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BRILL

Arabian Aesthetics in European Modernism

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Abstract

This article focuses on one aspect of the impact of the *Arabian Nights* on Western literature that has been rarely addressed, namely its impact on modernism. Modernism is almost always viewed as a quintessentially European movement, self-generated between the first and second World Wars. From there it spread to the rest of the world. Despite its global diffusion, the imperial project has remained to be viewed in terms of the impact of the colonial powers over the colonized. My contention is that the cultural traffic was not one-way, but two-way. By considering the cultural traffic as going two ways, we instill an understanding of Modernism as a World Movement and recognize the constitutive part that Arabic poetics played in European Modernism. This article thus detects how the narrative logic of the most famous Arabian tales structured the works of the two pillars of High Modernism, Marcel Proust and James Joyce.

Keywords

Arabian Nights – high modernism – Proust – Joyce – aesthetics – poetics – memory

• • •

One Thousand and One Nights is certainly one of the most seminal pieces of literature, not least because of its profound influence on the patterning and structure of subsequent narrative ventures.

NAGUIB MAHFOUZ

• • •

'Narrate or Die,' for Proust's narrator as for Scheherazade, is the imperative which underlies the exercise of verbal craft. By mere sentences placed end to end, one's sentence is commuted for a while and the end postponed.

MALCOLM BOWIE

• • •

[D]oes *The Arabian Nights* fit inside of [Joyce's] Ulysses or is it the other way round?

BRAD BANNON

• •

I shall concentrate on one aspect of the impact of the *Arabian Nights* on Western literature that has been rarely addressed, namely its impact on modernism. Modernism is almost always viewed as a quintessentially European movement, self-generated between the first and second World Wars. From there it spread to the rest of the world. *Al-Ḥadātha*, as we call Modernism in Arabic, is seen as a Western import and is often dubbed as alien. In contrast to modern art, where the influence of non-European aesthetics is better known, such as the impact of Japanese prints on Van Gogh¹ and African masks on Picasso,² the non-European

1 There are dozens of works on impressionism and Japonisme in Van Gogh. In her article on Van Gogh, Janet Walker documents the variety of woodblock prints that the Van Gogh brothers (Vincent and Theo) collected. She analyzes the influential role of these prints—a sort of index of a “japon rêvé”—on the imagination, artistic innovation, and worldview of Vincent Van Gogh. As she puts it, “when European political and cultural hegemony threatened to overwhelm non-Western cultures, Van Gogh was able to create a powerful image of ‘Japan’ that creatively assimilated Japanese aesthetic techniques and cultural beliefs” (108).

2 The impact of African art is recognized from even a cursory view of Picasso's work and much has been written on its influence on modern art and cubism. See the classical work by Robert Goldwater, *Primitivism in Modern Art* (1938), the 2-volume work edited by William Ruben, “Primitivism” in *20th Century Art* (1984), and Denise Murrill, “African Influences in Modern Art” (2000). Gikandi argues that such impact is framed in such a way as to exclude the constitutive part of African art on Picasso: “Why is it that Picasso's intertextual relation to Gauguin or Cézanne was considered constitutive (hence conceptual) while his relationship to

roots of literary modernism are less known. Although the impact of Hindu and Indian thought are detected in the works of T.S. Eliot, the Japanese Nô theatre in William Butler Yeats's drama, Pharaonic and Chinese poetry in Ezra Pound's poetics, yet such modernist writers' deployment of such motifs remain allusive and intertextual, and thus rather difficult to attest to by the general reader.

In the realm of art, the visual aspect of a painting or a sculpture gives away any "foreign" element in it almost immediately. The viewer, even though not an art critic, can sense instantly the un-European style embedded in a European artwork. No one can see Pablo Picasso's *Les Femmes d'Alger (O. J. R. M.)* (1907) without immediately recognizing the impact of African masks. Certain aspects of Modernist European movements have been studied by literary critics and art historians, who have acknowledged non-European components and thus demystified claims of cultural purity. Yet such research has remained intransitive; it has not revised the definition of Modernism as a purely European cultural phenomenon. Studies of non-European factors in modernist experimentation have not radicalized the view of what Modernism is, or redefined it as an outcome of global interaction. It is as if there is an erasure of non-European elements when it comes to defining European cultural innovations in the modern period. The non-European roots of Greek thought and culture, for example, have been revealed in such studies as Martin Bernal's *Black Athena*; the impact of Islam on the literature of the Middle Ages and particularly Dante has been documented by Miguel Asín Palacios and more recently by Jan Ziolkowski; as well as the role of Averroes in the European Renaissance (see *Alif*). Despite such studies of the Classical, Medieval, and Enlightenment periods, the history of Modernist European literary culture continues to be viewed essentially as self-generated, *causa sui*, not a hybrid. There are rare studies that have recognized the impact of the Orient on twentieth-century literary movements such as the thorough study of D'Outreligne-Saidi on surrealism, yet it has not made a dent in the definition of the surrealist movement as an essentially European cultural product (see also the study of Buisine on the Oriental dimension of Proust). Moreover, the number of studies on the non-European in literary movements does not compare favorably with those on the non-European presence in modern art.

Despite its global diffusion, the imperial project has remained to be viewed in terms of the impact of the colonial powers over the colonized. My contention is that the cultural traffic was not one-way, but two-way. By considering the

African objects was perceptual, a more starting point to something more profound than its degree zero?" (469).

cultural traffic as going two ways, we instill an understanding of Modernism as a World Movement and recognize the constitutive part that Arabic poetics played in European Modernism. My article goes beyond finding references and allusions made by master modernists to Arabian lore, but instead detects the narrative logic of the most famous Arabian tales as having structured the Modernist texts in the heart of Europe.³

By looking at cultural traffic as going both ways, we propose an understanding of modernism as essentially a global movement. World literature is not simply a traveling literary work recognized as such in different cultures, but also, as I maintain, a work that itself has been shaped by more than one culture. Dominated cultures had an impact on the more powerful ones, even if not in the same measure that the colonial ones had on the cultures of the colonized. While the colonized were busy imitating and displaying their imitation of the dominant and intruding culture, the colonial culture was also borrowing from native cultures and trying to accommodate the diversity of empire, but in ways that did not reveal colonial mimicry, or at least did not display it. Thus, this “creative borrowing” (to use the term of von Grünebaum) was not recognized critically as such and discussions of literary Modernism have remained enclosed within a European framework, notwithstanding the few studies that point to specific borrowing. Under colonial rule, indigenous cultures were penetrated by a combination of brute force and transplantation: on one hand, by repressing native cultures and presenting them as inferior or lacking (as Said showed in *Orientalism*), and, on the other hand, by transplanting foreign social institutions and European cultural norms unto the far regions of the world. The impact of colonial dispossession of the colonized has been studied in the field, if not sub-discipline, of Post-Colonial Studies. However, the impact of the indigenous cultures on the empire has yet to be assessed, and in particular on literary works.⁴

3 Brandon Kershner points out it is not a one-way borrowing even if we have a dominating-dominated relation: “As most of the modernist writers realized, any master-slave formation implies a dangerous cultural ambivalence” (282).

4 Zack Bowen gets close to seeing the impact of the *Arabian Nights* on Joyce. Although he mentions it, Bowen does not elaborate, however, and concentrates instead on the analogical relations between Haroun al-Rashid (Al Raschid) and characters in *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake*. He refers to Gerhardt’s description of the cycle, concluding its affinity to Modernism: “[her] assessment sounds so much like the modernist, non-judgmental ambivalence regarding resistance to closure, moral message, and accuracy of the human predicament that it comes close to a description of *Ulysses*” (299). Furthermore, he himself describes the *Nights* and draws attention to its affinity to Joyce’s work: “Given full license within the formality of the frame

In the period commonly known as High Modernism, following WWI, the accumulated effect of non-European elements in culture as well as a certain awareness that European culture itself had ceased to be steady and firm made writers inscribe this new world, with its contradictions and juxtapositions, in novel ways. The intellectual assault on traditional modes by such thinkers as Nietzsche, Marx, and Freud prepared the ground for deconstructing traditional certainties and questioning Eurocentric worldviews, leading to the writers' adoption of wider perspectives. In a short section in *Culture and Imperialism*, entitled "A Note on Modernism," Edward Said states that "the formal dislocations and displacements in modernist culture, and most strikingly its pervasive irony, are influenced by ... two factors: the contending native and the fact of other empires" (228).

Said suggests that when Europe had to account for its imperialist dreams and geographic discoveries, it attempted—at least in the artistic sphere—a new inclusiveness, not exclusiveness, based on irony. He sums up the changes that empire brought to Europe and its modernist orientation in three salient points:

[A] new encyclopedic form became necessary, one that had three distinctive features. First was circularity of structure, inclusive and open at the same time Second was a novelty based almost entirely on the reformulation of old, even outdated fragments drawn self-consciously from disparate locations, sources, cultures: the hallmark of modernist form is the strange juxtaposition of comic and tragic, high and low, commonplace and exotic, familiar and alien Third is the irony of form that draws attention to itself as substituting art and its creations for the once-possible synthesis of the world empires.

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Said argues that the Empire on which the sun did not set and which included the diverse regions of the world was the basis for an aesthetic of spatiality that combined the pluralism and the hybridity of the Empire.

If we were to look closely at the three features isolated by Said as the touchstones of modernism: circular structure, assembly of diverse fragments,

tale, the countless contributors to these tales [the *Arabian Nights*], right through their European translators and interpreters, were able to add embellishments, modify, shape, distort, or simply play with the venue and create an enormous reflection of the culture's imagination. As the reader might guess, what I am talking about increasingly resembles both *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake*" (299).

and irony, we will find them also as the typical features of *The One Thousand and One Nights*. While Said explains the emergence of modernism as a function of the empire in its inclusion of different cultures, that is, he explains the dominant features of the most prominent literary movement in Europe in terms of history, geography, and sociology, I would like to add that certain indigenous literary works—in this case, the *Arabian Nights*—contributed to this aesthetic by offering a literary model that could embody and exemplify the new context in which Europe found itself immersed in the aftermath of its imperial conquests. In my view, the *Nights* offered European artists a paradigm by which they could get hold of their collective experiential condition of co-existence, of being in a diversified world that is neither closed nor static. The assimilation of the model might have been conscious or unconscious, but there was no shortage of occasions to be exposed to it starting from the early eighteenth century, after the translation of the *Nights* by Antoine Galland in twelve volumes (1704–1717) under the title *Les mille et une nuits: Contes arabes traduits en français*.

The *Arabian Nights*, as everyone knows, is the most famous secular text of world literature from the “Orient”. It became a bestseller in the eighteenth century and continues to be so until today. In the nineteenth century, the *Nights* had penetrated European critical thought as Muhsin Ali [al-Musawi] has documented in his *Scheherazade in England*. Robert Irwin devotes an entire chapter to the “Children of the Nights,” elaborating on the literary works that carry the imprint of the *Nights*: “From the eighteenth century onwards, translations of the *Nights* circulated so widely in Europe and America that to ask about its influence on western literature is a little like asking about the influence on western literature of that other collection of oriental tales, the Bible” (237). Conferences and scholarly works on the impact of the *Nights* on Western thought and literatures continue to be produced in our own time. To give a few recent examples, one can consult Marina Warner’s *Stranger Magic* (2011), Philip Kennedy and Marina Warner’s *Scheherazade’s Children* (2013), and Paulo Lemos Horta, *Marvellous Thieves: Secret Authors of the Arabian Nights* (2017). The latter engages with the *modernity* of *The Thousand and One Nights* before the term became part of our critical discourse.

Not only did European authors read the *Arabian Nights*, but the tales were also read to them as children, thus leaving a definite impression on their psyche and imagination. Marcel Proust and James Joyce, Walt Whitman and Stéphane Mallarmé—and just about every canonical writer in the West—has recalled childhood memories of tales from the *Nights*. The *Nights* has penetrated European culture—both popular and elite, both literary text and artistic form—to the point where it is sometimes referred to as a “Western

classic," not because the West claims its authorship but because of its diffusion in the West and its appropriation by Western culture.

I shall concentrate on two pillars of High Modernism, Marcel Proust and James Joyce, to show how the aesthetics of the *Nights* has shaped theirs. My intention is not confined to picking a motif from the *Nights* in their work or simply finding intertextual relations. My intention is to sketch similar, if not identical, aesthetics and foundations for creative production in the *Nights*, Proust, and Joyce.

Proust did not only love the *Nights* and reread it regularly, but it was his frame of reference. The characters in *À la recherche du temps perdu* (*Remembrance of Things Past*), including Marcel the narrator, are seen in terms of characters in the tales of the *Arabian Nights*. Aunt Léonie is depicted as a Persian Princess; the Princess de Guermantes is like Badr al-Boudour; Paris is compared to Baghdad; the flogged Baron de Charlus is compared to the transformed sisters in the tale of "The Porter and the Three Ladies of Baghdad." Marcel himself, as he narrates his stories trying to vanquish death, is compared to Shahrazad:

Si je travaillais, ce ne serait que la nuit. Mais il me faudrait beaucoup de nuits, peut-être cent, peut-être mille. Et je vivrais dans l'anxiété de ne pas savoir si le Maître de ma destinée, moins indulgent que le sultan Sheriar, le matin, quand j'interrompais mon récit, voudrait bien surseoir à mon arrêt de mort et me permettrait de reprendre la suite le prochain soir. Non pas que je prétendisse refaire, en quoi que ce fût, les *Mille et une Nuits* Ce serait un livre aussi long que les *Mille et une Nuits* peut-être, mais tout autre.

PROUST, *À la recherche* III: 1043

If I worked, it would be only at night. But I should need many nights, a hundred perhaps, or even a thousand. And I should live in the anxiety of not knowing whether the matter of my destiny might not prove less indulgent than the Sultan Shahriyar, whether in the morning, when I broke off my story, he would consent to a further reprieve and permit me to resume my narrative the following evening. So my book, though it might be as long as the *Thousand and One Nights* ... would be entirely different.

PROUST, *Remembrance* III: 1101–1102

Lest someone might think I am overstating the impact of the *Arabian Nights* on the quintessential modernist, Proust, and accuse me of projection, let me use as evidence two major works that uphold this view. Dominique Jullien in her book, *Proust et ses modèles* (1989), considers the two effective literary models

for *À la recherche du temps perdu* as the *One Thousand and One Nights* and *Les mémoires de Saint-Simon*. A doctoral dissertation that was later published as a book, *Lilies and Sesame: The Orient, Inversion and Artistic Creation in À la recherche du temps perdu* (1998) by Anthony Everman confirms and further elaborates the aesthetic role the *Nights* played in the imagination of Proust, and how it develops from being an oriental topos of his childhood to a key trope in his adult life.

A number of other articles have also handled the Oriental side of Proust, without ever suggesting the role of the *Nights* in actually triggering the modernist movement of which Proust is an icon. The same can be said of James Joyce, even though an entire double issue of the *James Joyce Quarterly* (35: 2/3, Winter-Spring 1998) is dedicated to “Re-Orientating Joyce.” However, such studies on the role of the *Nights* in Joyce and Proust, interesting as they are, remain distanced from the scholarly definition and history of modernism. Just to take a couple of examples, Morton Levitt’s *James Joyce and Modernism: Beyond Dublin* (2000) and Gerald Gillespie’s *Proust, Mann, Joyce in the Modernist Context* (2010) seem to be able to discuss the modernism of Joyce and Proust without any reference to the Arabian impact on them or the effect of the heterogeneity forged by empire. Furthermore, in a recent study entitled “Modernism” by David Ellison, Joyce’s *Ulysses* is viewed merely as “the mirror of the history of Western civilization” (217). Proust’s *À la recherche* is seen as contemplating “the prestige of art being threatened by the ravages of human mortality” (217), without any mention of the impact of the *Nights* as a model which Proust himself had admitted to. It is interesting to note that Ellison in his earlier work, *The Reading of Proust*, points to the analogy of Marcel the narrator and Shahrazad the narrator: “Like Scheherezade whose execution is deferred as long as she produces imaginary tales and entertains the king, Marcel can hope to avoid suffering at the hand of his ruler, Albertine, as long as he transforms her from the possessor of magical, unknown energies into the passive reader of his invented experiences” (161). This omission of the *Nights* when mentioning Modernism is indicative of what I have been demonstrating, namely that acknowledgment of the impact of the non-European is present in given instances but not accounted for when explaining Modernism. This glaring absence corresponds to Simon Gikandi’s denouncement of the way modern aesthetics drop African art from its analysis even though modern painters have borrowed from it, and his refutation of the argument that such African objects were merely the launching pads for modernist art but not constitutive of it (455–480). It is a kind of departmentalization if not ghettoization where the existence of the cultural Other is recognized in Europe but is never made part of the process of its modernization. Peter Wollen maintains “that there was a

strong 'ornamental' and 'oriental' element in early modernism that later was 'written out' of the movement's mythology" (qtd. in Kershner 293).

Irwin suggests that what Proust actually produced was "*a Thousand and One Nights* for his own times" (281). I would not go as far as Irwin, but I will argue that some of the most seminal passages of the Proustian epic, those which point to his aesthetics of memory and recollection, are based on the *Nights*. There are many places in *À la recherche du temps perdu* in which references and allusions to the *Nights* occur. The best-known example is that of the chinaware that Proust the child used, and which carried images of Ali Baba, Aladdin, the Sleeper Awakened, and Sindbad the Sailor (I: 904). Irwin states that although "the oriental images displayed on the cake plates are less famous than the *madeleine* dipped in tea, they too play a recurring role in conducting the narrator back to his lost past" (281). I will argue that the plates representing figures from the *Nights* are an incidental reference to the *Nights*, and that it is precisely the famous *madeleine*—often seen as the key metaphor to understanding the poetics of Proust—that relates intimately to the *Nights*, albeit in a concealed way. The *Nights* figures as a subtext in the *madeleine* incident, yet Proust, by drawing our attention to the *Nights*' images on the plates, displays his borrowing act in front of our eyes. The appearance of an adjacent motif of the *Nights* in this particular incident dissuades the ordinary reader from finding it hermeneutically submerged in the more French elements at hand, as exemplified in the French pastry, *la petite madeleine*. Thus in a cursory reading we are obliged to note the existence of the Arabian motif on the plates along the very French *madeleine*. Yet it is precisely the French *madeleine* that conceals the Arabian core. In other words, as readers we recognize the *Arabian Nights*' characters in the chinaware but consider the typically *French madeleine* the key to the action of involuntary memory now emblematic of Proust.⁵ I contend that the very French *madeleine* is a camouflage to the device that reveals buried treasures typical of the *Arabian Nights*.

The dipping of the *madeleine* in lime-blossom tea is a moment in which memory is unlocked; it is a magical event of sorts that opens up the treasure house of remembrance. It is a key so to speak that retrieves the wealth of past incidents. Not any pastry could have done this, not a *petit four*, nor a *papillon*,

5 The *madeleine* was named after Madeleine Paumier who worked in the kitchen of the Duke of Lorraine and former King of Poland, Stanislas Leszczynski, in the eighteenth century. She concocted the pastry as the cook had left the Duke's menu without a desert. When the Duke found it delicious and asked about its name, he was told that it was just baked impromptu and did not carry a name. He declared then it should be called after ingenious Madeleine who invented it (S. Walker 394).

not a *mille-feuilles* nor an *éclair*, nor any kind of French pastry, but only a *madeleine* could trigger this stream of images of bygone times. Furthermore, it had to be a *madeleine* soaked in tea, not in milk or coffee or hot chocolate. It is a complex formula where two agents have to coincide: that particular type of pastry and that particular type of drink. This corresponds to the sealed treasures in caves and the underworld where only a certain boy in a certain place can unseal them, as in the Moorish magician who comes seeking the right boy to take him to the right place to perform the magical unlocking of what is concealed and *marsūd*, that is, destined only for him. In the tale of Aladdin and the magic lamp, we come across a magician seeking a specific boy: "The stranger was a famous magician who was a skilled physiognomist, saw in 'Ala al-Din's [Aladdin's] face all that was absolutely necessary to carry out the purpose of his journey" (Haddawy 82). Thus, it is not any street boy who can unlock the treasures but only one particular urchin who can open the underground treasure. The magician says to Aladdin: "Indeed, there is no one in the world, save you, who is permitted to touch this stone and to lift it, in order to enter" (Haddawy 88). But in order to get to the stone that requires lifting by only one specific child the magician has to start a fire and throw in "incense he had ready, raising a heavy cloud of smoke ... while pronouncing some magic words" (Haddawy 88). It is a two-step process that requires the incantation as well as the destined boy who can lift the stone and access the hidden treasures.

In the tale of "Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves," the magical formula to open the cave, "Open, Sesame!" (Haddawy 54) is again unique and cannot be replaced by anything else. Should one replace sesame by any other grain, the formula will not work. My own interpretation of the choice of grain, namely sesame, over wheat, barley, or rice comes not from its botanical nature but from its phonetic effect. In Arabic sesame is *simsim*; a repetition of one syllable, and gives the effect of incantational formulas, which are often associated with rhythmic and repetitive syllables. When Qasim, Ali Baba's brother, learns of the magical words that will open the cavern, he goes there with ten mules to carry away the exquisite riches. He enters but is unable to leave for he has forgotten that special formula. "Instead of saying 'sesame,' he said 'Open, barley,' and was very much surprised to find that the door, far from opening, remained shut" (Haddawy 57).

Proust himself, and Ruskin before him, seem to have assimilated the notion of treasure with sesame. The word occurs in the title of a lecture by John Ruskin "Sesame: Of Kings' Treasuries". The lecture, of course, has nothing to do with the Arabian tales. It is a text that deals with what to read and how to read, yet the term *treasuries* called to Ruskin's mind *sesame*. This lecture, along with another, was published under the title *Sesame and Lilies* and was translated by Proust as

Sésame et les lys. The pervasive impact of the *Nights* thus went as far as to create literary clichés in the minds of artists. In the *Nights*, sesame, the magic lamp, and the ring are talismans that can open up concealed worlds, and so is the *madeleine* in *À la recherche du temps perdu*. Proust's creative mind moved from the key boy, Aladdin, or the key formula "open sesame" to the key incident, the combination of a certain taste and a certain aroma—those of the *madeleine* dipped in tea—in order to unlock what is concealed in the mind: the treasures within.

There is definitely a transformation from the magical to the psychological in Proust, but the way memory works in Proust is very "magical," if one may say so. It is not a dialectic memory—where one thing leads to another and then another in a chain of resemblance and opposition, by metaphor and metonymy. Instead, a simple action of tasting opens up a realm of past experiences, and allows them to gush out. This is far removed from the intricate way by which Freud conceptualized dreams or Marx analyzed the historical process. The cascade of souvenirs that implode via one object in Proust is different from the way memory works in Freud's theory, grounded in language and signifiers, or in the operation of Marxist dialectics.⁶ In this key incident, Proust is closer in terms of process to magical thought, as it specifically takes place in the *Nights*, than he is to the discussions of memory by the intellectual luminaries of his time. Samuel Beckett even called the "madeleine steeped in an infusion of tea" a "fetish" and the process it triggers as "intellectualized animism" (30). Proust's disclaiming that his work was a reworking of the *Nights* is to a great extent true; but he also, and significantly, reworks the nocturnal poetics and the narrative transformations of the *Nights*. In the final chapter of the last volume of *Time Regained*, the narrator gives evidence once more of the fearful symmetry—to use Blake's expression—between Proust's work and the *Nights*, when Marcel compares his project to that of Shahrazad's.

This key moment of tasting the tea-dipped *madeleine* that delivers and redeems the narrator can also be seen in Joyce, albeit that with him it concerns an image rather than a gustatory experience. It is condensed and exemplified in the image of the young girl on the seashore in Joyce's autobiographical work.

6 There are several studies that have pointed out the affinity of Proust to Freud, starting with Jacque Rivière, who asserted in 1924 that "without Proust Freud cannot be understood" (qtd. in Rose 7), to Surprenenat and Jordan on Proust and Freud, as well as Mackenzie's *The Unconscious in Proust*. On Proust and politics, see chapter 4 in Bowie's *Proust among the Stars*, and Hughes's *Proust, Class, and Nation* and "Politics and Class." My point is not to deny such intersection of Proust with Freud or Marx, but to point out the difference in processes of cognition.

Joyce uses the Christian term, epiphany, to describe the magical moment when Stephen Daedalus sees the young girl in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. The nomenclature notwithstanding, it reflects also a talismanic sight where everything falls in place upon beholding the image. It is a moment of revelation of sorts. Joyce's fascination with Arabian lore and the *Nights* goes beyond the poem written by Caroline Norton in imitation of Arabic poetry, "The Arab's Farewell to his Steed" that appears in Joyce's short story "Araby" (in *Dubliners*). The poem recited by the uncle of the protagonist is somewhat incidental in the unfolding of the story. The poem shows the oriental vogue in poetry at the time, but does not reflect the narrative logic of the short story that is realistic and revolves around a romantic teenager who fails to bring a token for his girl from the bazaar Araby. The poem actually delays the protagonist from arriving in time to the fair, and stops him from buying a souvenir as he had intended (see Ehrlich).

On the other hand, the narrative logic of the *Arabian Nights'* penetrates the aesthetic architectonics of *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake*. The relation of *Ulysses* to the *Wake* is like the relationship of the Sindbad Voyages to the frame story of the *Nights*. Sindbad narrates in the daytime and stops at sunset and Shahrazad narrates at night and stops at dawn. We have a diurnal and a nocturnal narrativity (Ghazoul 68–81). Ulysses goes on a voyage in Dublin—a microcosm of the world—while Sindbad goes on voyages to discover the seven *kishwars* or regions of the earth. Sindbad the Sailor and Sindbad the Porter are complimentary figures, so are Stephan Daedalus and Leopold Bloom. The Iraqi Sailor fond of wandering is replaced by Bloom, the wandering Jew. In as much as Joyce writes about Dublin and Ireland, the conditions of roaming and displacement have to be embodied in a credible character of flesh and blood, not a fantastic figure from the Orient. Bloom is a local variant of the Sindbadian quest for traveling and movement. The wanderlust of Sindbad is transformed into the exile of Bloom, but the principle of uprootedness remains the same. In fact, Bloom is presented as an Oriental in the section known as "The Lotus-Eaters," along with all the clichés of orientalism, from orientalizing features to Turkish baths and languorous moods. Sindbad, of course, was very much on the mind of Joyce and kept propping up in his text. The structure of *Ulysses* is that of the *Odyssey*, but the kinship of the Greek epic and the Irish masterpiece passes through the shipwrecked sailor Sindbad, as many critics in the West have noted.⁷ Hampson maintains that "[t]he merchant Sindbad is arguably a

7 See von Grünebaum, *Medieval Islam*, chapter 9, "Creative Borrowing: Greece in The Arabian Nights," pp. 294–319.

necessary step between the aristocratic Greek [Odysseus] and the democratic Bloom" (230). It is not only the protagonist that relates to the *Nights*, but as Brad Bannon puts it: "Joyce uses *The Arabian Nights* as another native model, a way of framing the substance of the novel [Ulysses]" (508). Bannon adds that "[t]here is a kind of Chinese-box structure at work here, but it is unclear which is the outermost box: does *The Arabian Nights* fit inside *Ulysses* or is it the other way around?" (506).

There are of course many references to the *Nights* in *Ulysses*, but I am less concerned with the occurrence of allusions than I am with the impact of the *Nights* on the very conception of the voyage. Joyce had not only read the *Arabian Nights* in different translations,⁸ but had also seen its staged adaptations. In the pantomime *Sinbad the Sailor*, which was shown in Dublin, there were characters named Tinbad and Whinbad. Joyce ends his penultimate chapter in *Ulysses* by Sinbad:

He rests. He has travelled.

With?

Sinbad the Sailor and Tinbad the Tailor and Jinbad the Jailer and Whinbad the Whaler and Ninbad the Nailer and Finbad the Failer and Binbad the Bailer and Pinbad the Pailer and Minbad the Mailer and Hindbad the Hailer and Rinbad the Railer and Dinbad the Kailer and Vinbad the Quailer and Linbad the Yailer and Xinbad the Phthailer.

When?

Going to dark bed there was a square round Sinbad the Sailor's roc's auk's egg in the night of the bed of all the auks of the rocks of Darkinbad the Brughtdaylater.

Where?

606–7: 2320–32

I choose this passage to emphasize not only the reference to Sindbad, but also to show the emphatic use of alliteration and *saja'* (prose rhyme), and the repetition of the conjunction "and," so typical of Arabic stylistics and particularly the oral poetics of the *Nights*. In the above passage the stylistic tendency of phonetic repetitions and parallelisms is combined with the Arabic grammatical phenomenon of *ishtiqāq*, the derivation from a tri-literal root which allows

8 Joyce had an Italian translation of the *Nights* (based on Galland's) by Dominicus in Trieste and had Burton's translation in Paris. According to Michael Gillespie and Thomas Connally, the scholars who worked on Joyce's Library, he had marked both of them (qtd. in Bowen 306).

speakers of Arabic to coin new words that would be perfectly understandable by other speakers since the meaning of the root and the significance of the structure remain recognizable. This stylistic orientation is similarly amplified in *Finnegans Wake*, turning the text into a series of puzzles, and challenging the creativity of the reader. Reading becomes not only a matter of having broad knowledge, but also an act of ingenious deciphering.

Finnegans Wake is a work of nocturnal fantasy: "Joyce's initial interest in the Arabian Tales had to do with the fact that they were 'night' stories. Having written *Ulysses* as a book of the day, he was conceiving *Finnegans Wake* as a book of the night" (Yared, "Joyce's Sources" 130). It is a dream of sorts in which the devices typical of the *Arabian Nights*, embedding and *mise en abyme*, offer a structural feature, while the Tales of the *Nights* are also interspersed in it. Characters like Haroun al-Rashid ("haround"), Sindbad ("Sinobiled"/"Sinbads"), and Shahrayar as reflected in Earwicker, whose very name evokes a listener ("Not the king of this age could richlier eyefeast in oreillental longuardness with laternate nightjoys of a thousand kinds but one kind. A sharryar cobbler on me when I am lying" *Wake* 357: 17–19). Henriette Power suggests that "Shahrazade offers Joyce a model for the reader redefined as a *voyeur* who simultaneously holds the reader's power of judgment and the writer's power of expression, who both discriminates and generates" (259). Grace Eckley acknowledges that "the *Nights* informs the *Wake* in many unsuspected passages" (64) and gives the example of "he could dixtinguish white thread from a black," (*Wake* 63: 25–27), a common way in Arabic to refer to the dawn. Aida Yared "In the Name of Annah" explores the Arab-Islamic traces in the *Wake*. Above all, the *Wake*, like the *Nights*, tries to be a total work, an encyclopedic text, to have the narratives of bygone times all assembled and packaged together. This nocturnal novel of Joyce is in fact a reworking of the poetics of the *Nights* in an Irish key and a modernist spirit.

To acknowledge the aesthetic model of the *Nights* in two prominent masters of modernism is not to deny in any way their originality and innovation, nor is it to dismiss other influences on them. Rather, it is a search for the non-European strands in the tight weave of Modernism, which is often presented as purely European and Western. Whenever one scratches the surface of what is purely this or that one finds hybridity lurking in the depths. In the beginning there was not one but many. The colonized cultures may have been dominated politically and subdued by force, but in more than one instance we find their literary and artistic presence imposing itself and changing the power equation so that the traffic is made to move in two ways.

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