



The Arabian Nights: A Companion (Tauris Parke Paperbacks)

By Robert Irwin



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The Arabian Nights: A Companion (Tauris Parke Paperbacks) By Robert Irwin Bibliography

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Editorial Review

From Library Journal

In this learned and exotic companion to the Arabian Nights, Irwin, a novelist and the author of *The Middle East in the Middle Ages* (Southern Illinois Univ. Pr., 1986), provides a history of its origins, translations, and textual editors; a treatment of the various literary approaches to the text (structuralist, folklorist, etc.); and insight into the work as social history. Irwin has, admittedly, concentrated on the "seedy and bizarre" aspects of the tales, asserting that the Arabic world of criminals, sorcerers, drug-takers, and adulterers is far less known than the edifying world of miracle-working holy men and sages. Though the Arab world long viewed the Nights as folk literature, in the West it has continued to exert enormous influence on diverse writers, giving way, only in the 20th century, to its rival genres, science fiction and fantasy. Irwin's soundly researched and provocative work is highly recommended for academics and interested readers of Arabic social history and literature.

Marie L. Lally, Alabama Sch. of Mathematics & Science, Mobile

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From Kirkus Reviews

Matching *The Arabian Nights'* scope and enchantment with erudition and wit, Irwin (*The Arabian Nightmare*, 1987) explores its elusive kingdom of stories, delving into the vast work's textual genesis, cultural history, and literary legacy. The most influential book in the Western canon that does not actually belong to it, *The Arabian Nights* never enjoyed the same literary status in the East, and its origins have been made only murkier by its reception in Europe. Irwin begins with the translators who popularized the Nights and, along the way, bowdlerized and warped it, or even inserted their own episodes. Most famously, Aladdin, who has no Arabic version predating his appearance in 18th-century France, may well have been the creation of translator Antoine Galland, not of Scheherazade. Irwin wryly glosses these early translations, which distortedly mirror the original Eastern exoticism with the reflections of their age's prejudices and their translators' personal eccentricities (notably the lexical, racial, and sexual obsessions of the Victorian adventurer Sir Richard Burton). The earlier Arabic compilations are no more reliable, however--Irwin devotes a separate chapter to forerunners (conjectural or lost) over several centuries, from India to Persia and Egypt. In a quixotic effort to amass 1,001 actual tales, these medieval compilers would incorporate local legends and real settings, sometimes approaching souk storytellers as sources. Throughout, Irwin's scholarly acumen illuminates these myriad worlds of the Nights, whether the cityscapes of the Mamelukes, the urban rogues' gallery of thieves and bazaar magicians, or the marvels of jinn and clockwork birds. The longest chapter is a selected roster of its literary heirs, from nursery fables and gothic novels through Proust, Joyce, and Borges, to contemporaries like Salman Rushdie and John Barth. An enchanting dragoman and chaperon for sleepless nights with Scheherazade. -- Copyright ©1994, Kirkus Associates, LP. All rights reserved.

Review

... an enthralling cascade of the arcane and the exotic.--Peter Kemp, *Sunday Times*

... story after story, wonder upon wonder. This monumental, infinitely faceted gem should be every writer's bedtime sampler.--Michael Moorcock, *New Statesman & Society*

*A generous and erudite book...We're in the company of someone who loves *The Arabian Nights*, and who has generously shared that love with us through this companion.*--Michele Roberts, *Independent on Sunday*

*Matching *The Arabian Nights'* scope and enchantment with erudition and wit, Irwin explores its elusive kingdom of stories, delving into the vast work's textual genesis, cultural history, and literary legacy.*--Kirkus

Reviews on 1994 Edition

Superlative...just the sort of relaxed, informative book that Edmund Wilson might have written had he grown interested in the Middle East and its early literature.--Michael Dirda, *Washington Post*

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Michael Jackson:

Here thing why this specific The Arabian Nights: A Companion (Tauris Parke Paperbacks) are different and reputable to be yours. First of all studying a book is good nevertheless it depends in the content from it which is the content is as yummy as food or not. The Arabian Nights: A Companion (Tauris Parke Paperbacks) giving you information deeper including different ways, you can find any book out there but there is no reserve that similar with The Arabian Nights: A Companion (Tauris Parke Paperbacks). It gives you thrill looking at journey, its open up your own eyes about the thing that will happened in the world which is possibly can be happened around you. You can easily bring everywhere like in recreation area, café, or even in your approach home by train. When you are having difficulties in bringing the published book maybe the form of The Arabian Nights: A Companion (Tauris Parke Paperbacks) in e-book can be your substitute.

Guadalupe Baxter:

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