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SCRITTRICI BRITANNICHE DEL SETTECENTO E *LE MILLE E UNA NOTTE*:  
DALLA TRASMIGRAZIONE DI UN GENERE  
ALLA CREAZIONE DI NUOVI GENERI LETTERARI

Nel variegato panorama letterario britannico del Settecento, il genere della novellistica orientale -quello, per intenderci, basato sul *pattern* delle *Mille e una Notte*<sup>1</sup>- venne preso a prestito, rielaborato e riadattato al contesto politico e culturale anglosassone e riscosse un successo di pubblico enorme: basti pensare

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<sup>1</sup> La prima versione europea delle *Mille e una Notte* (*Arabian Nights Entertainment*) si basa su *Livre des Mille et une Nuit* di Antoine Galland, pubblicato a Parigi tra il 1704 e il 1717 in dodici volumi; alla pubblicazione dei primi sette volumi in francese (1706), seguì la traduzione inglese. Già alla fine del 1712 una seconda traduzione inglese cominciò a circolare in Gran Bretagna sotto il titolo: *Arabian Nights Entertainments: Consisting of One Thousand and One Stories, told by the Sultanness of the Indies, to divert the Sultan from the Execution of a Bloody Vow he had made to Marry a Lady every Day, and have her cut off next Morning, to avenge himself for the Disloyalty of his first Sultanness, &c., Containing A better Account of the Customs, Manners, and Religion of the Eastern Nations, viz., Tartars, Persians, and Indians, than is to be met with in any Author hitherto publish'd. Translated into French from the Arabian MSS by M. Galland, of the Royal Academy; and now done into English*, London, Printed for Andrew Bell, 1712-1722. Tutte le edizioni inglesi di *Arabian Nights* che apparvero durante il XVIII secolo sono di volta in volta traduzioni dalla versione di Galland. Tra le numerose edizioni moderne, si segnala *Arabian Nights Entertainments*, ed. by Robert L. Mack, New York, Oxford UP, 1995. Si veda anche D. Black MacDonald, «A Bibliographic and Literary Study of the First Appearance of the *Arabian Nights* in Europe», *Library Quarterly* II (1932), pp. 397-420.

*Abstract*

In the variety of literary genres which literally exploded in Britain during the long eighteenth century, the so-called oriental tale, as a result of the immense influence of the translation of the Arabian Nights Entertainments into English at the beginning of the century, had a vast success. The structure, frame, style and themes of the Nights, which were at first simply «adapted» to fit into a more British context, gradually became a privileged means for expressing critical views on current political affairs and moral concerns. Yet whereas male writers focused on the moral message they could convey through their own versions of the oriental tale, eighteenth-century women writers radically re-interpreted the genre of the oriental tale not only by transmigrating it (Bakscheider and Ingrassia, 2005) into the British canon with better narrative results compared to those of their male colleagues, but also by creating an unprecedented, extremely gendered version of the oriental tale which deeply influenced narrative literary genres.

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