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Faculty:Visual Communications

A Comparative study of *'The Arabian Nights* Through the eyes ofEdumund Dulac and Kay Nielsen

by

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Introduction

Introduction

If two illustrators of the same period, with similar influences, are given the exact same text, aiming at a similar audience, will they visualise and execute their work in two entirely unique ways?

Through the exploration of the classic Eastern text, *The Arabian Nights,* I will compare how both Kay Nielsen and Edmund Dulac approached the same subject matter. I will investigate how the artists depicted the text and how each successfully, yet differently managed to capture the essence of the East. I will attempt to evaluate the extent Persian Art influenced both illustrators, and how they adapted these influences to their own work.

My initial intention was to obtain original imagery of the text *The Arabian Nights* from an Eastern source, which I could in turn use to directly compare and analyse both 19th Century illustrators. Unfortunately, due to lack of assistance from the Chester Beatty Library attributed to the absence of an Islamic curator, or staff with knowledge of their Persian collection, I was unable to obtain any examples. Fruitless searches at Trinity Library, UCD and the National Library, led me finally to the British Library, where Hugh Goodacre, the Islamic curator, although extremely helpful and co-operative, could be little real assistance. He informed me that they had no information on *The Arabian Nights*, as Arabian manuscripts are extremely rare. Therefore, I was forced to abandon my search, and direct my attention instead to comparing western texts of *The Arabian Nights* with Eastern Art in general, but more importantly, with Persian illustration.

I chose the illustrators, Edmund Dulac and Kay Nielsen as my case studies because they are both examples of artists from 'the golden age of illustration', and were two of the greatest gift book illustrators of all times. They also shared the same obsession with the East and were influenced greatly by it throughout their work.

My thesis is divided into four chapters. The first two chapters supply the background material, which is essential later for a discussion on the main topics in the latter two chapters. Chapter One contains a concise description of the origin of the text *The Arabian Nights* and how it arrived in the hands of such artists as Dulac and Nielsen. Also it focuses on the society and changes which were occurring in England at the time.

Chapter Two consists of a brief account of the historical background of Persian Art. This discussion encompasses, colour, materials, pattern and the portrayal of figures and animals. This chapter lays the groundwork for chapter three, a discussion of the influence of Persian Art on the work of both Dulac and Nielsen.

Chapter Three, which forms the main bulk of my investigation, compares and contrasts the work of Dulac and Nielsen, examining the Persian and Eastern elements present in their depiction of the *The Arabian Nights*. A clearer picture should then emerge on how as to the effectiveness of these depictions of the East.

Finally, in Chapter Four I will examine how similar their aims were,yet how differently both tackled the text. Lastly, I will give a concise insight into how *The Arabian Nights* has been conceptualised in the 20th Century.

Chapter 1

The History of the Arabian Nights

Introduction into Western World

Chapter 1

This chapter will outline the circumstances surrounding the creation of the story of the *The Arabian Nights*, giving a brief narrative synopsis of as well as discussing the origins of the text and from where it originated. It will then document how and why it was introduced into the Western World, eventually reaching artists such as Edmund Dulac and Kay Nielsen. I then intend to elaborate the influential factors, such as the Industrial Revolution and the nostalgic revival, revealing how fantasy became a popular means of escapism; orientalism forming the ideal new style of illustrating the fantastic.

The History of the Arabian Nights

Since the earliest times, man has delighted in the art of story-telling. The documentation and gathering of such tales brought forth the discovery of the art of writing. The East was the home of many great literary collections, the most acclaimed being *One Thousand and One Nights*, better know as *The Arabian Nights*, which is still considered a classic today.

This collection of well-loved tales assembled over many centuries became well known in Europe from the 18th century onwards. Records indicate that the story was instigated by the Persian collection *Hezar Efsan* or *The Thousand Tales*, from as early as the 8th century AD. This book was immensely popular and in due course was translated into Arabic. However, additional material was added to the text haphazardly, at different times and in different places, and hence single individual authorship is unknown and considered unlikely. These additional stories perhaps resulted from the fact that from the 8th to 13th century 'A Thousand and One' meant 'many'; the term was later translated literally. Compilers and translators might have been motivated with the desire to make up the actual number of nights in the title, by adding extra fairy tales to the original text.

The framing story *The Arabian Nights*, is set around *Scherazade*, a heroic female, who devises a cunning plan to prevent her husband the King from killing her. She tells

him a story every evening which she leaves incomplete until the next night, so that he spares her life in order to hear its conclusion. Eventually, after a *Thousand and One Nights*, she wins his heart and he abandons his plan.

` Since the text was first translated (into French, in 1704 by Antoine Galland, and later into English by Richard Burton, in 1885) these tales have inspired many Western dreams about the 'Romantic' East, capturing the hearts and imagination of children from every generation. There are few people of any nationality who would not be familiar with the adventures of characters such as *Aladdin*, *Ali Baba* or *Sinbad the Sailor.*

Introduction into the Western World

As early as Roman times Europeans seem to have had a yearning for the exotic, with animals and tropical plants featuring in early cathedral sculptures. In the 1600s this taste for the orient was increased by direct trade between Britain and India. Eventually, by 1820 the Near East and Middle East were brought increasingly into the mainstream of European affairs (Philippe, 1977, pp.19, 28). Europeans became educated in the appreciation and comprehension of Eastern art and culture. This Eastern knowledge knowledge was obtained by travellers and explorers who, on their return, brought with them various oriental paintings and mythical fairy tale literature, such as *The Arabian Nights*; this resulted in increased interest in Eastern art and literature.

"In times of great social upheaval and stress, men looked to the past for solace or escape from present evils". (Nicholsen,1975, p 1)

The 'social upheaval' that Nicholsen refers to was a result of the Industrial Revolution in late 19th Century England. At that time, people were appalled by the horrors of industrialism. They began to become nostalgic, longing for a 'beauteous vision', and turned towards the world of fantasy as a form of escapism, through images of fairies and goblins, and also the mystical east. The image of the orient symbolised easily obtained freedom from the mundane world to one filled with wealth, mystery and passion. The printed book became the perfect medium for such ideals to unfold. (Nicholsen, 1975, p1)

The Industrial Revolution also saw a dramatic improvement in the development of printing.

The development of photomechanical reproduction in the 1870s marked the beginning of the Golden Age of Illustration, which continued into the early twentieth century This artistic era finally ended around 1918, as a result of the depression which followed World War One.

The introduction of photomechanical reproduction insured that for the first time an exact replica of the original illustration could be reproduced. This enabled every mark that was made on the original to be transferred mechanically to the printed page. This process also insured that the original image was left intact and was not destroyed in its reproduction, as was the case in the past. It also eliminated the need for the middle man or engraver (Peppin, 1975, p.8). In 1890, a full colour process was developed with colour half tones which helped to soften the lines of the image. These developments in printing had in turn a great effect on illustrators, allowing their styles to develop more freely, enabling them to break away from the limitations of engraving and etching, therefore allowing them to experiment with mediums such as watercolour or ink drawing in printing for the first time.

The accuracy and swiftness of the advanced printing methods led to a boom in the book publishing industry. This then resulted in a reduced cost in the production of 'gift books' and meant that for the first time the middle class could indulge in the pleasures of reading. With the growth of a middle class society who could afford the 'gift book' a new audience and market was formed.

Chapter 2

Historical Background to Persian Art
Characterisyics of Persian Art

Chapter 2

Historical Background To Persian Art.

Before discussing the relevant characteristics and traits of the Persian Arts, I will give a brief background history to Persian Art in general. This chapter will be of particular importance later in my thesis, in a comparative study of Dulac and Nielsen's use of Persian techniques, and with the influence of the orient on their illustrations of *The Arabian Nights.*

Oriental painting is, in general, the painting of Asia. It consists of three main branches, Indian, Chinese and Islamic. Islamic painting is the art of the Muslims and its most important centre was Persia (now Iran). Islamic Art chiefly entailed the creation of beautiful books through calligraphy and illustration. These paintings, which appeared in illuminated manuscripts, are referred to as miniatures. (World Book, Vol. No. 13,1981, p132) The earlier versions of these books were transcriptions of the Koran (the Islamic Bible) and it was not until much later that Persian artists began illustrating fables, history, and love poems, etc. (World Book, Vol.No.15, 1981, p 48)

These books often represented sacred objects and status symbols of regal power. The more lavishly the book was created in terms of medium and execution (i.e: the use of gold and lapis lazuli) the more it reflected a leader's position of power. As a result, Persian painters depended greatly on their kings and rulers for patronage and by following the rise and fall of their leaders through the centuries one can observe the evolution of the ever changing Persian style of painting (Canby,1993,p 25).

Persian book illustration predates the 1300s but the majority of the material available for study dates from the 14th century onwards. Therefore, it is in this period, that I will concentrate my studies. In the 14th century, during the 'Mongol' supremacy, a lack of stylistic consistency was present throughout the painting of the time. In fact, a number of different styles and influences were present; both Persian and non-Persian. It was during this reign that elements of Far Eastern painting began to appear. One of the

most prominent elements was the Chinese cloud design known as 'tai', (which remained an important feature throughout Persian miniatures) demonstrated in Fig 1.1. During this period Chinese influences constantly reappear in many different forms; i.e: the 'pontoone' bridge in Fig 1.2, the lotus patterns present in Fig 1.3 and water (fig1.4). Even the human features of figures present in compositions often seemed too Mongoloid to resemble Persian characteristics. Anthony Welch gives further evidence to confirm this finding in Fig1.5, in which he reveals that both figures in the composition wear headgear of Chinese origin (Falk,1985,p.51). One can observe from such illustrations that the use of strong concentrated line has more immediate precedence over the use of colour. The style was loose, vigorous,and dramatic, and also had a simular feel to a Chinese ink drawing. Notice the similarities between the depiction of water in the Persian miniature (fig1.4) and the Chinese ink drawing (fig1.6). One instantly notices how the informal lines swirl and intertwine with each other on a horizontal plane.

With the introduction of the Timurid rulers in the 15th century these Chinese elements began to merge and a fundamental nationalistic style developed, with a brilliant use of strong primary colour and meticulous execution (fig1.7). According to Robinson, this depiction of the 'perfect world' was beautifully elaborate, but its visual portrayal was too rigid and lacked life (Robinson, 1983, pp.281-283).

The mid 15th century consisted of three major styles, Shiraz, Herat and a simpler style from the north-east. By the end of the 15th century the city of Shiraz became the central exporter of paintings. Miniatures drawn in this style conveyed a stronger sense of colour than before, and the use of a full palette is evident(fig1.7). The school from the city of Herat produced less miniatures but were considered to be of a higher quality. (Robinson, 1983. p 288)

The high point for Persian miniatures came in the Safavid rule of Persia. After eight and a half centuries of domination by Arabs, Turks, Mongols, and Tartars, the country had finally been reunited under Persian rule and had gained confidence once more. Paintings such as Fig1.8 and Fig1.9 reflect this through visual images of

celebrations and victories in war and rule. This was a period of profound nationalism and such paintings were rich with elaborate decoration such as the use of dramatic arabesque and floral design. Unfortunately as this period matured, their elegant use of decoration began to become saturated in detail and eventually this led to its degeneration and 'decadence,' as shown in Fig1.9. (Finnigen,1990,p 12)

The end of the unique classical period of Persian Art finally came about by the filtration of western culture, as communication and trade developed. By the late 16th century this contact with Europe had begun to grow, and ironically halted further development of the classical Persian Style.

Characteristics of Persian Art

Having dealt with the historical background to the birth of Persian Art and its development throughout the centuries, I will now turn my attention to Persian Art and its specific characteristics, and will discuss the factors such as composition, perspective, form, materials, colour, pattern and motif. These factors prove to be of great importance in the succeeding chapter when dealing with Edmund Dulac and Kay Nielsen in conjunction with *The Arabian Nights.*

Composition and Perspective

No matter what generation a Persian painting originates from, it will always carry one distinctive quality, the'sense of design.' (Canby, 1993, p 11)

The problem of portraying a three dimensional world on a two dimensional surface was a factor common to both Western and Eastern artists. The West overcame this problem by the use of scientific perspective i.e: the reflection of depth and recession on a two-dimensional surface. (Hutt, 1987, p 34) This depiction was not enough to satisfy the Persian artist, as he felt no reason to limit himself to one viewpoint. In fact he consciously avoided the use of scientific perspective, turning his attentions instead to the use of artificial and multiple perspective viewpoints. The far Eastern artists, unlike Europeans, were not concerned with reproducing the world as we see it. Instead, they

were concerned with taking elements from everyday life and depicting the world in a 'radiant' new way. (Martin F.R, 1968, p 14) Persian miniatures do not just illustrate a story, but enable the viewer to 'explore and enjoy in each detail', as they were primarily interested in the portrayal of the overall mood and feeling (Robinson, 1983, p 7). Therefore the use of multiple perspectives gave them a much broader picture plane to work in.

Because a Persian miniature was not executed to portray reality, the foreground, middle and background were conveyed by the use of artificial divisions. Examples of these include strategic positioning of components such as river, clouds, mists and mountains, to give the optical illusion of movement from the foreground right through to the background, without having to use foreshortening or tonal gradations, as utilised by the contemporary Western Renaissance masters. Fig.2.1 has three distinct artificial picture planes, which are identified by the use of flat areas of contrasting colour. The eye is guided from one plane to another by linking certain strategic components. For example, the positioning of a horseman on top of a dark green hill, marks the end of the foreground and entry into the middleground.

A common element in Persian illustrations was the use of multiple perspective Fig 2.2 is a typical example. Here we observe the use of a bird's eye perspective in conjunction with a false receding distance. In Fig 2.2 and 2.3 the floor ground space is perceived from an ariel view, yet converges with figures viewed from a frontal position. Backgrounds were also raised, enabling the viewer to see every part of the scene.

Nearer objects were placed lower down in the picture plane, while objects in the distance were depicted higher up. This was based on the continuously rising viewpoint of 'Vertical perspective'. (Hutt, 1987, p 35) Despite European influences from the 17th Century onwards, painters still did not conform to three dimensional effects.

Exteriors and Interiors

The romance and idealism of Persian painting is set in two main environments; interiors and exteriors. Exteriors usually consist of battle scenes or garden landscapes.

Whatever they portray, Gray states, is always in the 'brightest spring sunshine', where flowers and fruits on the trees were always in bloom. If the trees were bare of foliage, as in the top right hand corner of Fig2.4 (also the larger tree to the right of Fig2.5), this was only a method of utilising the spaces to create more elaborate shapes in the branches (Martin,1968, p15). Notice how in Fig.2.4 plants, flowers, trees and rocks decorate a large flat area at regular intervals. According to FINNIGEN, whether it is a Shiraz landscape with a high horizon line and 'fungal' shaped rocks(fig.2.6), or a lower but straighter one in the Tabriz style (fig.2.7), the sky always adhered to the same 'rigid' formula of flat gold or lapis lazuli blue (FINNIGEN, 1990, p 14). A rhythmic pattern of stars or birds was often suspended in an illuminated sky.

As stated by Welch, the colour of the clouds, usually the reverse of the sky, are depicted as 'a great wispy tangle of cloud dragons', resembling the Chinese scroll clouds or 'tai', as seen in Fig2.8 and Fig.2.9. (Falk, 1985, p77) Ariel perspective is predominant throughout landscape painting, and streams and rivers were used to separate mountains. Another device used to distinguish between forms was the use of flat contrasting background colours, evident in Fig.2.1. Here four main colours (dark green, lime green, gold and lapis lazuli) break up the overall composition.

Architectural design was also very significant in Persian Art. Fig.2.2 is a typical example of a Persian interior scene. Here side walls are absent and back-walls are viewed straight on. All the action in the scene is shown, by taking away the front wall of the building to expose the two lovers and a crouching figure (in separate chambers). This technique enables both characters to be present in the one scene. Floors, like landscapes, are perceived from the 'birds-eye' view, insuring a great space in which pattern and decoration could be added.

Materials and Colours

There are three basic materials which constitute a Persian miniature; paper, which was hand made from fibres of flax in the form of linen rags; brushes, which were made from Persian cat hair, and paint. (Brend,1940,p 18) Persian paintings are famous, for their vibrancy and purity of colour. The pigments which they were made of, came from

three different sources; minerals (e.g. semi-precious stones), inorganic (e.g. artificial) materials and organic materials (eg. plants and insects). The choice of pigments were determined by the expense and availability of the materials and the cost of labour. Gold, silver and lapis lazuli, being the most expensive, were also the most popular as they represented the power and position of the patron. The colour was flatly applied; tone and shading were only used for decorative functions and never added dimensions. Instead form (as previously mentioned), was distinguished by contrasting colours. There was "no attempt to render light and shade of nature, everything glows distinct like a jewel" (Martin,1918,p 14). This opaque, 'jewel-like' quality that Binijon refers to was created by the use of albumen in the binding of pigments which gave the surface a sheen.

The lack of attention to light and shade is related to the Persian preoccupation with creating beautiful effects. As shown in Fig.2.8, they were not concerned with details such as depicting the time of day. This 'bright' night is a typical feature of Islamic Art, in which stars and moon are suspended in a day time sky.

Once a mark had been made on the page it was very difficult to change it, due to the limited materials available. As a result, Persians became excellent draughtsmen. Their work was well thought out and planned carefully in advance (Hutt,1987, p 35). Artists often made preliminary sketches and re-used details or even whole sections of a composition from existing pieces by an early method of tracing known as 'pouncing' (Canby, 1993, p 18).

Figures and Animals

In the early Islamic Books, pages were completely filled with pattern as the Muslim religion dictated that no living thing could be present in their art. As time passed, these laws were not as strictly inforced and figures soon started to appear in miniatures (World Book, 1981, Vol.No.15, p 48) This led (perhaps intentionally) to a very stylised portrayal of people and animals, lacking expression.

Due to the use of 'pouncing', artists were capable of repeating the positions and expressions of these 'stylistic' figures many times over. Both men and women were

similar in structure. Men were depicted as tall, and slender with rounded shoulders and small waists (fig.3.1). Women were slightly smaller with long loose garments, based on the traditional Islamic models of beauty (fig3.2). They were both painted with small noses and mouths, ovoid 'moon-shaped' faces usually depicted in three-quarter profiles, and 'slanty', 'almond-shaped' eyes which were usually looking to the side. Both male and female were also usually depicted in three-quarter profile (Ferrier R.W, 1989, p 201).

Communication was not conveyed through facial expressions, but rather through the grouping or positioning of figures, and the use of gestures (or 'affetti'). As seen in Fig 3.3, it is never too difficult to distinguish who is the main character (ie: in this case the figure in green) in a Persian composition. He is usually the centralised figure surrounded by minor characters, positioned on either side of him, or sometimes above or below.

Hand gestures are very significant in the communication between such characters. Notice how the Persian illustrator clearly conveys that the two figures to the extreme right of the group are in conversation, merely by a raised hand and the positioning of their heads. According to Finnigen, when both hands are raised, as shown in the figure to the immediate left of the main character, this represents gratitude, dismay or horror, while the figure to the extreme left with its bowed head, is supposed to symbolise appeals, such as pleading or longing.(Finnigen,1990, p 15)

Due to the disinterest in realism, animals and humans have no sense of form and dimension; they are merely a part of an overall pattern. Horses and deer are two of the most common animals that exist in hunting and battle scenes. Like humans, they have a stereotyped beauty, with small heads, large fleshy bodies, and long thin legs. Notice how the horses in the foreground of Fig.3.4 and.2.1 are almost exact copies of each other, with the exception of colour and decoration. The disproportional forms and positioning of the feet are uncannily similar.

Demons and dragons were other popular characters portrayed in Persian painting.

Until the 1340s (Shizaz period), dragons were portrayed like legless serpents or old bipedals (two-footed animals). It was not until later that human characteristics were really introduced.

Pattern and Motif

"... as a race the Persians are born decorators" (Martin, 1968, p 14).

Pattern and motifs are two very distinct traits of Persian Art. However, objects such as floors, walls, clothes or furnishing, were not the only surfaces onto which a pattern appeared. On closer examination of such miniatures as Fig.2.1 and 2.8, another form of decoration is evident. This is the use of repeated motifs such as tufts of grass (fig 2.8), or star filled skies (fig. 2.1), which form a regular rhythmic pattern, (Ferrier, 1989, p 206). Arabesque (ie: fanciful ornament with intertwining lines), also play a major part especially in borders (World Book, 1981, Vol. No.1, p 544). Geometric designs were depicted with the smallest detail. Although pattern and motif were extremely lavish and elaborate, they were always well draughted and well composed.

Chapter 3

Background to Artists
The Arabian Nights through the Art of Edmund Dulac
and Kay Nielsen

Chapter 3

This chapter will deal with the comparative examination of the works of Edmund Dulac and Kay Nielsen, through the Eastern text, *The Arabian Nights*. I will evaluate how accurately both illustrators managed to relate the eastern text and the feeling of the orient in general. The influences of Persian art on both illustrators will be considered. Before doing so, I will give a brief synopsis of their background histories, achievements and general influences on their work.

Background to Artists

As mentioned in Chapter 1, by the 1890s the 'gift book' had become an object of great beauty and desire. England was becoming one of the greatest book publishing centres in the world. Painters from Europe and America started to flock in their thousands to settle in London. Two such artists, were Edmund Dulac (from France) and a rather late arrival to the illustrative scene, Kay Nielsen (from Denmark).

Edmund Dulac, born in Toulouse, France, in 1882, studied art in the Academie Julienne in Paris (where Kay Nielsen was also a student a few years later). He arrived in England in 1905 and became a British subject in 1912. Apart from being an imaginative illustrator, he also dabbled in stage set and costume design, caricature, stamp design and poster design.

In 1907, Dulac's Christmas gift book, *Stories from the Arabian Nights*, became an instant success, and he was labelled 'The Arabian Nights Man'. Over the next thirty-one years he was to illustrate six different editions of this text. Dulac's main sources of inspiration were Persian and Indian miniature paintings, with a particular interest in their vibrant use of colour and attention to detail. He was also influenced by Japanese prints, which he experienced through his uncle, a collector of Far Eastern art. He was effected by their flat use of colour, high viewpoints and asymmetrical design (Larkin, 1975,p 3). Pre-Raphaelite art and Art Nouveau were also important in his earlier work, but his preoccupation with Oriental art soon surpassed these elements.

If one is to look at Fig.3.5 from Dulac's first edition of *The Arabian Nights* (1907) in comparison to an illustration from his second last publication (1914) Fig.3.6, great changes in his style are evident. The use of brighter, flatter colour, increased patterned surfaces, and a more stylistic portrayal of the figure developed over the years. He abandoned Western 'photographic' perspective and introduced geometrical and floral borders into his work, as seen in Fig.4.6 and Fig4.2. These changes in style were due to his increased passion for Persian art following a Mediterranean cruise in 1900.

The Danish artist, Kay Nielsen was born in Copenhagen in 1886, arriving in England quite late in the 'gift book' boom, only contributing to British illustration from 1911 to 1930, after which time he left England and abandoned illustration almost completely. He died later in 1957 almost totally unknown.

Like Dulac, he was a student at the Academie Julienne, and was interested in stage design and middle eastern art. The latter became his main source of inspiration, although there were many influences that lead to this interest. Like Dulac, his childhood played a part in attracting him in the East. His parents were prominent figure in the theatrical world, his father being a director and his mother an actress. As a result, Nielsen was brought up in a 'tense atmosphere of art' (Meyer,1983, p 196), surrounded by actors, artists and writers enveloped in the world of fantasy. Also, like Dulac, Art Nouveau was of influence in his earlier work. The Russian Ballet in Paris, which took place when Nielsen was a student, also left an impression on him, resulting in vigorous patterns and exotic costumes appearing in his designs. He also adopted traits from Japanese prints: asymmetrical composition, large vacant areas, flattened perspective, high view points and simplified and formalised landscapes.

A Thousand and One Nights, for which he illustrated a series of twenty paintings, occupied Nielsen at the highest point of his Persian obsession. These lavish and exquisite illustrations, which were painted between 1918 and 1922, were unfortunately too costly to be reproduced at the time. It was not until as late as 1977 that these paintings were finally published by Peacock/ Bantam Books. This was one of the last books Nielsen illustrated, as he turned his attention to stage design and to America.

Undoubtedly, if these illustrations had been published in the late 1800s or early 1900s during the 'Golden Age of Book illustration', Nielsen's position as an illustrator would have been anchored firmly, and he would not have faded from the public eye in his lifetime as he eventually did..

The Arabian Nights through the Art of Dulac and Nielsen.

Composition and Perspective

Both Nielsen and Dulac paid great attention to the fact that they were illustrating an Eastern text, and much of their work is influenced by this culture. Through their illustrations of *The Arabian Nights*, I will attempt to evaluate how each successfully captures the essence of the Eastern text, and to what extent they were influenced by the characteristics of Persian art. As the text is so broad, there are few illustrations containing exactly the same moment in a scene. Therefore, it is impossible to do a direct comparison of specific illustrations. After examining all the illustrations, I have selected the most typical, hence giving an in depth analysis of a limited number of examples. I will use a similar structure to the previous chapter in a comparison of their work, examing factors such as their use of colour, composition, pattern, their depiction of the mystical world, monsters and genii, interiors, exteriors, animals and figures, all in comparison with Persian Art.

Both Nielsen and Dulac shared the same intense interest in Persian Art and many of the devices they used were similar. Neither of them were interested in conveying the real world, but instead concentrated on the world of fantasy. Like Persian artists, their primary interest was in creating a greater space in which the text could unfold. Nielsen and Dulac (in his later period), abandoned European fixed-viewpoint perspective, instead basing their illustrations around multiple and artificle perspectives. Therefore, few of their illustrations have single clear vanishing points, and some illustrations are so simple that perspective is almost completely absent. This is visible in Dulac and Nielsens execution of the picture 'Scheherazade', the heroine of *The Thousand and One Nights* (fig.3.7 and fig.3.8 respectively).

Artificial divisions were also created by making distinctive divisions between the

background, middle and foreground. This can be seen in Fig.3.9, in which Nielsen uses the fluffy clouds (with a flowering effect not unlike Chinese 'tai' clouds mentioned in Chapter 3) to create a background. The sea, with its horizontal swirling waves forms the middleground, and the flat surface at the bottom constitutes the foreground. These three elements also create contrasting patterns covering almost the entire page. Certain objects in the composition are also used to draw the eye up, down or across the picture. In Fig.4.1 Nielsen uses a bridge, which starts at the right hand corner of the composition and is used as a vehicle to carry the movement gradually across to the left of the page, then up to the centre the figure in black. The curving mountainous landscape also enhances this movement. Dulac also creates a similar effect using a bridge in Figure.4.2. Here the main character, 'Princess Badoura', stands in front of the bridge, which also entices the eye upwards in the image. The river below it, runs in a geometrical manner and is used to divide the objects.

Multiple perspectives simultaneously utilise a variety of viewpoints. Vertical perspective, in which nearer objects appeared lower down in the composition, and further ones were higher up, was also a common Persian device, and was used by both Dulac, (fig.4.3) and Nielsen (fig.4.1). Notice how in both painting the figure in the foreground, is the same size as those in the background, yet there is still an impression of distance being formed. There is little attempt made by either artist in the use of tonal gradation to convey a feeling of depth and distance. This helps to reinforce the flatness of the picture plane.

Nielsen's interior scene (fig.4.4), shares many of the same devices used in Dulac's later work (fig.3.6). Both artists make use of 'birds-eye' viewpoint on the surface of the carpet, which reduces the depth of the floor. This enables them to cover the surface with elaborate patterns, without distorting them with fixed perspectives. The raising of the background enables the viewer to see every part of the scene. The back walls in both cases are viewed straight on while the figures are depicted from a viewpoint slightly above them. The bed and the floor in Fig.4.4 are also viewed from separate positions.

Figure 3.6, an illustration from Dulac's mature years, seems to lack the artistic

innovation and autonomy of his earlier period and could merely have been executed by the hand of an unrecognised 14th century Persian artist. Notice the strong similarity between the Persian miniature Fig4.5 and Dulac's Fig.3.6.

Nielsen, on the other hand, never resorts to merely reproducing Persian replicas, but instead borrows techniques, such as multiple perspective, and manipulates them to his own creative advantage. Nielsen's art always remained innovative, never imitative. An example of this would be in the continual creativity present in his borders surrounding all his images (fig.4.8, 4.9). While it is apparent that Nielsen was influenced by the Persian use of borders, he has transformed this feature into a particularly individualistic element in his work, whereas Dulac (fig.4.6) merely copies and reproduces the borders of past Persian illustrators (fig.4.7).

Characters

Dulac's figures are not only divided into male and female, but also have bipolar roles such as the hero and the comedian. These roles are featured on a large scale in his earlier work becoming less apparent and popular later on.

The major characters in Dulac's earlier paintings , whether hero or heroine, prince or princess, are always depicted as possessing youth and beauty. These images are based on the traditional Persian idea of beauty. The gender of the character makes little difference; they are both stylised and stereotyped. This representation of 'classical beauty' is to be found throughout Dulac's work. The same features (dark hair, oval faces, pale translucent skin) reoccur throughout his work. Dulac's figures also possess deep set, almond shaped eyes, and have, in the artists own words, prominent 'eyebrows joined artistically',as seen through Fig.4.6 and Fig.5.1 (White,1976, p. 65). These typical characteristics of Persian beauty are common to in every female he illustrated.

On a closer inspection of Dulac's females, it is obvious that his tracing methods were constantly at hand. Each female, whether princess or slave (fig.5.1) looks remarkably like the same girl. It is impossible not to notice how similar their features are. Even the positioning of the heads (i.e. three quarter profiles) are too similar to be

coincidental.

Even greater similarities can be drawn between Fig.5.2 and 5.3. Not only are their features uncannily alike, but their profiles are almost a complete replica of each other. Even the movement in the swirling hair and the figure are almost identical. Observe how the curves in the folds of the garments in both paintings intice the eye of the viewer from the top left hand corner, around the entire composition, and end finally in the lower left hand corner. This device is typical of Dulac's earlier period, but was used to a lesser extent in his later work.

Dulac's depiction of the female costume is very accurate and, like traditional Eastern costumes, was usually long, loose, and accompanied by many layers of material, as seen in Fig.5.4. Females in Dulac's later work convey even less expression and appear emotionless. They become smaller and more focused against the backgrounds (fig.5.4), conforming exactly to a stereotypical Persian portrayal of the female (fig.3.2), thus confirming that as Dulacs work matured his style began to lean more heavily on pure Persian depictions and lacked personal artistic individuality.

Unlike Dulac, Nielsen rarely pays attention to female garments. Of fifteen of Nielsen's paintings portraying women, only two are fully clothed (fig.5.6 and fig.5.7). In contrast, Dulac has only one female figure baring her breasts (fig.5.5). Dulac depicts her as a mystical being, an Efreet (female genie), not truly of human descent. Dulac could have been afraid of public opinion, fearing their disapproval by baring flesh or showing nudity. It is likely that Dulac took into account that these books were created for children's eyes, as well as adults. Certainly they are both based on the Persian model of beauty but Nielsen's illustrations are more erotic.

A direct comparison in the depiction of females can be obtained through the heroine of *The Thousand and One Nights*, known as 'Scheherazade'. I have chosen to compare both artists portrayal of this character, as it is one of the few examples which feature the exact same person and moment in the text. In Fig3.7, Dulac depicts her as innocent, tender and extremely passionate, whilst in Nielsen's portrayal in fig.3.8, she

seems more experienced, flirtatious, sensual and erotic. The importance concerning the positioning of Scheherazade, differs greatly between each artist. Dulac dedicates the entire illustration totally to this character, hence stressing her heroic and amorous qualities. She stands tall, proud, yet unsophisticated, and her presence fills the entire page.

This is in complete contrast to Nielsen's Scheherazade (fig.3.8). A full page is not devoted to her alone; instead she becomes merely an object of desire. In the overall composition, she kneels at the bottom left hand corner, facing the enthroned Sultan, who towers above her. Her demeanour is sensual and seductive, with arched back and outstretched arm, as if to captivate the King. Although in Fig.3.8, she is completely naked, Nielsen, like Dulac, pays great attention to her head-dress. Notice how he allows one or two strands of hair to escape from her head-dress, letting them follow the curves of her form, emphasising the arch of the back and the roundness of the breasts, eventually disappearing between her legs. She is portrayed merely as a sexual object, utilised to seduce or bewitch the Sultan. There is nothing angelic or sweet about her, rather she oozes with sensuality and enchantment.

The male role, as mentioned earlier, can be divided up between youth and old age. The male youth as portrayed by both artists, has a similar likeness to the female. In the work of Dulac this is especially evident (fig.5.8), where there is virtually no difference in the visage of both figures. The only way to differentiate between the two is through their costumes and head dresses. Like Persian art, the female's clothes hang loosely, whilst the male garments usually are more fitted and emphasise small waists. Dulac's males are slightly more effeminate than those of Nielsen.

Relationships

Persian art was not accustomed to portraying intimacy of any description between characters. It is rare to find a miniature in which lovers passionately embrace, and when they do the figures appear rigid and stiff.

While I have carried out a detailed analysis of the treatment of relationships

between characters in the works of both artists, a similar analysis of each individual scene is too large an issue to confront here. Therefore I will evaluate this portrayal of love and unity, in one specific work of each artist, Nielsen's 'The Tale of the First Dervish' published in 1913 (fig.4.9) and Dulac's 'Camaralzaman cures Badoura' completed in 1922 (fig.5.9).Relationships between characters, in both Dulac and Nielsen's work, (although often containing similar characteristics), are carried out in two entirely different ways.

Although the execution of both paintings is very different at first glance,at closer evaluation it leads to the question, as to whether Dulac's depiction of the couple was the inspiration for Nielsen's lovers; considering that Dulac's scene was executed at least one year earlier. Both illustrators have used the idea of close embracing lovers. Colour and technique are very different, but the overall positioning of the fingers hold a striking resemblance to each other. Nielsen has taken the best elements of Dulac's image and assimilated them into a more vigorous and passionate scene. Both couples are certainly positioned exactly in the centre of the composition with the female to the left of the pair. Eyes are closed, lips tightly sealed, and the folds in their garments hang loosely from their forms. Even the headpieces (turban) on the men bare a striking resemblance to each other, and tilt forward in the same direction, as both partners embrace. Also the use of a black cloak in Fig.4.9, almost engulfing the female figure, is present in Fig.5.9. However, unlike Dulac's couple who are of equal height and who are a mirror image of each other, Nielsen's male towers above his partner, envelopes her in his strong embrace. These lovers are separated only by the contrasting colour of their skin, which prevents them from appearing as one.

Dulac's portrayal is much stiffer and formal in its execution, lacking any feeling of intimacy at all. Their hands are positioned regimentally on each other's shoulders. It is not the most sensual of scenes. They could be mistaken as brother and sister instead of passionate lovers. This could hardly be questioned in Nielsen's version, a scene of intense desire and 'inflamed' passion. There is nothing stiff or conservative in Nielsen's composition. Their lips meet and their half-naked bodies feverishly intertwine, reinforced by the movement of the folds.

Nielsen's elaborate use of flame red enhances the overall feeling of lust and passion in contrast to Dulac's use of 'ice blue'. Due to both artists' theatrical influences, there is an intense stage-like presence in both images in which the figures are posed like actors against a backdrop. Nielsen's illustration is considerably more dynamic and expressive with his use of dramatic and vigorous arabesque movements in the swirling flames and the flowing garments.

Conforming to the text to which he illustrates is not always of paramount importance to Dulac. In this scene the lover 'threw herself into the arms of Camaralzaman' and 'speechless with joy, she kissed him without ceasing'. This is certainly not the moment which Dulac decides to portray. Instead, the moment is now over (the couple have finally ended the 'kiss'). This could have been because Dulac wished it to resemble the Persian stylised portrayal of relationships and did not want to conform to the European image of love. Nielsen, in contrast, prefers to freeze the tender passionate moment of the kiss, so that perhaps it will remain eternal.

As regards the depiction of elderly and minor characters, both artists differ greatly, and their styles have little in common. Both Dulac and Nielsens heroes and heroines are depicted as having classical statuesque attributes, while Dulac's minor and elderly characters are caricaturised and features are exaggerated. This use of caricatures adds a unique humour and wit to Dulac's work, and is totally absent in Nielsen's work and in Persian art in general. These comical characters (which are extremely exaggerated in his earlier work, as seen in fig 6.1) gradually become more subtle and less prominent and are almost totally eliminated as his work matured (fig 6.2).

Let us take a closer look at Nielsen and Dulac's contrasting portrayal of Kings, through Fig 6.3 and Fig 6.4 respectively. Although both artists pay great attention to the depiction of facial expressions (for example by elongating certain features such as the nose), Nielsen merely uses such marks to create more pattern, whereas Dulac's facial lines add depth and character to the face, making it less stylised and more individual. In this image, Dulac incorporates the traditional Persian technique of three-quarter profile, while Nielsen moves away from this. Nielsen's character certainly seems more

influenced by the portrayal of a figure in a Persian miniature. Its lack of expression and dismissal of three-dimensional features make it merely part of the overall pattern and motif in the picture. Dulac's earlier figures although also extremely influenced by Persian art, reflects adaptations of the European device of caricature.

These "comic faces, as those of western music-hall clowns, are out of keeping with the eastern theme" (White,1976, p 29). This critical review made by *The Tribune* (1907), is perhaps true of some of his earlier work and may be alien to eastern art, but one must give credit to the way he manages, in his earlier works, to use it to create an exciting, personalised image of the Far East.

Horses

Like any good Persian tale, *The Arabian Night*, would not be complete without the depiction of a flying horse or a hunting scene. Nielsen's depiction of the hunt in Fig 4.8 is unquestionably Persian in its portrayal. When it is placed beside the miniature painting (fig 3.4), the likeness is remarkably similar in its representation of animals. The disproportional bodies of the horses, with small heads, thin legs and long tails are a direct copy of Fig 3.4. The central horse in fig 3.4 and the brown horse in fig 4.8 share similar ornamental saddles and hunting implements.

Dulac executes a much more sturdy, muscular and naturalistic horse. There is nothing two-dimensional or flat about this animal, as every feature is in proportion. Although this horse is not portrayed in a style similar to Persian Art, Dulac's attention to detail on the saddle and bridle reinforce the fact that his animal could only have originated from the Far East. The pose of the horse heightens the action and excitement of the passage and enables the reader to feel almost part of the energy in the picture (fig 6.5).

Genii

"... and there in the midst stood a mighty Genie; whose brows touched the heavens while his feet rested on the ground" (Arabian Nights, Housman, 1907).

This magical, enchanted text not only portrays an image of the East but also conjures up

a mystical world in which demons, giants and powerful genii govern the land. In Nielsen's work there are only two depictions of the 'genii' (fig 6.6 and fig 3.9), both of which are male, with an anatomically sound structure. In Fig 6.6, the Genie is only wearing a piece of grey material draped like a loincloth around its waist. In both illustrations, his hair appears to extend upwards and seems to create enveloping clouds. This teases the eye, forcing it to move upwards in the picture. Both figures are anatomically complete and are baring their feet. This is similar to the Persian representation of a demon in Fig 6.8.

On first impression, Dulac's portrayal of the Genii seems to have evolved greatly from his earlier period (1907) to his later work (1913). A closer inspection of Fig 6.7 and Fig 5.5 respectively, reveals that this is not the case. The human flesh-like appearance of Fig 6.7 has evolved into a blue tint in Fig5.5. However, if the skin tone of the Genie in Fig 6.7 were changed, he could almost be mistaken for the same character as Fig 5.5. The shape of their faces, their bulbous eyes, inflamed nostrils and defined structured check-bones, even their elongated, emaciated physic arouses suspicions as to how much could have been a direct copy. The main difference in their appearance are that the former has prominent dark bushy eyebrows, which are almost joining in the centre, whilst the latter has three horns or tentacles extending from its forehead. In addition, the depiction of the garments covering their middle region differs in structure and colour.

Early Persian demons were depicted as legless serpents or two-footed animals, neither greatly resembling humans. In the Persian example given in Fig 6.8, the central demon has many characteristics similar to both Nielsen's and Dulac's Genii. His coat, although not as vigorous in colour as Nielsen's, is primarily blue, with hints of red added. Again, the feet are visible with long sharp nails, unlike Dulac's whose feet disappear in a cloud of smoke.

Although, Dulac's and Nielsen's treatment of eyes are very different (the former are bulbous while the latter are slanted), the eyebrows are depicted in a somewhat similar way. The mouth in Dulac's Fig 5.5 is certainly closer in representation to the

Persian demon's large red mouth and ferocious white teeth. Nielsen's representation is much flatter than that of Dulac. Although Dulac uses great areas of flat colour in his later piece (fig 5.5), there is still attention to tonal work on the anatomy.

Overall, the Persian example is much more grotesque and beast-like than either Nielsen's or Dulacs Genie. This is perhaps because the European artists are aware that their text is a fairytale in which even the reality of horror should be depicted exquisitely. Yet this is not to say that the Persian illustration is not executed by a fine hand with a similar focus on elaborate detail.

Giants

Dulac, having illustrated over ten times as many episodes of *The Arabian Nights*, as Nielsen has the advantage in portraying many different mystical creatures, such as giants (fig 7.1) or enormous serpents (fig 7.3). On close observation of such monsters, one can see that Dulac must have done elaborate research into the portrayal of eastern demons.

The giant in Fig 7.1, has an uncanny resemblance to the figure in the manuscript painting (fig 6.9). Both figures (of black descent with negroid features) tower over their opponents. They are also wearing similar clothes, bright red upper garments which in Dulac's case are roped by a waistband, and white baggy trousers that tighten at the calves. Dulac depicts many folds in the material (a typical European trait found in his earlier work), which is not a traditional characteristic of Persian art. Turbans in both are similarly positioned on their heads, and their faces are frozen in three-quarter profile. The movement in these paintings flows from left to right, while the weight of the figures is carried on the right hand side. Dulac's giant is much more stylised and has a blank, dumb expression on its face. Unusual to Persian Art, Fig 6.9 contains great action and vigour, while Dulac's giant is stationary and the composition lacks movement.

Dulac's giant serpent in Fig 7.3 shows other resemblances to miniature painting (fig 7.2). Although the movement and positioning of the two have less convincing similarities than the previous example, Dulac's attention to detail (an open mouth with

prominent fangs, slithery tongue, and the elaborate use of pattern on the skin) is similar in execution to the Persian example. Notice also how both protrude from similar rock formations.

Colour

Both Nielsen and Dulac are regarded as excellent decorators but they are both also exquisite colourists, with a vibrant purity in their use of colour. While colour is an essential element in Dulac's earlier illustration, giving the effect of mood, Nielsen relies equally on drawing and colour to create his images. There would be no illustration if the colour was removed from Dulac's earlier work, whereas Nielsen's would remain intact. However, this does not make Nielsen's use of colour any less important throughout his work.

Dulac's use of colour throughout his oeuvre went through a series of changes. During the early years of his career (1907), he experimented with tonal gradations which helped to portray a realistic, yet mystical ambiance. As Fig 7.4 demonstrates, the blue, purple and green tones convey an enchanted romantic atmosphere which are, in my opinion, an example of Dulac at his most original, an explanation being that as his work matured, his illustrations become more imitative of the typical Persian miniature. Also during his early years he developed an interest in experimenting with different techniques such as sponging and blotting on damp paper, which further added to the mystical translucent effect present in Fig 7.4.

> There was nothing linear about (Dulac's) work, and everything was depicted through tones, allowing colours, narrow in tonal range and tight in organisation to flow into one another.
>
> (White, 1976, p. 43)

This "tonal range" to which Collins refers to, is a fundamental characteristic of his earlier period. In Fig 7.4, notice the softness in the gleam of the moonlight, which subtly reflects the image of the palace in the water. There is something very tranquil and mystical about this light.

In a description by Dulac about the transparency of water, his obsession with the

colour blue is apparent, and in his own words, "the shadows in it are blue. Blue - the *only* blue, a blue to make you drunk" (White,1976, p 64). The preoccupation with this colour was a characteristic which remained evident throughout Dulac's work.

As Dulac's work matured many of these devices were eliminated and replaced by more Persian stylistic elements. His colours became brighter, almost enamel-like due to the introduction of swirling areas of gold and silver (present in fig 7.6). His palette was extended and the execution of such colours became much flatter.

The typical Persian 'bright night' consisting of an idealistic stylised moon or stars suspended in a bright blue sky (fig 2.8), was never depicted by Dulac in his earlier years. Instead he used the greeny blue tonal gradations in his depiction of dawns, dusk, or night (fig 7.4). The mixed tones, green/ blue and purple/ blue respectively, are later replaced by a brighter primary blue,which was applied in a flatter manner, when he predicts a noon sky (fig 7.7). This colour is similar to the lapis lazuli used in Persian art. It must be noted that even in his later work Dulac's depiction of a nightime sky still remains more subdued and never becomes a typically Persian 'bright night' (fig 6.2). As his art matured, warmer tones such as red, yellow and orange become more evident, and in Dulac's own words, "lots and lots of chinese white," can be seen in Fig7.8 (White, 1982, p 64).

Nielsen held a similar fascination with the colour 'blue'. When applied the colour was flatter, and had no murky or misty tendencies, which can be seen in Dulac's earlier works. Fig 3.8 shows a vibrant, bright use of blue and the pigment is almost identical to that of a Persian miniature. He also painted in large areas of red and gold, popular colours in Persian Art. His colour is always delicate and suggestive; never forceful or crude. Unlike Dulac's earlier work, tone and shade are only used as decoration and never add dimension to his work (as seen in the background of fig 3.8), while form is only distinguished by the use of contrasting colours.

Unlike Dulac, who never depicted a traditional Persian 'bright night', Nielsen the (fig 7.9), came close to achieving such an effect. The starry sky in this illustration is

slightly darker than a classical Persian night, but the composition is brightly illuminated. There is no mist or fog present here, and nothing appears to be dull or in shadow. The clouds resemble blooming flowers and are distinctly Chinese in influence. This differs greatly to the skies produced in Dulac's early painting, Fig 7.4, where the clouds are more naturalistic, fluffy and translucent. His paint is applied in fine layers and is lightly blotted, giving the appearance of 'shot silk', unlike Nielsen's flat, bold application. Later such clouds and mist disappeared from Dulac's work, and when clouds were portrayed, they were reminiscent of Chinese scroll clouds, such as Fig 6.5, another example demonstrating Dulac's later stylistic work.

Like the Persians, both artists left 'nothing to chance'. After hours of planning and draughtsmanship, the well thought out composition would evolve through the careful and skilled use of water-colour. Dulac's use of hand made paper, was similar to that used by Persian Artists. Another similarity between Dulac's method of working and the artists of Persian miniatures, was through their use of copying certain elements of a composition many times.

Pattern

In Nielsen's work it is often difficult to evaluate whether the pattern in his designs functions as a decorative motif, or whether the picture acts as a vehicle in which pattern and motif can be explored as subject matter in itself. This question rarely arises in Dulac's work as (although pattern is an extremely important element), it usually does not dominate the over all composition of the picture.

In Dulac's later period, his approach became more stylised, almost mosaic-like, with the use of strong pattern. His familiar jewelled dots of colour evolved into decorative patterns. It almost reached a similar parallel to Nielsen's work, whose narrative often came secondary to effects and decoration. The use of decoration to cover objects such as floors, carpets or clothes was taken from Persian miniatures. Figures 3.6and 4.4 respectively, show the way the two artists raised and tilted the floor to enable an increased space in which flat undisturbed pattern could unfold.

Figures in Nielsen's work and later in Dulac's functioned as part of a pattern. The surface of their clothes became yet another vehicle in which decoration could occur. This is very distinctive in Dulac's illustration (fig 8.1), where the figures look rather like decorative cut-outs placed on a background pattern. Their garments are very flat and few folds are visible. Nielsen also uses pattern similarly in Fig 8.2.

Another technique used primarily by Nielsen, and often more subtly by Dulac, was using the objects themselves to form a rhythmic even pattern at intervals in the image. Plain areas of landscape were covered with flowers and shrubs, such as in Nielsen's illustration Fig 4.8, whilst in Dulac's Fig 7.8, bushes and trees have made a delicate jewel-like pattern. In Fig 4.1 and Fig 8.3, Nielsen also uses figures to form this type of pattern. The people to the left hand side of Fig 4.1, with their faces of equal size and shape and their decorative clothing, could be taken merely as ornamentation. Dulac also adapts this style slightly in his later work. In Fig 8.4 the figures in the composition are of equal size and appear like dots of colour at regular intervals.

The use of large decorative borders appealed to the Persians, as it was an excuse for further ornamentation and also unified the composition. Nielsen adopted the use of borders for similar reasons, ie: his passion for decoration and colour. Such borders had no function with in the text but enabled Nielsen to add further decoration to each page. Unlike Persian miniature borders which were delicately executed with flowers, leaves and animals (fig 4.7), Nielsen's borders were more vigorous and bold in their execution and in their use of colour (Fig 4.8). Dulac introduced borders in his later work (from 1913 onwards), but merely imitated a typical Persian border (fig 4.6).

Dulac and Nielsen both use an inner plain border of straight lines and bands of colour plus a more decorative outer border which contains foliage and patterns, like that of Persian miniature painters. These bands of colour prevent the image and the decorative outer borders from merging into one another. In Figure 4.8, for example, Nielsen uses an inner border of purple which separates the ornately decorated areas of the actual picture from the outer border. This exterior border reiterates symbols and motifs already present in the picture (e.g. flowers, and animals). Nielsen's borders unify

the image and enhance the colours and motifs found within the composition. This can be see in Fig 4.9, where the pattern and colour of the red garment in the picture are reinforced in the outer border.

Unlike Nielsen, Dulac rarely used borders to enhance certain colours or motifs in the picture; it was used mainly as a framing device, and there was nothing bold or innovative about them (eg Fig 4.6). Although Nielsen's borders were very lavish, they were never vulgar and showy, and details were always tightly controlled. He never imitates Persian art, but instead manipulates it to suit his own style, turning it into something totally unique and original.

It is evident that Dulac and Nielsen were quite diverse in their execution of *The Arabian Nights.* Both artists drew heavily on Persian influences, in relation to medium (eg. colour usage), technical devices (eg. multiple perspective) and style (eg. character portrayal), yet manipulated them in two entirely different ways. Finally, the underlying psychology in the illustrations differs also. While Nielsen's art is erotic and sensual, Dulacs later work is devoid of any sexual over-tones.

As Dulac's work matured his style began to lean more heavily on pure Persian depictions and lacked the personal artistic originality of his earlier work, whereas, Nielsen utilised traditional elements to transfigure his own style, turning his art into something totally original and unique. In short, through the influence of Persian art, Dulac imitates whereas Nielsen innovates.

Chapter 4

Relationship between the Artist ad the Text

The Arabian Nights in the 20th Century

Chapter 4

Both, the relationship between the artists and the text, and their influences on the 20th century vision of *The Arabian Nights,* are fascinating areas of study. Unfortunately, space does not allow a detailed investigation into these subjects, but as far as it permits, a discussion is necessary.

The relationship between the artist and the text.

Nielsen and Dulac's work shared a similar aim (i.e. to illustrate a given Eastern text). The subject matter - *The Arabian Nights*, and their target audience - the Victorian upper and middle classes, were exactly the same. However, the method by which they attempted to achieve this 'aim', differed greatly. With reference to Dulac, I will concentrate my attention primarily on his earlier work, as it is this which demonstrates his talents at its most original.

It seems that Dulac structured his earlier more successful illustrations primarily to illustrate the story, and to complement the text. Every picture follows the next as a series, and is used to enhance and intertwine with the text. Fig 8.5 clearly conveys that the main drama in the scene has just occurred between the comical figures in the foreground. Even though this action is over, there are still hints that something new may be about to happen. The importance of the figures in the distance who are drawing closer is questioned. Who is the female concealing herself by the curtain to the left? Will her identity be exposed by the arab men? The reader is immediately urged to read on.

Nielsen seems to use the text as a vehicle for his art. Each object is strategically positioned and every stroke is carefully planned to form one large pattern. Drama and tension are usually conveyed through colours and geometrical shape, rather than narrative techniques (fig 7.9). Everything is clearly stated for the reader in the illustration and little is concealed within the picture. After studying a Nielsen painting, one would rarely be left in intense anticipation, wondering what might happen next in the scene, but rather admire it for its exquisite vibrant use of colour and dramatic

composition.

Nielsen's illustration *The Tales of the First Dervish,* is the only example by which the artist evokes an immense feeling of suspense and apprehension. This feverish inflamed scene is extremely powerful and leaves the viewer wondering what fate has in store for the lovers.

In short, apart from this latter example, each of Nielsen's illustrations can stand alone without the viewer wondering what might happen next in the text, whereas Dulac's illustrations work in units with the text and leave the viewer with a sense of intrigue, urging them to read on.

The Arabian Night in the 20th Century

Dulac, as mentioned previously, still remains known as the man who created *The Arabian Nights*. His illustrations have remained a constant point of reference for modern illustrators. For myself, the mention of adventures such as *Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves* immediately conjures up images of stout, plump Arab-like men, with large turbans and comical expressions. Even in the recent version of *Aladdin*, by Walt Disney, there are uncanny resemblances to Dulac's works. They often, perhaps, verge on direct copies of Dulac characters, such as his comical peasants (fig 8.5 and 8.6) and a scene depicting the Sultan's palace in the distance(fig 8.8).

Unfortunately, as Nielsen's *Arabian Nights* were not published until 1977 and are not widely known, it is impossible to evaluate how they could have effected or altered the '90s public vision of the story. If they had been in circulation throughout the whole of this century, the outcome could have been completely different. It is possible that Walt Disney's characters in *Aladdin*, would have been less rounded or humourous, being more stiff and stylised. Somehow, the latter portrayal does not seem to suit the audience that the text has now come to attract.

Conclusion

Conclusion

This dissertation set out to analyse and compare the illustrations of *The Arabian Nights,* by the early 20th century artists; Kay Nielsen and Edmund Dulac. The objective was to prove that two artists, from similar schools of thought, with the same immediate influences, depict the same subject matter in to entirely diverse ways.

Neither Nielsen or Dulac were interested in conveying the real world, but instead indulged in the world of fantasy. They shared the same fundamental interest in Persian art, and each borrowed similar devices from it. Both artists abandoned the use of European fix-viewpoint perspective and replaced it with artificial and multiple perspective. They also modelled their figures on traditional 'Islamic beauty'. Like Persians, their main interest was creating greater space in which the text could unfold. Even with such attributes in common they still managed to utilise these qualities in two totally different ways.

As Dulac's work progressed from 1907 to 1938, he seems to loose the personal touch which characterises much of his earlier work. The painterly, atmospheric hand, subtle and emotional, is replaced by a stiffer more stylised expression. This metamorphosis resulted from his early attraction to Eastern art. His work becomes imitative of stereotypical Persian miniatures, which perhaps led to the decline of his personal creativity.

However, Nielsen never resorted to merely reproducing Persian replicas, but instead borrowed their techniques (ie: multiple perspective, use of pattern and colour) to create an entirely individual and extremely dramatic style which was unmistakably personal.

The compositional arrangements differed greatly between the two artists. Dulac, in his early period adhered to realism, by conforming to Western photograghic perspective. There was a sense of depth and distance in many of his illustrations, and subtle tonal

gradations. Yet as his work matured, this naturalistic approach was set aside for something more abstract and geometrical. Space and depth did not exist but instead, unnatural multiple perspectives dominated. Unfortunately, Dulac merely copies and reproduces such Persian elements and rarely explores new possibilities in which they could be manipulated, whereas, Nielsen's treatment of perspective shows an ability to assimilate these Persian influences into something totally original and unique, instead of conforming to their original functions.

As previously mentioned, both artists conform to stereotypical beauty found in Persian art. While Nielsen's figures merely perform a narrative function and are only present due to their reference in the text, Dulac's, (particularly towards the beginning of his career), gives his characters equal preference and importance. Dulac never crosses the line into eroticism whilst Nielsen similarly avoided wit or humour. The use of caricature in Dulac's earlier work was not in keeping with Persian art, but enabled him to create an exciting, personalised image of the Far East. Unfortunately, this style is eliminated from his work as Persian influences heighten, and is replaced by the emotionless Persian style.

Although both artists were influenced greatly by Persian art, they utilised these devices in two totally different manners. In short, the influence of Persian art improved and strengthened Nielsens work, but eventually contributed to the decline of originality in the art of Dulac, who was perhaps over-dominated by his admiration for Eastern art. To conclude, it is quite apparent that the autonomy, individuality and creativity of each artists was quite different, although subject matter and influence were similar. This suggests, that the creativity of an artist is totally subjective in its own right.

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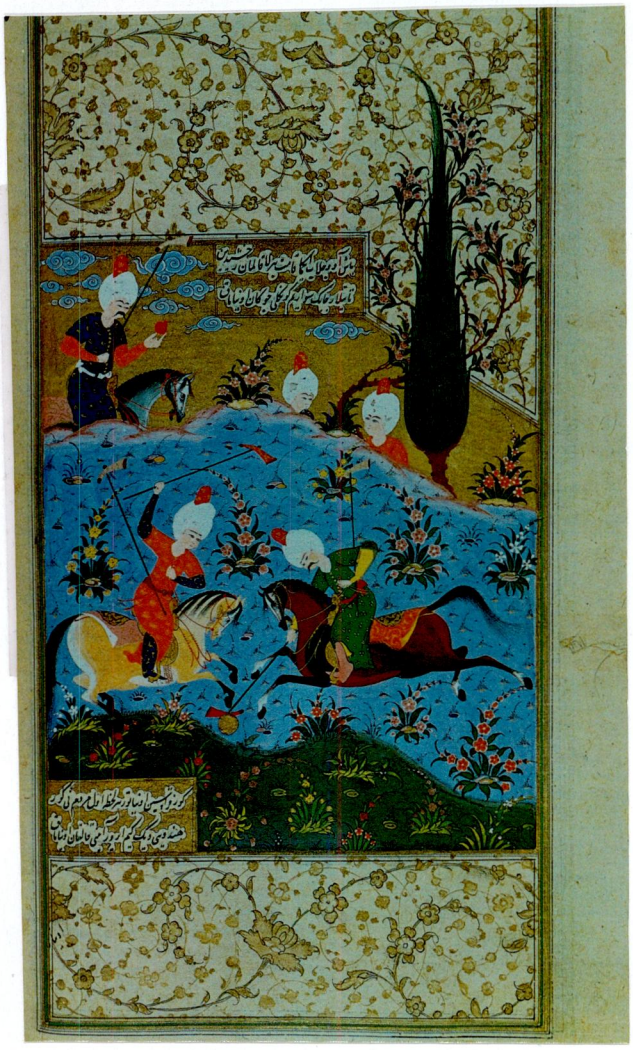


Fig 1.1 Ali Shir Neva' i, (46).

Fig1.2 Mahmud b. Sebuktegin of Ghazni crosses the Ganges,1306,(9)

Fig 1.3 Divan-i Muhibbi, late 1300s, (28).

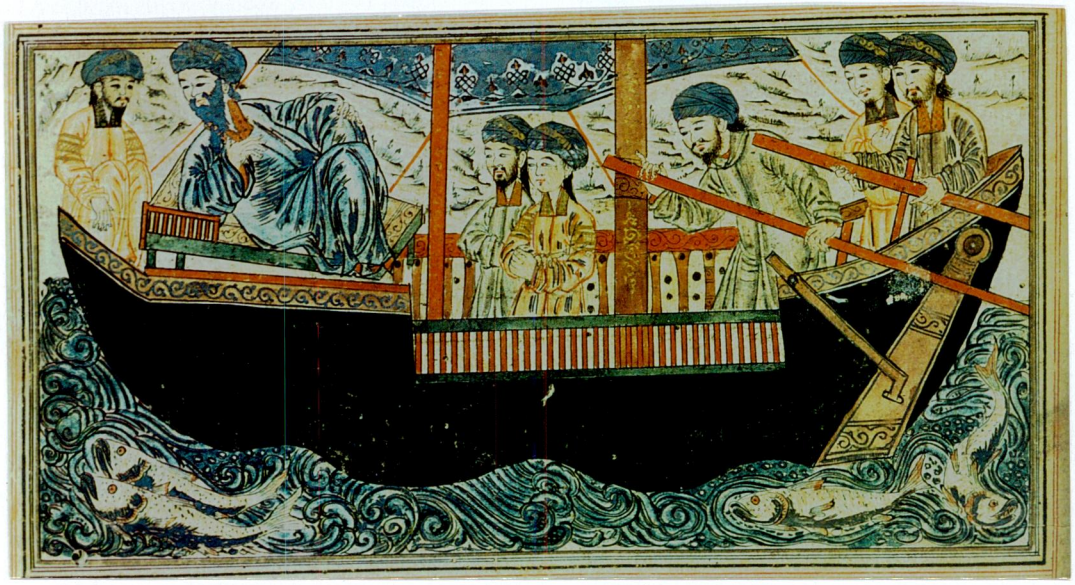


Fig 1.4 The Jami' al-tawarikh of Rushid al-Din (a), 1314 (19).

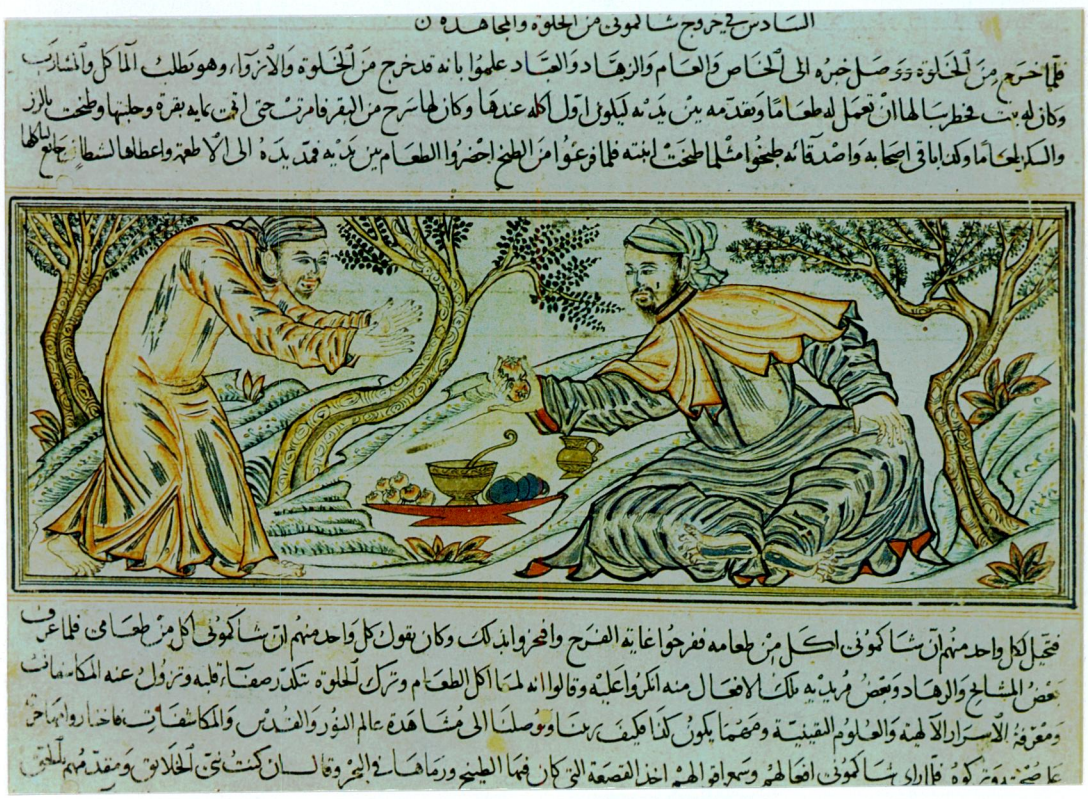


Fig 1.5 The Jami' al-tawarikh of Rushid al-Din (b), 1314 (19).

Fig 1.6 Chinese Study of Water, Yuan, 1190, (28).

Fig 1.7 Mahizheh watches Rustam rescue her lover Bizhan, 1444, (9).

Fig 1.8 Sam and Zul welcome into Kabul, 1520-30, (19).

Fig 1.9 The Battle of Mahacs, late 1500s, (46).

Detail of Fig ~~5.9~~
1.9

Fig 2.1 Rustam and the 'seven' Champions hunt in Turan, 1530, (19).

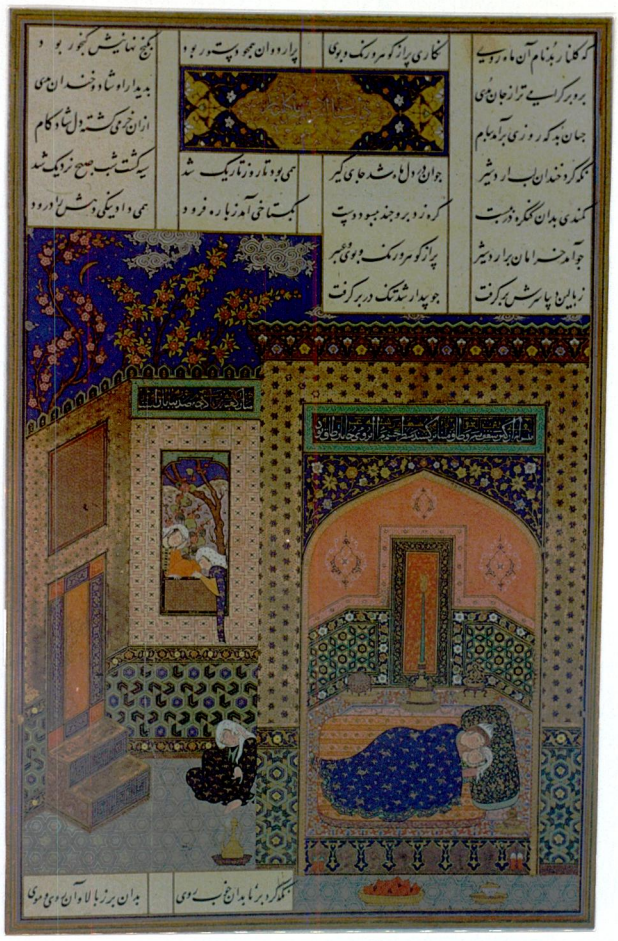


Fig 2.2 Ardashir and the slave-girl Gulnar, 1527-28, (19)

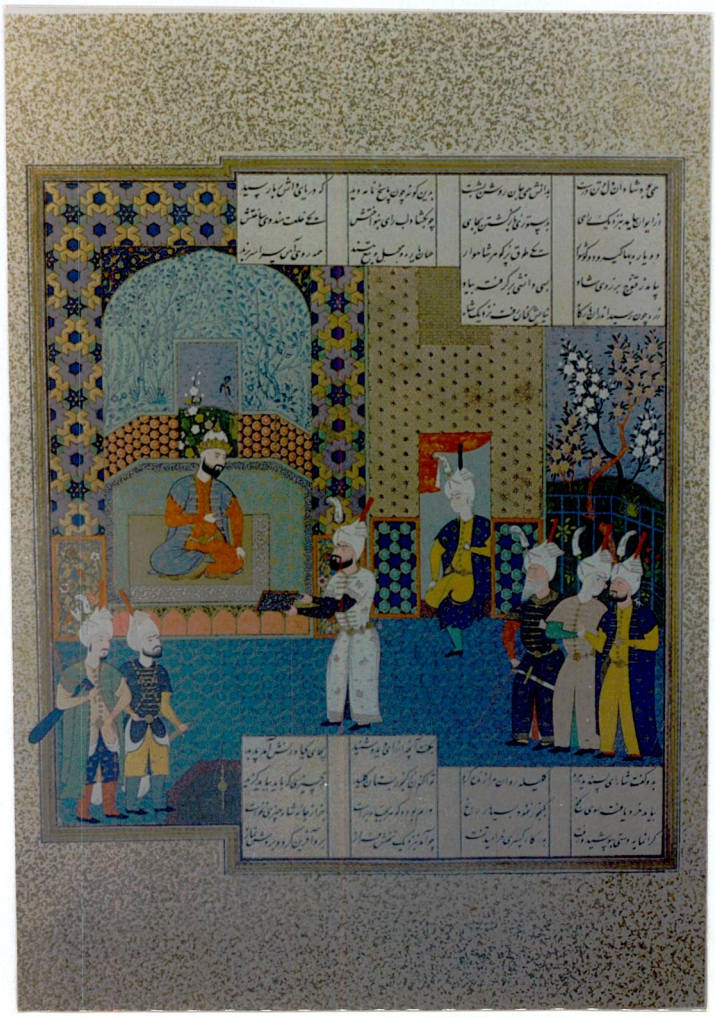


Fig 2.3 Burzuy brings Nush irvan the book of Kalila and Dimna,

Fig 2.4 'The first joust of the rock': Fariburz against Kalbad, 1540, (19)

Fig 2.5 'Bahram Gur slays the dragon', 1442-3, (9).

Fig 2.6 Iskandar visits the Hermit at Night, Shiraz, 1410, (20)

Fig 2.7 ‘The Angel provides a Ram for Abraham, 1427, (20).

Fig 2.8 Barbad the concealed museum, 1535, (19).

Fig 2.9 The Court of Faridun, 1520-30, (19).

Fig 2.1 Rustam and the 'seven' Champions hunt in Turan, 1530, (19).

Fig 3.1 (detail from Fig 2.8)

Fig 3.2 (detail from Fig 1.8)

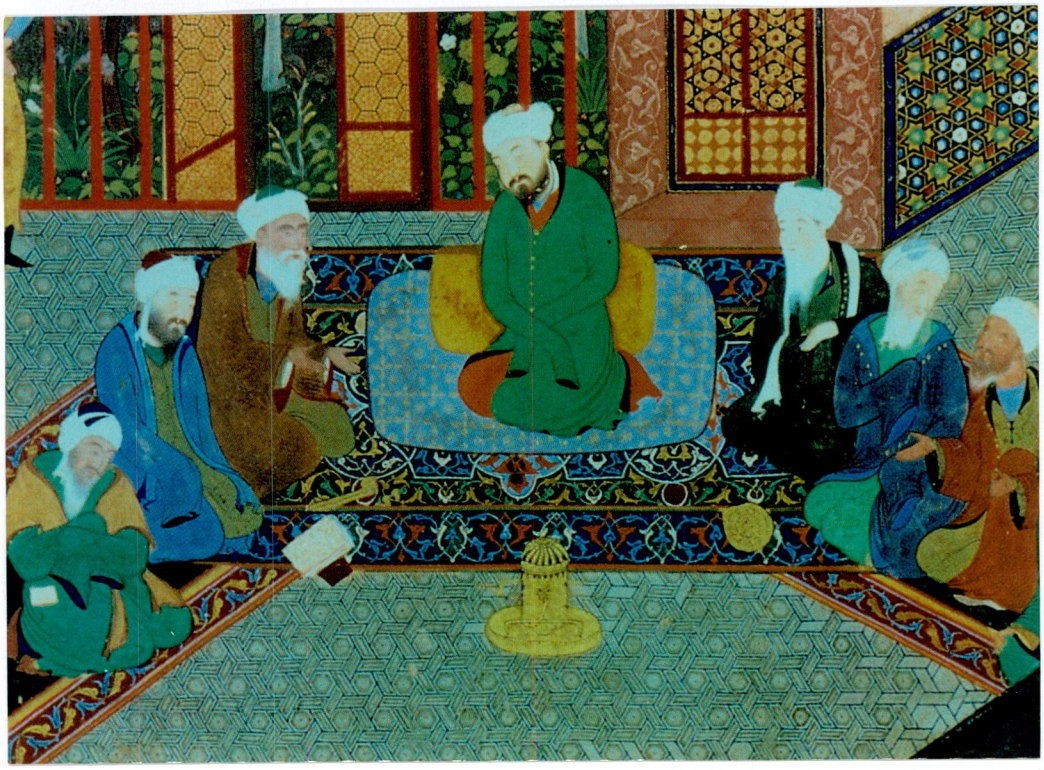


Fig 3.3 detail from: 'Iskandar and the Seven Sages', 1494-5, (9).

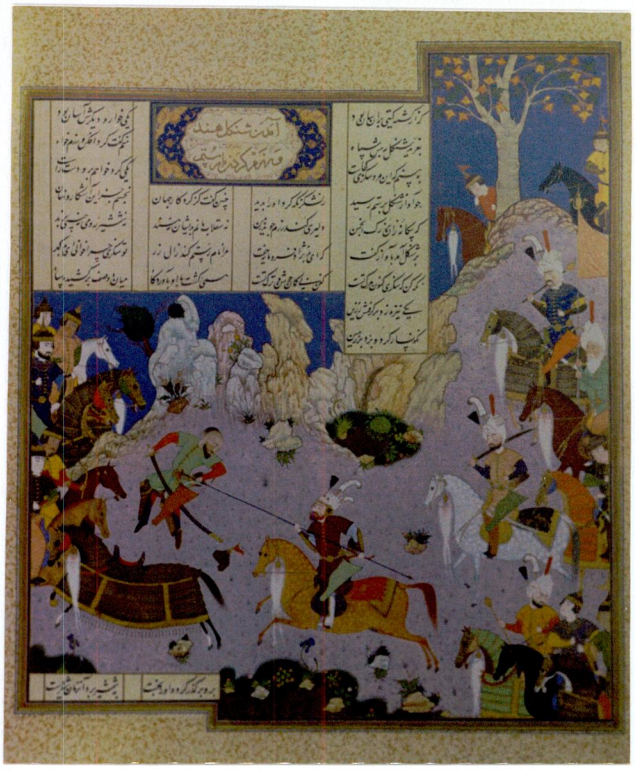


Fig 3.4 The Combat of Rustam and Shagul, 1525, (19).

Fig 2.1 Rustam and the 'seven' Champions hunt in Turan, 1530, (19).

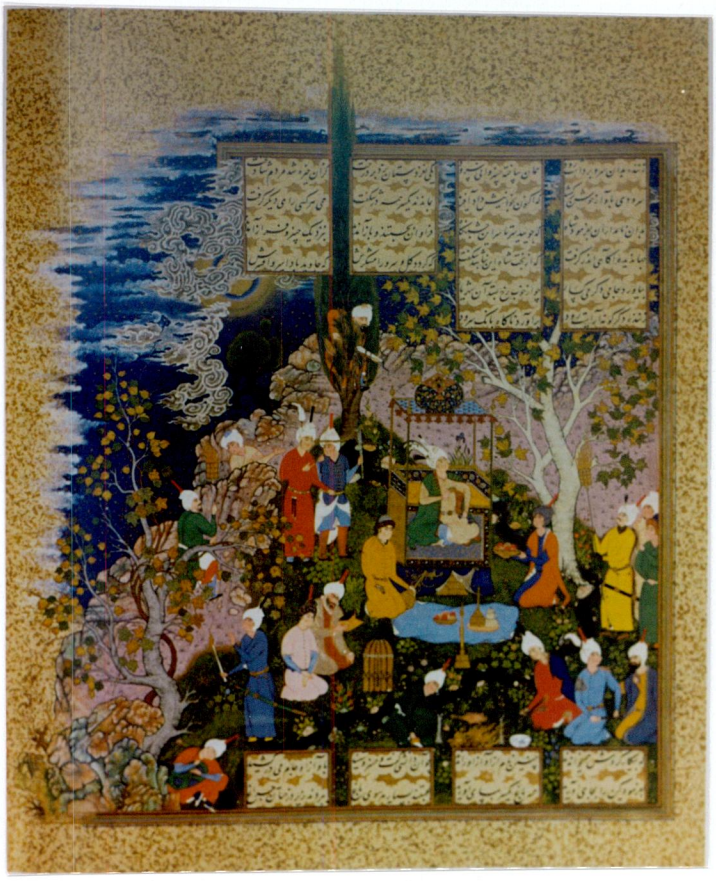


Fig 2.8 Barbad the concealed museum, 1535, (19).

Fig 3.5 'Began to heap upon me terms of the most violent and shameful abuse', Dulac, 1907, (1).

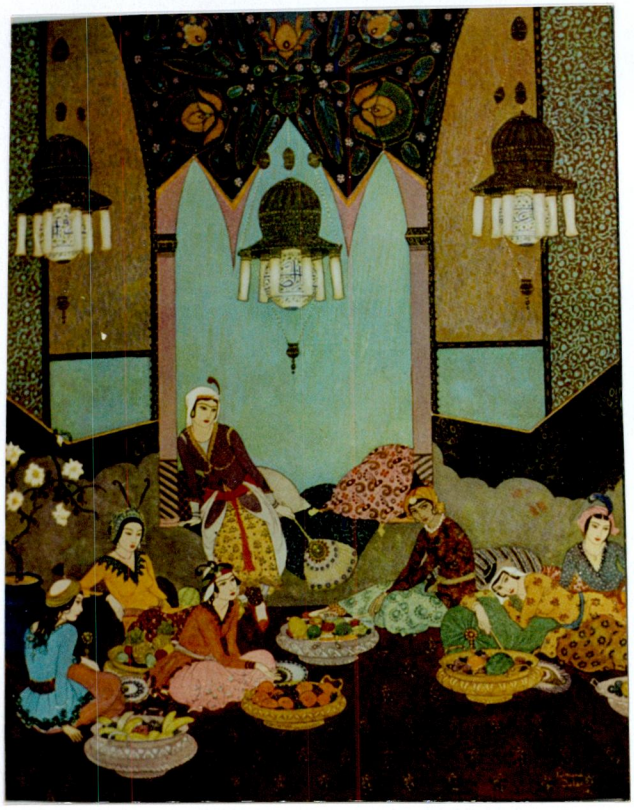


Fig 3.6 'The room of the fruits preparedfor Abu-i-Hasam, Dulac, 1914, (4).

Fig 3.7 Scheherazade, Dulac, 1907, (1).

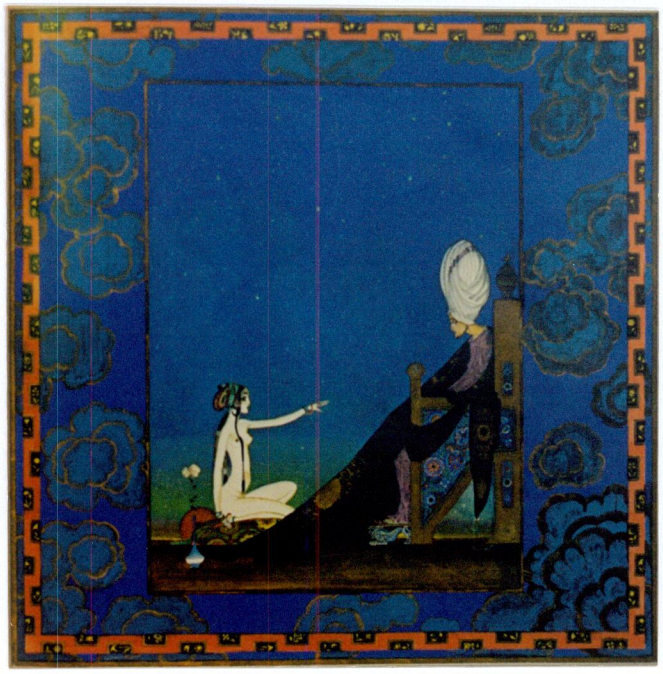


Fig 3.8 Scheherazade, Nielsen, 1922, (29).

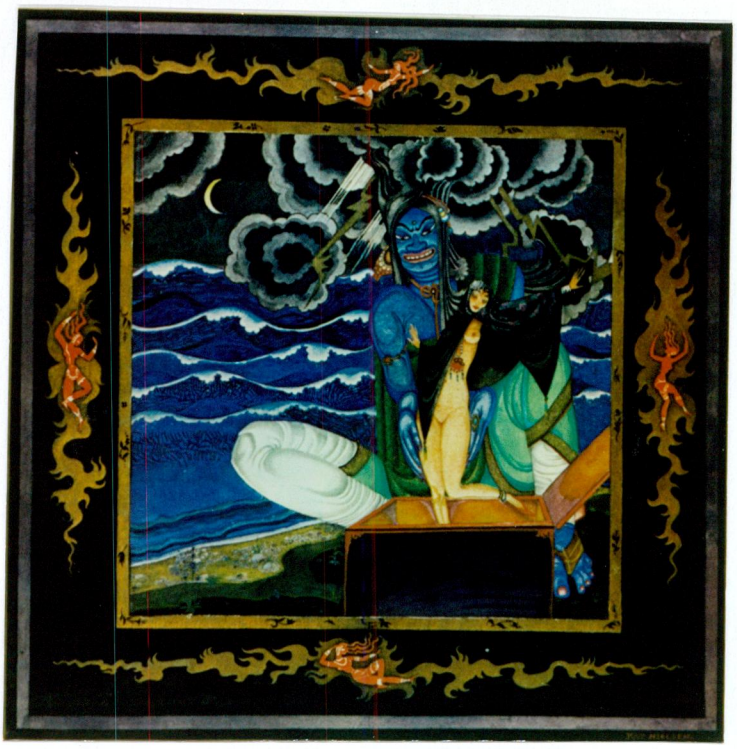


Fig 3.9 On his travels the Sultan meets a beautiful girl who is the captive of a Genie, Nielsen, 1922, (29).

Fig 4.1 The Tale of the little Hunkback, Nielsen, 1922, (29).

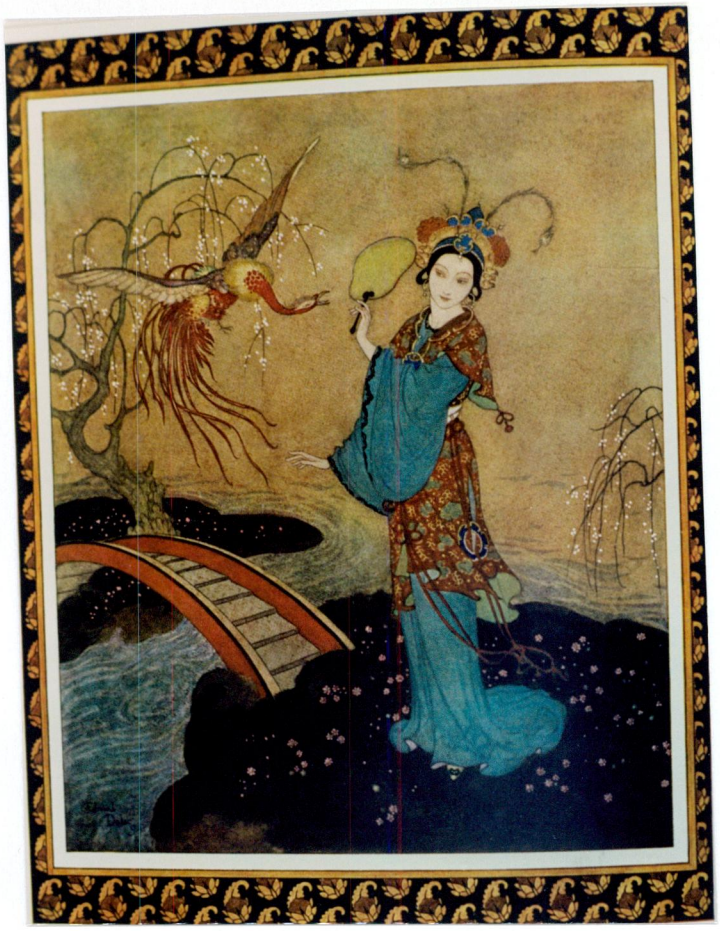


Fig 4.2 Princess Bandoura, 1913, (3).

Fig 4.3 Camaralzam as an Astrologer,Dulac,1913

Fig 3.6 'The room of the fruits preparedfor Abu-i-Hasam, Dulac, 1914, (4)

Fig 4.4 The Phsician's Tale of a young man loved by two sisters, Nielsen, 1922, (29).

Fig 4.5 'Iskandar and the Seven Sages', 1494-5, (9).

Fig 4.6 '...sit at her window and weep', Dulac, 1914, (4).

Fig 4.7 Untitled Persian manuscript.

Fig 4.8 Prologue, Nielsen, 1922, (29).

Fig 4.9 The Tale of the First Dervish, Nielsen, 1922, (29).

Fig 5.1 'The Story of the Magic Horse,' Dulac, 1907, (1).

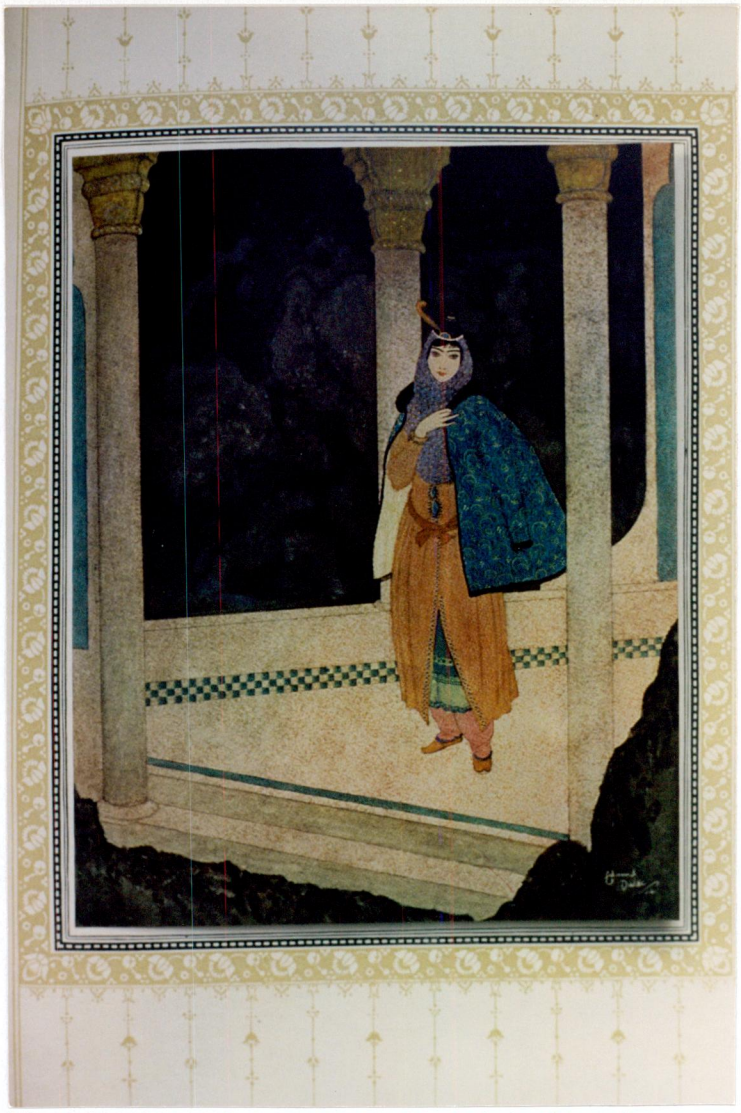


Fig 5.4 'The prince meets a noble lady in the underground Palace,

Fig 5.5 'As she rose up through clouds there passed one she knew by his tail to be Dahnash', Dulac, 1913, (3).

Fig 5.2 'There upon the damsel upset the pan into the fire', Dulac,

Fig 5.3 'Then for the last figure of all she drew out the dagger', Dulac,1907, (1).

Fig 5.6 detail from: The tailor's t Nielsen, 1922,ale of the lame young man and the barber of Baghdad, Nielsen, 1922, (29).

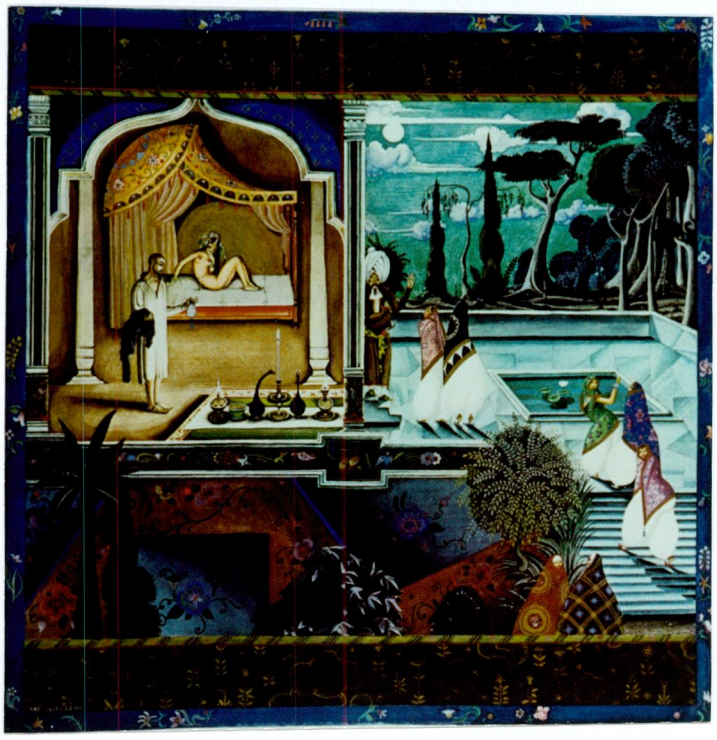


Fig 5.7 The History of Noureddin Ali and Bedreddin, 1922, (29).

Fig 3.7 Scheherazade, Dulac, 1907, (1).

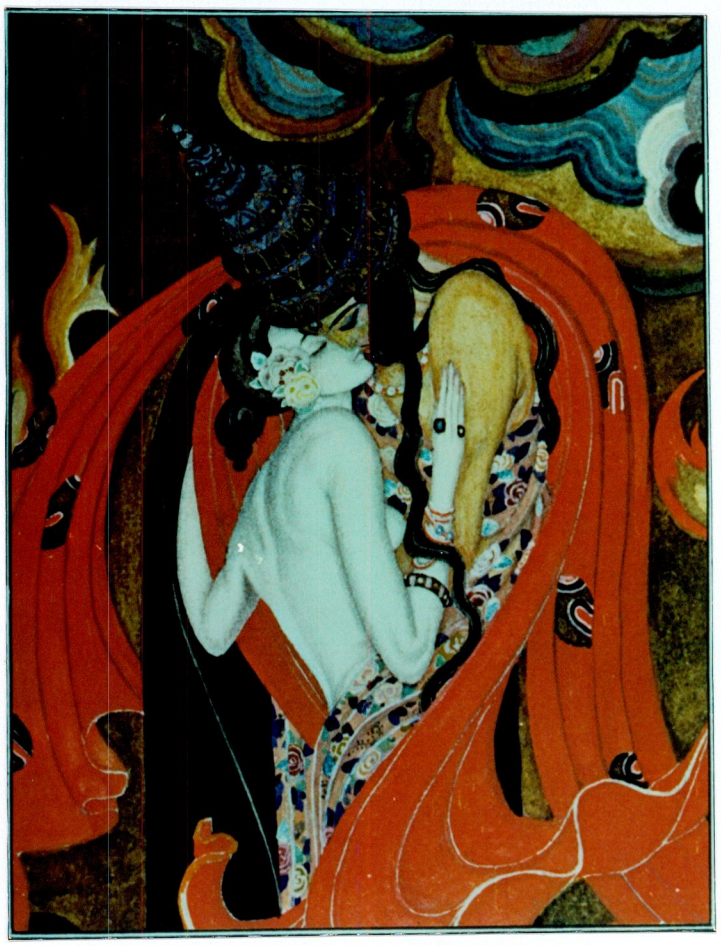
Fig 3.8 Scheherazade, Nielsen, 1922, (29).

detail of Fig3.8

Fig 5.8 'Camarazaman finds the Talisman', Dulac, 1913, (3)

Fig 5.9 Camaralzaman cures Badoura, Nielsen, 1913, (29).

Fig 4.9 The Tale of the First Dervish, Nielsen, 1922, (29).



Detail of Fig 4.9 The Tale of the First Dervish, Nielsen, 1922, (29).

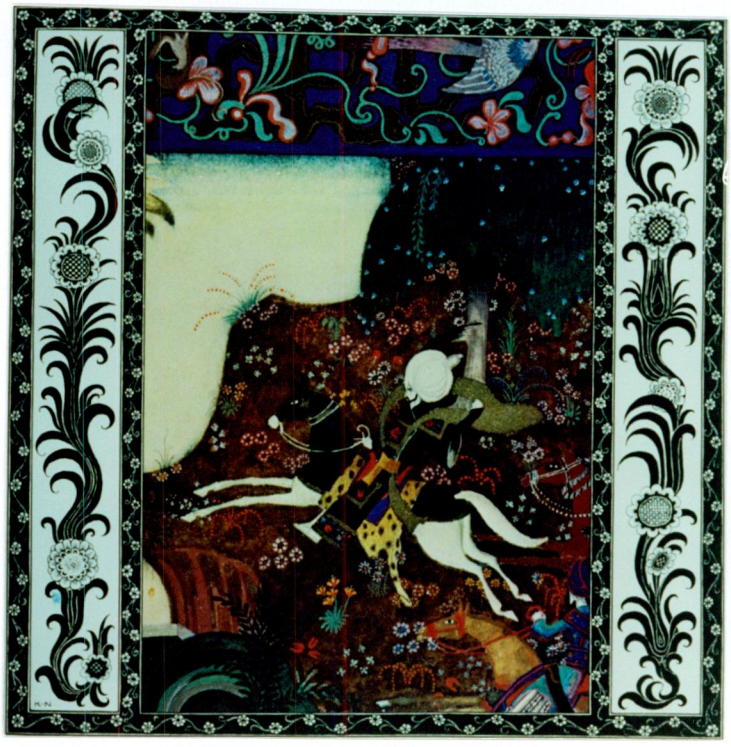
Fig 6.1 'At so arragant a claim all the courtiers burst into loud laughter', Dulac,1914, (4).

Fig 6.3 The Tale of King Sinbad, Nielsen, 1922, (29).

Detail of 6.3 The Tale of King Sinbad, Nielsen, 1922, (29).

Fig 6.4 'At this time the Princess had been watching the combat from the roof', Dulac, 1907, (1).

Fig 4.8 Prologue, Nielsen, 1922, (29).



Detail of 4.8 Prologue, Nielsen, 1922, (29).

Fig 3.4 The Combat of Rustam and Shagul, 1525, (19).

Fig 6.4 'The Prince is taken back to the Golden Palace by the Magic horse', Dulac, 1914, (4).

Fig 6.6 The Tale of the Second Dervish, Nielsen, 1922, (29).

Detail of Fig 6.6

Fig 3.9 On his travels the Sultan meets a beautiful girl who is the captive of a Genie, Nielsen, 1922, (29).

Detail of Fig 3.9

Fig 6.7 'And there in the midst stood a mighty Genie', Dulac, 1907, (1).

Fig 5.5 'As she rose up through clouds there passed one she knew by his tail to be Dahnash', Dulac, 1913.

Fig 6.8 Hamza fighting Demons, 1565, (19).

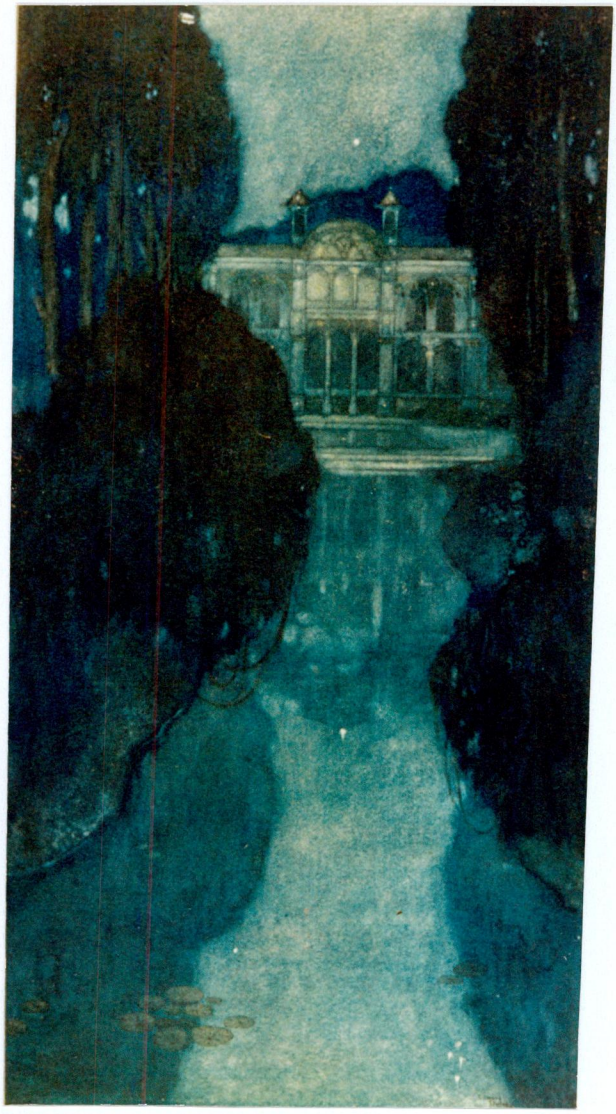
Fig 6.9 Untitled Persian Manuscript

Fig 7.1 'Reaching his farthest wounded the giant in the knee', Dulac, 1907, (1).

Fig 7.2` Subding a Dragon, 1594, (19).

Fig 7.3 The Episode of the Snake, Dulac, 1914, (4).

Fig 7.4 'In the garden of the summer palace all was silent and solitude', Dulac, 1907, (1).



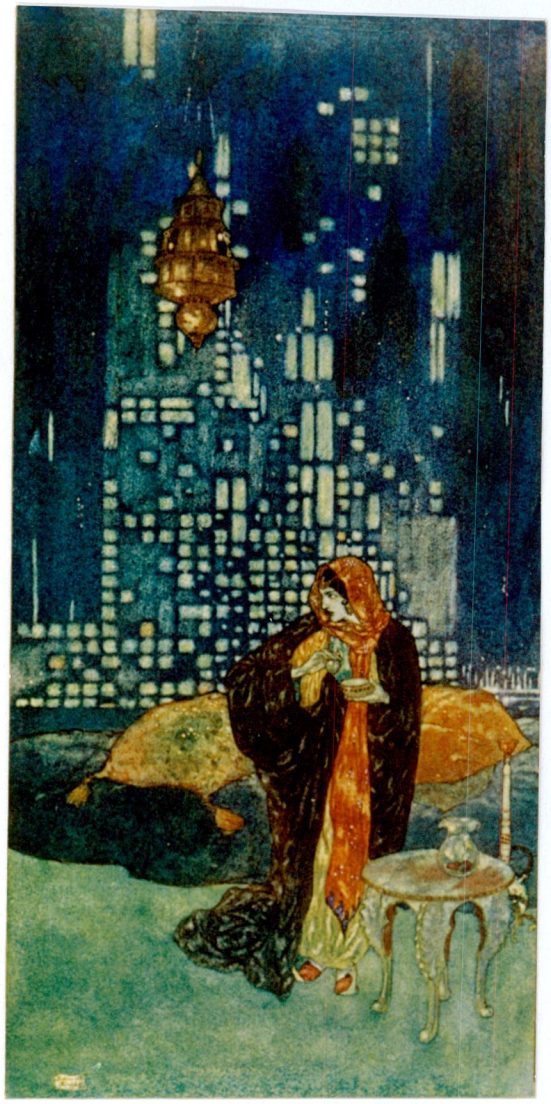


Fig 7.5 'The cup of wine which she gives him each night contains a sleeping-draught', Dulac, 1907, (1).

Fig 3.8 Scheherazade, Nielsen, 1922, (29).

Fig 7.8 Aladdin finds the Magic Lamp, Dulac, 1914, (4).

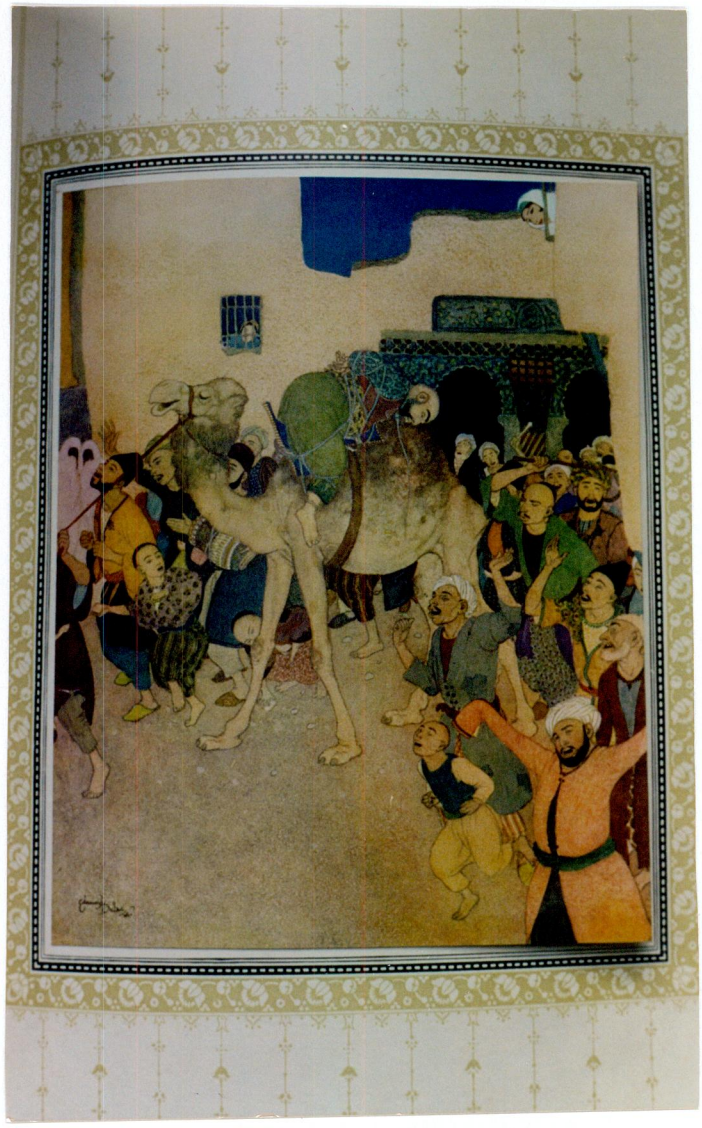


Fig 7.7 'Alu-i-Hasan orders the sheik of the district', Dulac, 1914, (4).

Fig 7.6 The Princess burns the Efrete to death, Dulac, 1914, (4).

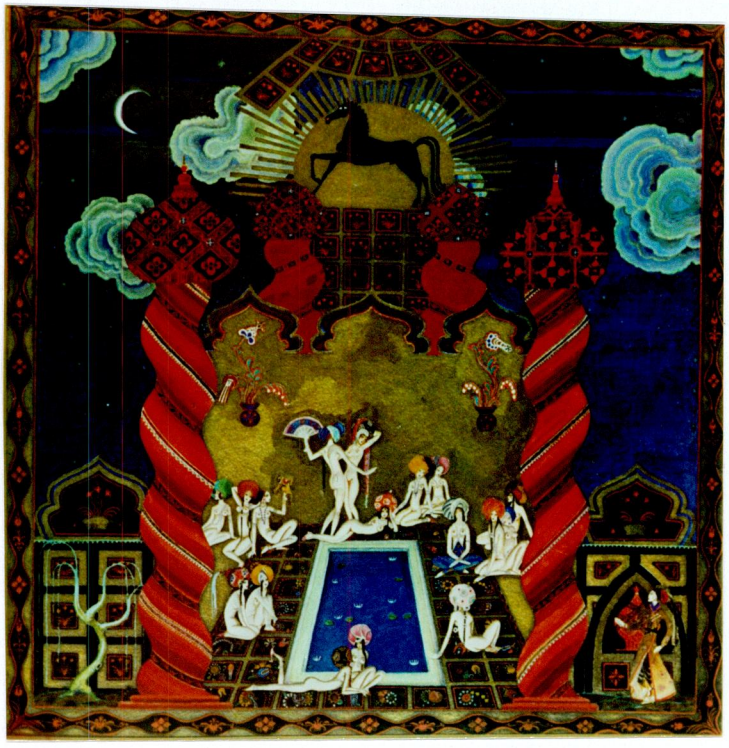


Fig 7.9 The Tale of the Third Dervish, Nielsen, 1922, (29).

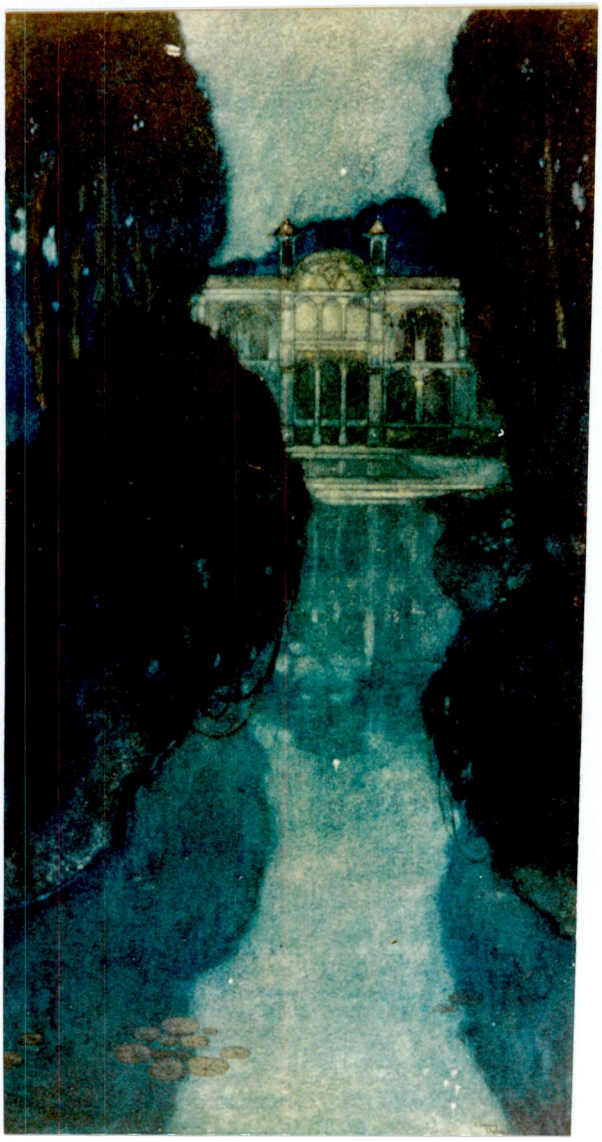


Fig 7.4 'In the garden of the summer palace all was silent and solitude', Dulac, 1907,

Fig 6.5 'The Prince is taken back to the Golden Palace by the Magic horse', Dulac, 1914, (4).

Fig 8.1 The Nuptial Dance of Aladdin and the lady Bedr-el-Budur, Dulac, 1914, (14).

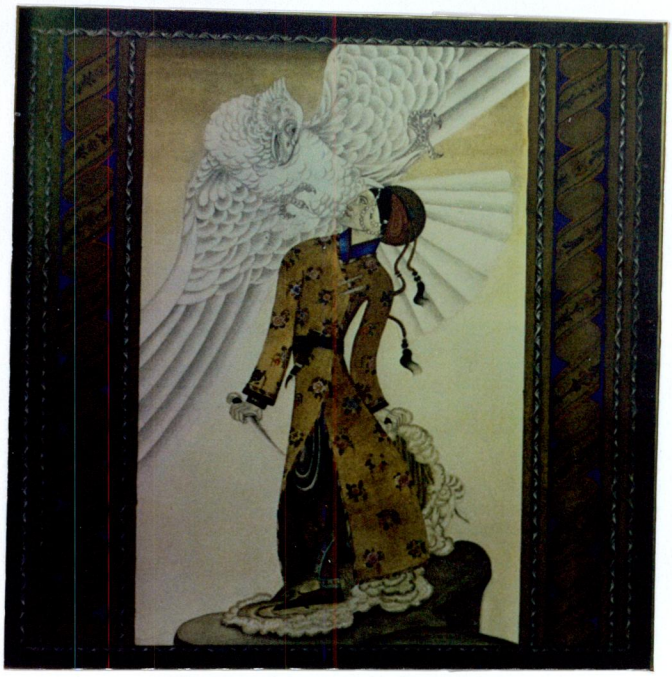


Fig 8.2 The Tale of the Third Dervish from the tale of the porter, Nielsen, 1922, (29).

Fig 4.8 Prologue, Nielsen, 1922, (29).

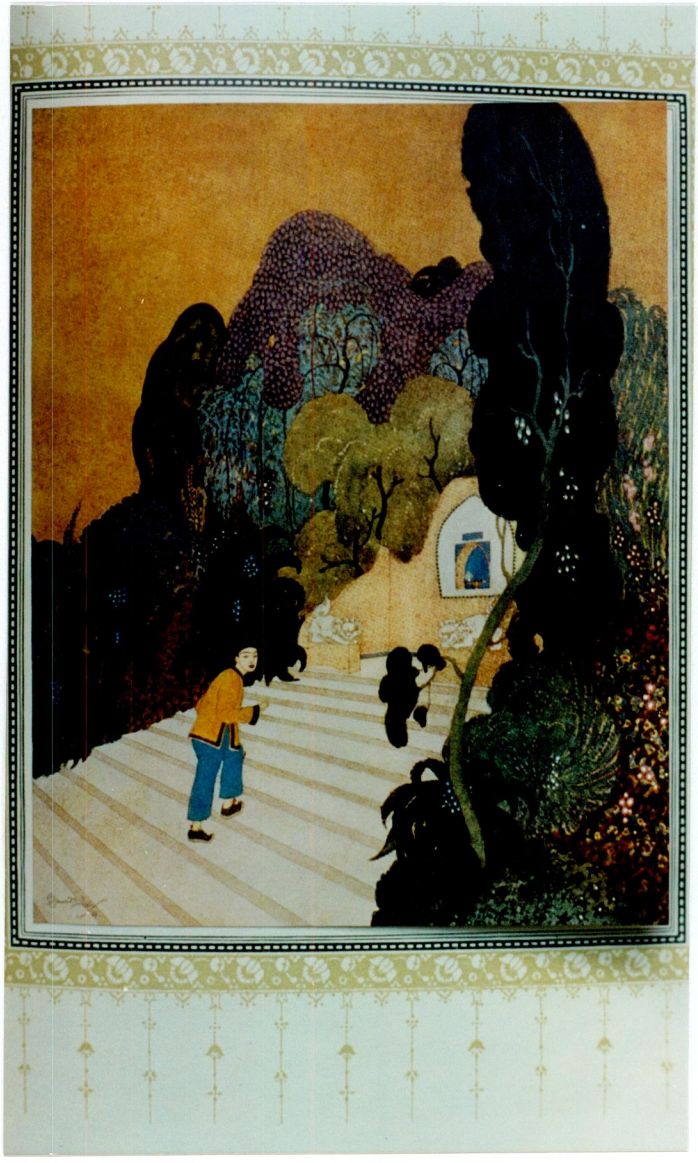


Fig 7.8 Aladdin finds the Magic Lamp, Dulac, 1914, (4).

Fig 4.1 The Tale of the little Hunkback, Nielsen, 1922, (29).

Fig 8.3 The Tale of the First Girl, Nielsen, 1922, (29).

Fig 7.9 The Tale of the Third Dervish, Nielsen, 1922, (29).

Fig 4.9 The Tale of the First Dervish, Nielsen, 1922, (29).

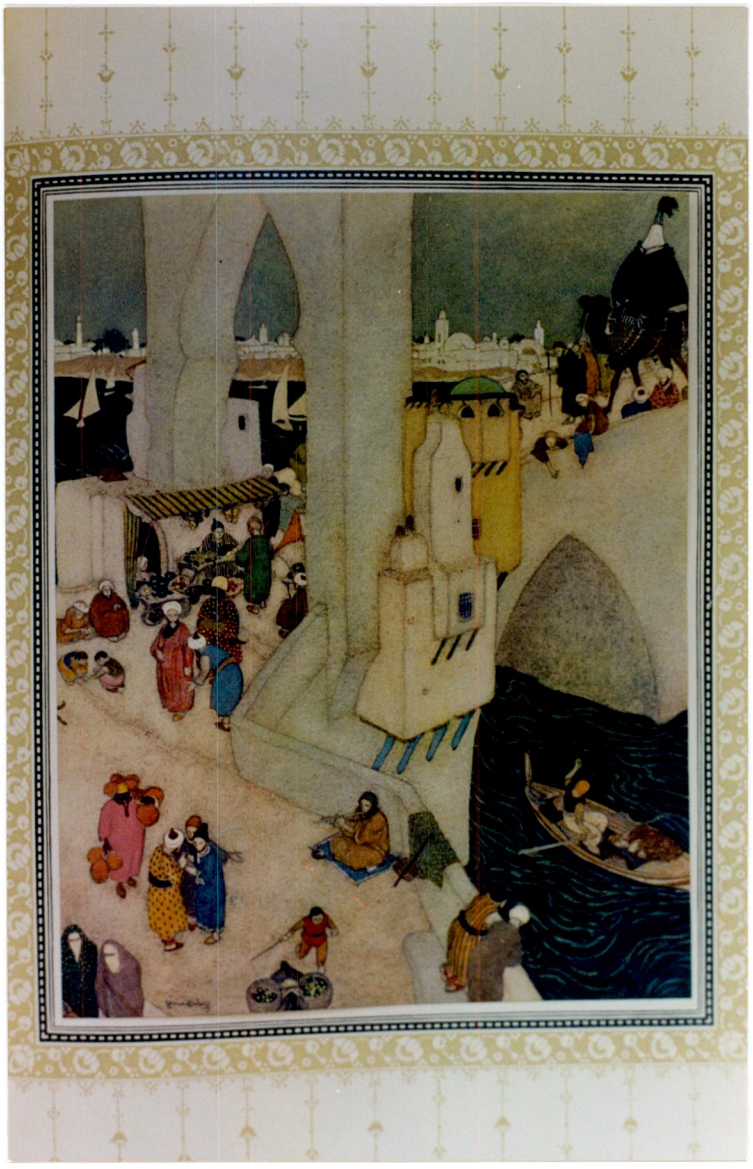


Fig 8.4 The bridges of Baghdad where Abu-l-Hasan awaits strangers, Dulac, 1914, (4).

Fig 8.5 'Great was the astonishment of the vizier and Sultan's escort', Dulac, 1907, (1).

Fig 8.6 'She gave orders for a rich banquet', Dulac, 1907, (1).

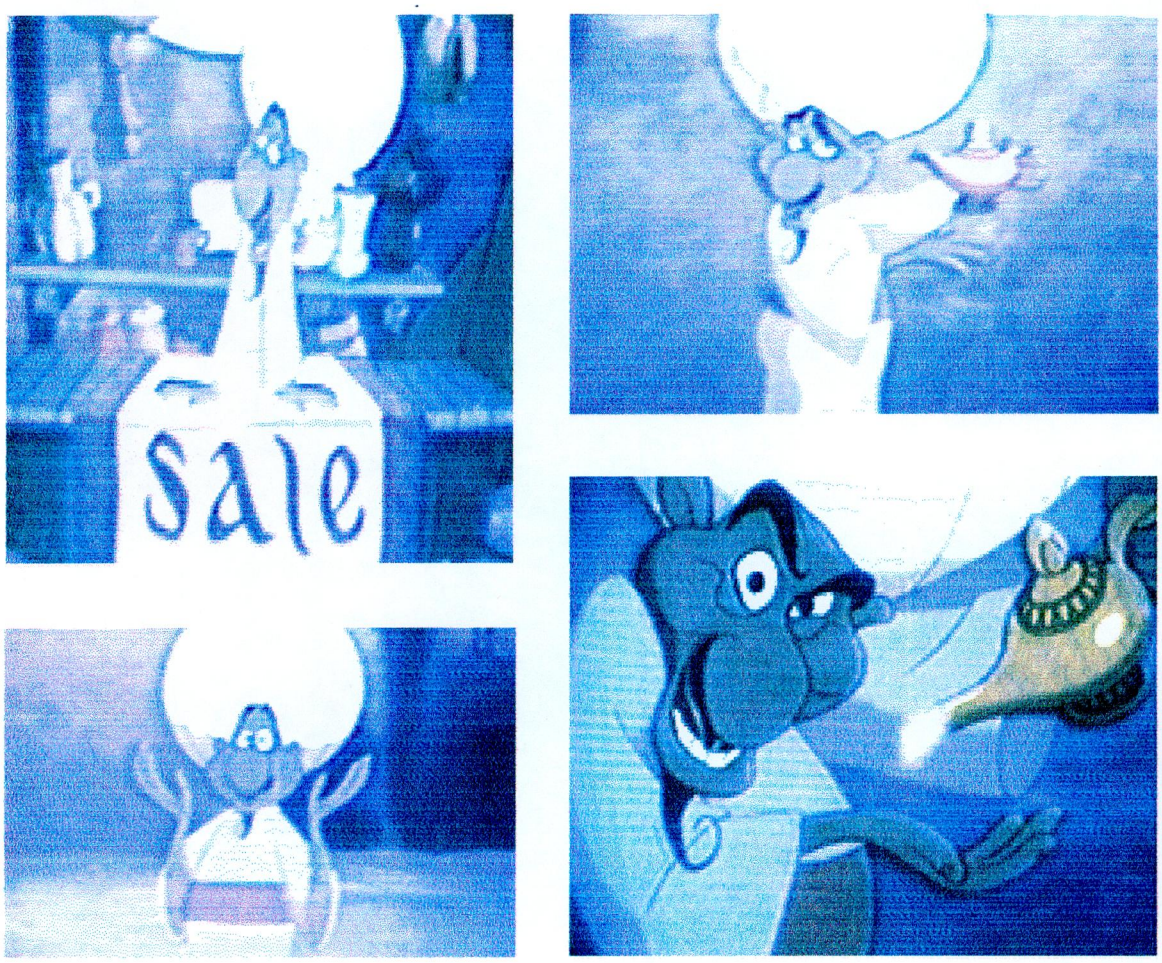


Fig. 8.7 Arab characters from Walt Disney's, *Aladdin.*

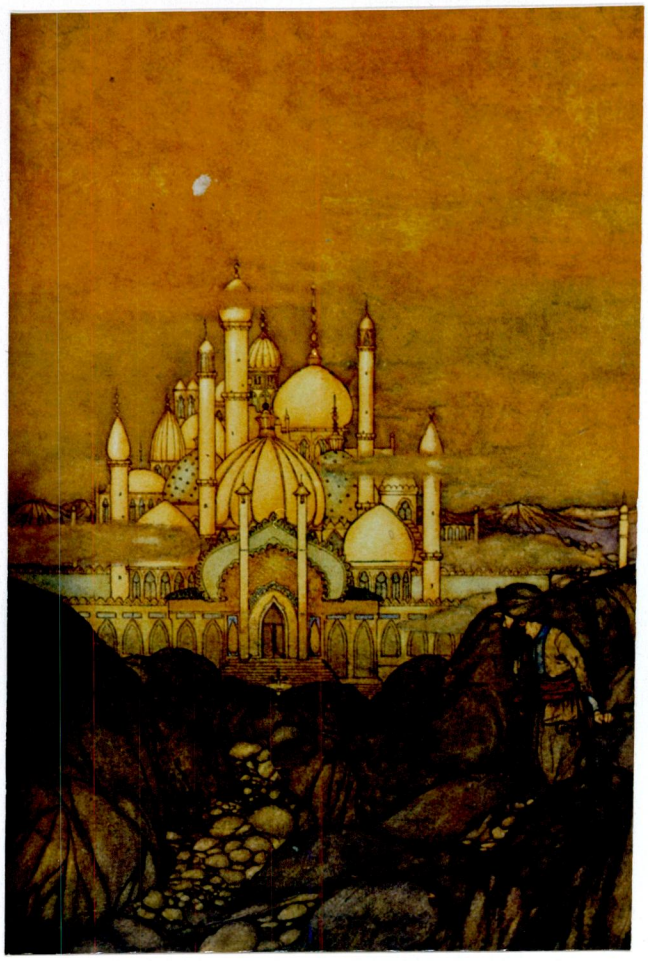


Fig 8.8 '...Palace of shining marble, with its crowd of domes', Dulac, 1907, (1).

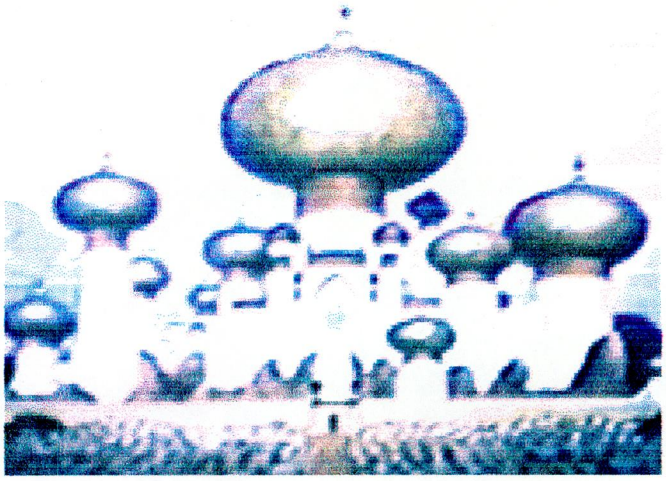


Fig. 8.9 Palace scene from Walt Disney's, *Aladdin.*