permanent state of emergency, argues Beck, protecting itself from a series of apparent threats and responding to them through internment, nuclear preparation, the war on drugs, and the war on terror, spun together into a dreadful economy of fear. Drawing on threads of theory from Hardt and Negri, Baumann, Virilio and Agamben, this book looks to trace patterns through a range of texts defined as "adversarial literature" (14) – some well-known (Silko, McCarthy, DeLillo, Momaday), some hardly known at all (Page, Carr, Miyake, Meloy), but always unearthing 'the honeycombed crypts beneath the surface plane of the map' (183) to create a new political archaeology of the West. Analysing what he terms this "purloined landscape," Beck's style weaves detailed, reiterated arguments, patterns, and ironies that persuade us of the "lines of convergence" which have constructed this "permanent state of emergency" and demonstrates that, at its best, literature can perform a vital and necessary "critical unveiling" (20). The association of the West with liberty and openness is exposed here as a screen behind which lurks a dark, "gothic" truth about how these myths have been used to shield and hide a terrible, uncanny secret. It is literature's role, he argues, to become counter-surveillance, presenting "modes of cognitive and representational disturbance that might warp, fold, or rend the military–industrial desert screen" (44).

At times, the book does strain to remain within its literary boundaries, and showed in its brief discussions of Robert Smithson or Richard Misrach (one of whose photographs adorns the cover) the potential to widen its scope into multi-disciplinary connections and lines of enquiry. I thought, too, that criticizing Charles Bowden's *A Shadow in the City* for its use of "narrative conventions" was to overlook his more experimental work in *Blood Orchid*, for example, a book which would have worked so well here.

However, these are minor criticisms of an important book which, through convincing and nuanced literary studies, suggests persuasively that in a culture of crazy politics, fantasy fears, and deliberately maintained insecurity, with "everywhere subjected to the obfuscatory concealments and erasures of power" (4), perhaps it is ultimately only through imaginative writing that we come anywhere close to grasping "the ghost of the land [that] moves in the blood" of American history.

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Susan Nance, *How the Arabian Nights Inspired the American Dream, 1790–1935* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009, $49.95). Pp. 344. ISBN 978 0 8078 3274 5.

Susan Nance's *How the Arabian Nights Inspired the American Dream* is a well-researched and engaging study of a wide variety of people – dancers, magicians, acrobats, lecturers – both native and foreign, who "played Eastern" for over a century before the Great Depression. Nance argues that playing Eastern had little to do with questions of empire and race but rather with capitalism, because the East promised an abundance and leisure similar to that of consumer capitalism. The book begins by examining the popularity of *The Thousand and One Nights* and American Oriental tales

inspired by it, the fascination with Eastern architecture and indulgent Eastern repose which found material expression in features like the lady's Oriental corner in American parlors in the 1870s. It then considers the careers of Hatchik Oscanyan and Bayard Taylor, who used the *ex oriente lux* method of exposing common misconceptions of the East and flattering the audience as enlightened consumers, inviting them both to enjoy Oriental calm and to view the East as a terrain for rugged, manly travel. Chapter 3 reviews the careers of Freemasons Rob Morris and Albert Rawson, who used the persona of the wise man of the East, and the Shriners, who critiqued the commercialization of the East while simultaneously engaging in it by mimicking Muslim rituals for their initiation rites.

Moving to popular entertainment, chapters 4 and 5 survey a variety of foreign and native performers in tent shows and vaudevilles, ranging from those playing roles like the Bedouin horseman to circus performers managed by people like Hassan Ben Ali and his troupe of Arabian acrobats. They also examine the Eastern displays at the 1893 Columbian exposition, including the Ottoman Empire's efforts to represent itself as imperial caretaker. Next, in the most interesting chapter, Nance examines the interest in the Oriental dancer who emerged in public consciousness after the Columbian Exposition. Nance argues that the belly dance, which had a wide female following, allowed middle-class white women to imagine a powerful, sexually aware femininity which these women eventually transformed into a burlesque act known as the "hootchy-kootchy" which lampooned male desire. Nance demonstrates the agency of Eastern women by tracing the career of Algerian dancer Zelika Zimman, who challenged the court when tried for indecency, and that of white women like Ruth St. Denis, who performed Oriental dances. Turning to a different personification, chapter 7 explores the popularity of the Eastern swami at the turn of the century as the swami provided an antimaterialist critique of the US and appealed to Anglo-American women as a rebuke of male power. The final chapter explains how the African-American Members of the Moorish Science Temple and the Nation of Islam used Eastern personae and spirituality to claim the consumption and opportunity promised in the tale of Alladin's lamp.

The strength of the book is its dense archival research, which unearths the careers of little-known performers such as Jovedah de Rajah, aka Joe Downing, an African American mystic adviser, or the Lebanese acrobat George Hamid, whose life exemplified the rags-to-riches story. Refusing to deny the agency of both performers and audiences, Nance rejects any ideological analysis that would link playing Eastern to a discursive system such as Edward Said's Orientalism or to questions of Anglo-American racial hierarchy. Indeed, Nance argues that playing Eastern was most ubiquitous before the East became "practically or politically relevant to the bulk of the population or the U.S. government" (5) and that to understand the attraction of playing Eastern, one needs to stay clear of such presentist orientations and actually "listen to those who played Eastern" (7). Yet this intention is often undermined by the author's attempt to force a reading of Eastern performance as a sign of consumer individuation in capitalism. For instance, the author's contention that audience interest in the exotic performances of Arab entertainers was a way to enact the promise of consumer capitalism is not borne out by the subsequent analysis of the Eastern horseman, which concludes that the horseman could be a despised foreigner, a warrior, or trickster. Likewise, it is not clear how the attraction of the

spiritual swami and his antimaterialist critique once again illustrates how audiences could attain the American Dream through the consumption of Eastern spirituality.

The author's summary dismissal of all scholarship which considers empire in relation to US engagement with the East is also hasty. Two examples will suffice: Douglas Little's *American Orientalism* (2004), an analysis of diplomatic relations between the US and the Middle East as affected by images of the latter, while based on eclectic sources such as political writings as well as articles in *National Geographic*, is dismissed as lazy reduction; analogously, Hilton Obenzinger's *American Palestine* (1999), which reads Melville and Twain's works as counternarratives to popular views of millenialist restorations of the Holy Lands to Christianity, is seen as exemplifying a tradition of tracing a stereotypical and monolithic Orientalism.

While Nance's argument about the allure of the East as a sign of capitalist plenty is provocative, the author's insistence on severing this allure from any relationship with imperialism is problematic and unnecessary. Few would agree with the author's claim that Eastern nations were not politically relevant to the US government or the population before the 1930s. An informal empire was operant in China and Japan, and the Philippines was routinely seen as "Oriental." In recent years there have been a number of works that have analyzed the complexity and multiplicity of American discourses about the "Orient" despite an acknowledgment of US empire and investments in racialization: Yoshihara Mari's *Embracing the East* (2003), Scott Trafton's *Egypt Land* (2004), Brian T. Edwards's *Morocco Bound* (2005), and Tim Marr's *The Cultural Roots of American Islamicism* (2006). Nance's contribution to American engagement with the "East" is its unearthing of a variety of Eastern performances that were ubiquitous for over a century, thus making the Middle East as well as West and South Asia central to American identity.

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