

The Series in Contemporary Literature, the Department of French and Italian, the
Comparative Literature Program and the Interdisciplinary Humanities Center
present

A Western Vision of Oriental Women: Antoine Galland's Translation of the *Thousand and One Nights*

A talk by Professor Jean-Paul Sermain (Paris-III)
Tuesday, April 17th 4:00 pm
UCen Harbor Room
Free and open to the public



By Edmund Dulac



The manuscript of the *Thousand and One Nights*, as discovered by their first translator Antoine Galland (1646-1715), depicts female characters who are subjected to the constraints of Arab society and Islam, and who overcome these constraints thanks to their intelligence, energy and moral conscience. For Galland, such a representation was incompatible both with the literary canon and the social norms of his time. 18th century French women had achieved a high degree of cultural refinement and social prominence and were allowed a great degree of freedom. Galland's adaptation reflects this, in effect acclimating the Oriental women of the Nights to the French code of civility. Galland's Western vision of Oriental women gives us access to three key issues of the *Thousand and One Nights*: the status of women in Islamic cultures, Classicism's translation aesthetics which advocates the appropriation of the original, and more generally the debate over Orientalism.