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In the variety of literary genres which literally exploded in Britain during the long eighteenth century, the so-called *oriental tale*, as a result of the immense influence of the translation of the *Arabian Nights Entertainments* into English at the beginning of the century, had a vast success. The structure, frame, style and themes of the *Nights*, which were at first simply “adapted” to fit into a more British context, gradually became a privileged means for expressing critical views on current political affairs and moral concerns.

Yet whereas male writers focused on the moral message they could convey through their own versions of the oriental tale (Samuel Johnson’s *Rasselas* and William Beckford’s *Vathek* are but the most renown examples), eighteenth-century women writers radically re-interpreted the genre of the oriental tale not only by transmigrating¹ it into the British canon with better narrative results compared to those of their male colleagues, but also by *creating* an unprecedented, extremely gendered version of the oriental tale which deeply influenced narrative literary genres and especially the novel. My paper will discuss the possibilities offered by such gendered versions of the oriental tale in the light of their contribution to the rise of the novel, and underline eighteenth-century British women writers’ involvement in configuring their conscious role in theorizing and creating the novel.

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¹ Paula R. Backscheider and Catherine Ingrassia, *Narrative Transmigrations: The Oriental Tale and the Novel in Eighteenth-Century Britain*, Malden: Blackwell, 2005.