuses such a division.

The essays for the most part live up to the ambitious agenda laid out in the introduction. In her study of the convergence of aesthetic and anthropological investments that make Galland's 1704 translation an act of transculturation, Madeleine Dobie wonderfully argues that the much-invoked notion of the "contact zone" presupposes the co-presence of defined groups localized in space and time, disguising how cultural contact is often experienced as a "blind interface" that eludes clear-cut description. Focusing on the enduring imagery of the *Nights* as a luxurious garden in an attempt to grapple with the text's "universal meaning and significance"—an assertion of a shared transhistorical

meaning that seems simultaneously wishful and troubling—Robert Mack offers a useful account of the numerous editions across the centuries (60). Nabil Matar shows that Arabic versions of the tales are no more static than the European, charting the devolution from the harmonious relations between Islam and Christianity depicted in the earlier cycles to the growing antagonism and intolerance in the first Arabic-language edition of 1835.

Examining the fantasies of social mobility and autonomy in female-authored Oriental tales, Khalid Bekkaoui argues that the heroines' renunciation of Christianity in order to remain with their Muslim lovers indicates the instability of European hegemony vis-à-vis an alluring Other. Ros Ballaster considers the mediating presence of Scheherazade's sister Dinarzade, arguing that eighteenth-century women writers present communities of sisterly interlocutors that circumvent the dyadic relation of despot to female subaltern, drawing on a set of thought-provoking, if occasionally extrapolated, parallels between *The Arabian Nights* and *Persuasion*. Whereas Ballaster sees the Oriental tale and the domestic realist novel as collaborating towards common national and imperial ends, Srinivas Aravamudan argues that one cannot be easily assimilated to the other. Pitting the action-oriented *Nights* against a subject-focused model in which character psychology and the consolidation of existing identities take precedence over plot, Aravamudan's important essay examines the intertwining of Oriental adventure and domestic realism in Frances Sheridan's *History of Nourjahad* in order to argue for the emergence of an Oriental "xenotrope" in tandem with the British domestic chronotope: "Each nationalism produces its own special chimera" (247).

Two strong essays by Donna Landry and James Watt are devoted to William Beckford's *Vathek*, while Tim Fulford's contribution treats the influence of the *Nights* on Romantic poetic sensibilities through an analysis of Samuel Taylor Coleridge's preoccupation with the formal structures of the *Nights* and their emphasis on non-human causality and an uncertain moral order. The tales also migrated to other media. Bridget Orr treats the fate of the *Nights* in the "illegitimate" theatrical genres of pantomime, melodrama, and romance in an essay notable for its impressive sensitivity to generic nuances and to the shifting national and class-based interests that shaped popular appetites for spectacle across the eighteenth century. Nasser Al-Taee's analysis of musicological and national translation in Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov's *Scheherazade* draws attention to the role of Orientalism in debates about distinctively Russian music. The volume concludes with Maher Jarrar's illuminating survey of the myriad reworkings of the *Nights* in contemporary Arabic fiction.

The obligatory complaints about what is missing from the collection (the tales' afterlife in dance, art, and film, for example) seem petty,

given that inclusive treatment would have made the volume longer than the tales themselves. That said, the emphasis on the eighteenth-century reception in France and England allows only fleeting attention to other centuries and nations (Spain, Italy, Germany, and Latin America are alluded to in passing). Whereas the nation-state serves as the organizing grid for the discussions of the West, the "East" at times veers between language-based diaspora and monolith, with Jarrar's essay, for example, asked to embrace Lebanese, Egyptian, Palestinian, and Algerian works. If the volume returns us to the division between East and West, however, it does so with the sense that the term "between" not only cleaves but also connects. The essays collectively seek to engage less in the comparison of set forms across a cultural divide than to depict the extraordinary confluence of cross-cultural influences that bring forth the *Nights* as a powerful and open-ended fiction. As such, these essays present an important methodological as well as literary-historical contribution to the field. In expanding the contexts in which the tales may be interpreted and interrogating the practices and protocols used to master their meanings, the collection invites us to reflect on how the *Nights* have historically been read and to imagine how we might learn to read them now.

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Ann Lewis. *Sensibility, Reading and Illustration: Spectacles and Signs in Graffigny, Marivaux and Rousseau.* Leeds: Legenda, Modern Humanities Research Association and Maney Publishing, 2009. xviii+292pp. US$89.50. ISBN 978-1-905981-96-0.

Ann Lewis undertakes a task of ambitious breadth and depth and of imposing complexity. Breadth and depth are evident in the opening overview and discussion of sensibility, an elusive and controversial term that resonates with emotional attitudes and is linked to moral, aesthetic, literary, and political concerns—with considerable variation both during and since the eighteenth century. Another dimension of breadth flows from the selection of three works as corpus, with a chapter each devoted to Graffigny's *Lettres d'une Péruvienne*, Marivaux's *La Vie de Marianne*, and Rousseau's *Julie, ou La Nouvelle Héloïse*. Complexity is inevitable given the need, first, to catalogue and analyze the verbal signs and spectacles (textual images) as well as the visual representations (illustrations) in each of the three works