and exegesis of the Quran, as well as their understanding and interpretation of Islamic history. In *Rediscovering the Islamic Classics*, El Shamsy shows how Muslim scholars were initially inspired by Orientalists in their programmes and methods of cultural reform and management of tradition but later responded to their understanding and assessment of Arabic classics, culminating in "fierce debates over philology and critical method" in the early twentieth century, and the development of indigenous philological methods and textual criticism (chapter 8, "Critiques and philology").

Moving away from postcolonial binaries and engaging with the idea of intercultural entanglement have made it possible for El Shamsy to go beyond the national frame and write a complex history of the Arabic intellectual traditions in the modern age. The fortunes of Arabic classics are determined by individual actors, whether vociferous intellectuals or silent correctors and editors, as well as the circulation of books and bodies of knowledge across transnational networks of European and Middle Eastern scholars. This history, as El Shamsy narrates it, is a series of intercultural dialogues – between past and present, East and West – which gave shape to the Arabic classics, as we know them today. As such, it not only fills the lacunae left in the prevalent discourses on the *Nahḍa* but also provides a much-needed corrective.

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RICHARD VAN LEEUWEN:
The Thousand and One Nights and Twentieth-Century Fiction:
Intertextual Readings.
(Handbook of Oriental Studies. Section One: The Near and Middle East.)
ix, 832 pp. Leiden: Brill, 2018. ISBN 978 90 04 36253 6.
doi:10.1017/S0041977X20002888

The author of this encyclopaedic book, Richard van Leeuwen, is a lecturer in Islamic studies in the Department of Religious Studies at the University of Amsterdam. He is a prolific author who has published extensively on the *Arabian Nights*, including *The One Thousand and One Nights: Space, Travel, and Transformation* (2007) and (with Ulrich Marzolph) *The Arabian Nights Encyclopedia* (in two volumes, 2004). He is also the first and only translator of the *Arabian Nights* directly from Arabic into Dutch (1999). What comes as a pleasant surprise in this book is Leeuwen's knowledge and command of twentieth-century fiction. He moves in this work from canonical authors of modernism and postmodernism to Third World novelists. He covers Nobel laureates – Naguib Mahfouz, William Faulkner, Gabriel García Márquez, Orhan Pamuk, and Toni Morrison – as well as lesser-known twentieth-century writers – the Libyan Ibrahim al-Faqih, the Cuban Abilio Estévez, the Iranian Bahram Beyzaï, and the Hungarian Gyula Krúdy – giving the reader a sense of unsuspected kinship among these writers, thanks to *The One Thousand and One Nights*, the common denominator which surfaces in these works.

Van Leeuwen's book is structured in such a way that the reader can pick and choose what set of writers to focus on. This is similar to reading the *Nights*, where one can skip a story or a set of stories and move to others without compromising the overall coherence of the work. Similarly, the Reader can choose what

works or what themes to focus on in this monumental work. Apart from the general introduction that the author provides, each part of the hexagon-like structure is introduced and concluded briefly. Each part has a theme under which other subsets of works are included. Here, as an example, is how the author presents part two of his six-division book, where he concentrates thematically on time. Thus the title of Part 2 is "Capturing the volatility of time". Within it, there are four subtitles: 'The return of time" (covering Marcel Proust and Ahmet Hamdi Tanpinar); "Narration and survival" (covering Vladimir Nabokov and Margaret Atwood); "Desire unbound" (covering The Marquis de Sade and Angela Carter); and "Temporal dystopias" (covering Botho Strauss and Haruki Murakami). As for the other parts, they cover: "Enclosures, journeys, and text"; "The textual universe"; "Narrating history"; "Identifications, impersonations, doubles"; and "Aftermaths: the delusion of politics".

In this embedding (one section inside another) and forking (the theme or motif splitting into more than one direction), which we come across in this work, are also the hallmarks of the *Nights*. Though van Leeuwen's book belongs to literary criticism, it has been infiltrated with Shahrazad's techniques and devices. Rather than touching on all the works the author analyses, I will refer to the fascinating section on James Joyce and the *Arabian Nights* (pp. 245–69). This is a particularly intriguing subsection of the book as it shows how pre-modern literature of the Orient has impacted high modernism. It throws light on two of Joyce's works: *Ulysses* (1922) and *Finnegans Wake* (1939) and guides us to fathom these enigmatic works, and by extension the corpus of Joyce, via the *Nights*. In this section van Leeuwen distinguishes between three types of references to the *Nights*: (1) references to the *Nights* via popular culture, (2) references to characters and episodes from the *Nights*, and (3) procedures borrowed from the *Nights* such as deferral, textual layering, etc. While *Ulysses* is commonly seen in its relation to the *Odyssey*, van Leeuwen shows how it corresponds to the *Nights*; as for *Finnegans Wake*: "The novel thus resembles the *Thousand and One Nights* in its structure and concept as a text that consists of a container filled with an irrepressible flow of stories or parts of stories" (p. 266). It is this fluidity and instability of both works that guides us not only to grasp Joyce's last work: such correspondence throws light on the poetics of the *Nights* through the stylistics of Joyce. This is also the place to point out how the influence of the *Nights* on Western literature has taken place via translations that vary considerably. Accordingly, the influence of the *Arabian Nights* should take into account the translation(s) read by an author. Joyce used Burton's translation of the *Nights*, which Burton claimed his rendering, with its archaisms and neologisms, reproduced Arabic stylistics in English. Van Leeuwen suggests that Joycean experimentation with language is due to Burton's model: "In a kind of proto-Joycean impulse, Burton attempted to break open the English language and fill it, in part, with Arabic elements in order to forge a new language . . . : it is probably the rather monstrous hybridity of Burton's style that influenced Joyce's radical experiment in linguistic anomaly" (pp. 267–8).

What I find odd in this work is the conclusion. Expecting to find a concluding essay to categorize modes of incorporating the *Nights* in twentieth-century literature, we find instead an excursion into the narrative universe of Paul Auster. Starting with Auster's first book, *The Invention of Solitude* (1982), which is part memoir and part critical theory, van Leeuwen sees in it the framework of his subsequent writing. No doubt that the frame of reference of Auster includes the frame story of the *Nights*, "speak or die", yet it is difficult to see why his works do not constitute another subsection of the book and are entitled instead "Conclusion".

In sum, this is a valuable book for courses in World Literature, Comparative Literature, and Translation Studies – in the broad sense of translation that includes how works and themes migrate from one place to another and what happens to them

when they do. The excellent indexes (Index of People and Places and Index of Subjects) in this voluminous work are useful tools for such courses and research.

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BARRY WOOD:

The Adventures of Shāh Esmāʿil, a Seventeenth-Century Persian Popular Romance.
(Studies on Performing Arts and Literature of the Islamicate World 8.)
xxiii, 485 pp. Leiden: Brill, 2018. €127. ISBN 978 90 04 38352 4.
doi:10.1017/S0041977X20002980

The founder of the Safavid dynasty (1501–1722), Shāh Esmāʿil I (r. 1501–24), who was the head of the Sufis of Ardabil, established Shiite Islam as the state religion. This helped create a national identity among tribes and united the country against the Ottomans, Mamluks, and Timurids. Far from the criticism he faced after his defeat in the Chālderān battle, which put Iran in a terrible state, he was celebrated as a national hero and became a mythical character among the people. His adventure was a popular story that storytellers related in coffee houses. Though oral tradition has preserved the details of the story, it is also written down and, in some versions, illustrated in manuscripts.

Barry Wood's research since 2002 has focused on the panegyric epic story of the founder of the Safavid dynasty and different versions of the anonymous histories of Shāh Esmāʿil. His recent book, *The Adventures of Shāh Esmāʿil: A Seventeenth-Century Persian Popular Romance*, translates one of the versions of the anonymous history, titled by its first editor *ʿĀlamārā-ye Shāh Esmāʿil*. According to the table in the book's preface (pp. xxii–xxiii), the author has identified 12 manuscripts of the anonymous history of Shāh Esmāʿil with dissimilar titles, and the manuscripts' dated colophons locate them between the 1680s and the 1820s. Wood's translation is based on the version edited, published, and owned by Aṣghar Montaẓer-Ṣāḥeb. In 1965 the manuscript was introduced by him in the Persian magazine *Yaghmā*; in 1971 he edited and published the story as a book, which has recently been republished for the third time (Aṣghar Montaẓer-Ṣāḥeb, *ʿĀlamārā-ye Shāh Esmāʿil*. 1392/2013, Tehran. Bongāh-e tarjome va nashr-e ketāb). The story – the latest-dated surviving version written in 1240/1825 – has had "the most time to evolve" and, Wood declares, is considered "the richest, most detailed one" (p. xxi).

The book *The Adventures of Shāh Esmāʿil* contains an 11-page preface, 467 pages of story, and a bibliography, as well as an index of names and locations. In the preface Wood establishes his discussion of three main subjects: the story's important role in understanding the popular mentality of the people of the late and post-Safavid period, lingual and structural characteristics of the text, and the story's potential areas of further research. The preface is short, concise, and inspiring. In its first lines the author introduces the text as a pseudo-historical narrative whose tales "are loosely based in historical fact but leavened with a great deal of what is apparently folk memory about a pivotal period in Iranian history"; the author believes it can open "a fascinating window on the way in which people in early modern Iran formed, transformed, and passed on the memory of a key figure in their cultural development" (p. xiii). Later he unpacks these information-dense statements and briefly describes the story's content and the basic principles of professional storytelling. Wood proposes theories about