

z to indicate the Semitic consonant 'ain is a completely new invention and strikes the reviewer as very odd. Didn't the publisher's computers have the well-established sign ' at their disposal? The compiler worked very hard — doesn't his work deserve a little more care?

Finally, we are eagerly awaiting Prof. El-Shamy's type index. May we conclude on the basis of his many comments on the type index's features that the index is ready for publication? The list of the newly introduced types (416–42) without descriptions just whets our appetites. Incidentally, I am curious as to what the compiler means by titling the type index "demographically oriented" (vol. 1, xiii).

#### NOTE

1. My thanks to P. Shin'ar and Laila and Mun'am Haddad for their advice in matters Arabic.

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Heda JASON  
Jerusalem

PINAULT, DAVID. *Story-Telling Techniques in the Arabian Nights*. Studies in Arabic Literature 15. Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1992. xi + 265 pages. Appendix (list of selected manuscripts), bibliography, index. Cloth US\$65.71; ISBN 9004095306.

This handsome volume presents a thoughtful, carefully structured, and well-documented study based on the author's doctoral dissertation (which bears the more representative title, "Stylistic Features in Selected Tales from the *Thousand and One Nights*" [University of Pennsylvania, 1986]). David Pinault examines a host of issues relating to the styles and modes of delivery (or "telling") characteristic of *Alf laylah*. As the author points out, his approach is literary and selective. Although the study speaks of "storyteller" and "audience," in general it perceives the work in terms similar to those in which elite (formal or academic) literature is typically seen: along "writer" and "reader" lines of communication. Direct application of the author's proposed techniques is limited to a sample of narratives. The study also uses certain postulates derived from theoretical orientations outside the field of elite "literature" (e.g., V. Propp's syntagmatic structuralism and Parry and Lord's oral formulaic theory) to account for certain phenomena pertaining to folk narration.

Two sets of questions, alternating between aspects of text and context, drive Pinault's study:

First, how is the story told? What narrative techniques are favored by *Alf laylah* story-

tellers for engaging an audience? What devices make one version of a story more effective than another? Second: in what ways does the redactor make use of pre-existent materials? How are traditional sources — legends, poetry, historical accounts — modified in the shaping of an *Alf laylah* adventure? Is it possible to catch a glimpse of the storytellers' interaction with their tradition? (ix)

Since the study does not deal with oral performances, more accurate alternatives for the words *told*, *storytellers*, and *audience* might have been *presented*, *writers*, and *readers*. It should also be noted that the "interaction" Pinault speaks of is between writers and their traditions (or worldviews) rather than between narrators and live audiences.

In answering the questions in the quote above, the author compares copies (renditions, versions) of selected texts of *Alf laylah* stories as they appear in various published editions and in archival manuscripts. A concise introductory section acquaints readers with the history of *Alf laylah*, with the recent social controversy in Egypt over some of its erotic elements, and with the fact that the written texts are essentially literary renditions of oral folk narrative performances. The author next describes a number of criteria for defining the techniques used by scribes/writers (also referred to throughout the study as editors, redactors, storytellers, authors, etc.) to commit orally transmitted narratives to written form. The analysis of four such devices constitutes the core of Pinault's study of the stylistic features of the traditional prose narrative.

1) *Repetitive designation*: repeated references to some character or object that appears insignificant when first mentioned but which reappears later to intrude suddenly on the narrative (16).

2) *Leitwortstil* (or leading word): a concept, borrowed from Biblical studies, that denotes "a word or word root that recurs significantly in a text, in a continuum of texts, or in a configuration of texts; by following these repetitions, one is able to decipher or grasp a meaning of the text" (18).

3) *Thematic patterning and formal patterning*: "The structure is disposed so as to draw the audience's attention to certain narrative elements over others. Recurrent vocabulary, repeated gestures, accumulation of descriptive phrases around selected objects: such patterns guide the audience in picking out particular actions as important in the flow of narrative" (22).

4) *Dramatic visualization*: "The representing of an object or character with an abundance of descriptive detail, or the mimetic rendering of gestures and dialogue in such a way as to make the given scene 'visual' or imaginatively present to an audience" (25). This technique is contrasted with "summary presentation . . . where an author informs his audience of an object or event in abbreviated fashion without dramatizing the scene or encouraging the audience to form a visual picture of it" (26).

The roles that these devices play in the written texts of the *Nights* are further discussed in chapters 2 through 4. Emphasis is placed on identifying and clarifying the presumed effects of these techniques as implemented by the scribes/writers responsible for generating the various editions (manuscripts, renditions) of the narrative anthology. Three major units from *Alf laylah* are selected for in-depth analysis, each in a separate chapter; the units seem to have been chosen to illustrate the diversity of form and content in the book. From a broad generic perspective the units may be characterized as a multilayered (multiframed) "frame-story"; a narrative cycle revolving around Hārūn al-Rashīd and companions like Abū-Nuwās and Ja'far al-Barmakī; and a historical legend. The individual units incorporated in the first two units belong to a variety of genres, including the belief legend, moral fable, humorous anecdote, and novella-märchen.

The narratives (cited here in the order of their presentation, along with the numbers under which they appear in Victor Chauvin's *Bibliographie*) are as follows:

*Chapter 2*: "The Fisherman and the Genie" [Chauvin no. 195], "King Yunan and the

Physician Duban" [Chauvin no. 156], "The Jealous Husband and the Parrot" [Chauvin no. 291], "King Sindibad and His Falcon" [Chauvin no. 173], "The Vizier's Tale of the King's Son and the Ghoul" [Chauvin no. 197], "The Tale of the Enchanted Prince" [Chauvin no. 222].

*Chapter 3:* Caliph al-Pleasures: Tales of Hârûn al-Rashîd, his vizier Ja'far, and the poet Abû-Nuwâs [cf. Chauvin no. 209], "The Three Apples" [Chauvin no. 302], "The False Caliph" [Chauvin no. 174], "The Tale of the Artisans" [Rabat 6152].

*Chapter 4:* "The City of Brass" [Chauvin no. 6], "Abû Muḥammed the Lazy" [Chauvin no. 233], etc.

On the basis of a meticulous analysis of textual evidence and an insightful consideration of the cultural and historical backgrounds (contexts) within which these texts appear to have been committed to writing, Pinault reaches several significant conclusions. Among these are case-specific matters such as the effectiveness of a particular mode of delivery ("brief, brutal, and to the point" [28]); the function of the same tale in two different narrative settings (59); the better job that one of two versions of a tale does of "integrating the mysterious Tigris-scene into the body of the narrative" (136); and the fact that the existence of an oral stratum underlying a historical legend "does not preclude the possibility of individual creativity on the part of the professional reciter and redactors who transmitted the story" (212). On a broader scale Pinault reaches a number of conclusions that parallel the views of folklorists on the nature of folkloric materials (see below).

For the reviewer, a folklorist, Pinault's study represents, as the expression has it, both good news and bad news. The good news is that it deals objectively with "the text"; historical, religious, linguistic, semantic, and other types of data are searched out as aids in understanding "the text." The bad news is that this impressive work — true to its academic home in literature — appears oblivious to the discipline of folklore, as well as to concepts, methods, and techniques used in the field of folk-literature research. Only a few peripheral works dealing with oral traditions are cited, mostly in a marginal capacity. In this respect Pinault's work falls short of that of a prominent predecessor in the study of storytelling in *Alf laylah*: Mia I. GERHARDT, whose *The Art of Story-Telling* (1963) Pinault occasionally cites. Gerhardt made significant and accurate use of such folkloristic concepts as tale-type, episode, motif, and fairy tale (märchen), and employed Aarne-Thompson's *Type Index*, Stith Thompson's *Motif-Index*, and other works of comparable relevance like René BASSET's *Mille et un contes* (1924–26). She also cited basic arguments regarding the oral versus the written in literature, notably those of Albert Wesselski.

None of these aspects of folk narrative research have found their way into Pinault's study. V. Chauvin's *Bibliographie*, the most exhaustive work on the various facets of *Alf laylah* and related works, is mentioned only in connection with a single detail concerning the presence of the "Parrot" and "Ghoul" in other literary anthologies.

It is worth noting here that the "Ghoul" narrative actually deals with a *ghoulah* (an ogress), and is so titled in Chauvin's *Bibliographie*. This folktale (tale type 327, "The Children and the Ogre") is typically narrated by women; its text in the *Nights* is atypical and constitutes an adult male's distorted rendition (perception, recollection, etc.) of a female-bound theme. Conversely, "The Tale of the Artisans" — which Pinault derives from an archival manuscript (140) — manifests homosexual "pedophilic" tendencies, which are recurrent and graphically detailed in the male-bound *Alf laylah* (motif: T463 "Homosexual love [male]"; for other examples see CHAUVIN 1892–1922, vol. 5, 43, no. 18, and vol. 67, p. 153, no. 317).

Another puzzling aspect of Pinault's study is its disregard for tale collections from oral sources, and for the process of telling a folktale from memory to a physically present audience that perceives the tale primarily through aural means (a process presumed to have preceded the commission of certain texts of the *Alf laylah* to written [visually perceived] form). Nor does Pinault appear to have consulted comparisons made by folklorists between oral versions

of tales and their counterparts in the *Alf laylah*. El-Shamy, for example, posits separate cognitive systems within which raconteurs seem to group the oral and the written (EL-SHAMY 1980, xlviiii-li; 1990).

But perhaps it is unrealistic (and unfair) to expect a literary study such as Pinault's to depart radically from the research parameters established by departments of "Arabic Language and Its Literatures." And, despite its non-folkloristic orientation, the book offers much with which students of folklore will agree. These areas of fundamental agreement include Pinault's remarks on creativity as exercised within the confines of the established traditional text:

The creativity we see in the texts before us . . . consists here *not* in the creation of inner-frame stories *ex nihilo*, but rather in how the redactor arranges given story-units and nests them within one another so they may function as exempla illustrating the themes of the overarching frame-stories. (37)

No less significant is Pinault's rejection of attempts to establish one version of *Alf laylah* as the "proto-text" (*al-nuskhah al-umm*, or the "mother-copy"), and his view that one edition should not be regarded as "more definitive" than another. For each redaction, each analogue-manuscript can be seen as another telling of the tale (250, 251).

Pinault's work is a welcome addition to the Arabic and Middle Eastern studies library, revealing depth of scholarship, sharpness of perception, and freshness of approach to the study of literary style. It is certain to impact on future studies in the field of traditional narrative and related disciplines.

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Hasan EL-SHAMY  
Indiana University  
Bloomington, Indiana