



The Arabian Nights in Historical Context: Between East and West

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Alf layla wa layla (known in English as A Thousand and One Nights or The Arabian Nights) changed the world on a scale unrivalled by any other literary text. Inspired by a fourteenth-century Syrian manuscript, the appearance of Antoine Galland's twelve-volume *Mille et Une Nuits* in English translation (1704-1717), closely followed by the Grub Street English edition, drew the text into European circulation. Over the following three hundred years, a widely heterogeneous series of editions, compilations, translations, and variations circled the globe to reveal the absorption of *The Arabian Nights* into English, Continental, and global literatures, and its transformative return to modern Arabic literature, where it now enjoys a degree of prominence that it had never attained during the classical period. Beginning with a thorough introduction situating *The Arabian Nights* in its historical and cultural contexts--and offering a fresh examination of the text's multiple locations in the long history of modern Orientalism--this collection of essays by noted scholars from "East," "West," and in-between reassesses the influence of the *Nights* in Enlightenment and Romantic literature, as well as the text's vigorous afterlife in the contemporary Arabic novel.

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