

- *I've read several things you've written. There's something I've noticed: there's in your analysis a first step that is not always reasonable. Following this first step, it's a flawless analysis. But we're obliged to believe this first step, to believe something and take it at face value, believe that it is correct, so as to discover not just that it might make sense, but that it's flawless from this step to the end. But this first step, I, as a reader and as someone thinking [about what I am reading], why am I to ... I mean you at one point said that "The Thousand [and One] Nights" is a great book, so nothing in it is by chance. I consider that it's a book written by someone ...*
- This work in particular is a tricky one because it is a collection written and pieced together over time by very different people, so ...
- *It can have gaps (lacunes), it can have strengths and weaknesses. Even in the case of the Gospels, some people say this paragraph isn't well written.*
- How do they know?
- How do they know *that it's not well written?* It's a matter of opinion here. *They notice that there are various styles in the Bible, that it is not uniform. So everyone can give his opinion. What I am driving at is that even in the case of the Bible we've become able to supposedly have as it were a masterly attitude toward it and give our opinion about what supposedly God said; why is it that in the case of this story, "The Thousand and One Nights," we have to take it at face value: this is a great work, it has to have sense—this first step of faith rather than knowledge—and proceed from this in a flawless analysis about which I have no question? The question concerns the first step.*
- ...
- Do you think we can *find these relations in any work whatever? Or does it have to be a certain [work] that you would regard*

as a great work? *For example, can I find this is an episode of [the TV series] "Friends"?*

- No, you can't find it in *Friends*.
- *What I am driving at is:* Is it connected to quality? Or is it a relation that we can see?

English translation of the Arabic segment of the Q and A following my lecture "Two or Three Things I'm Dying to Tell You about *The Thousand and One Nights*," in "Indicated by Signs," Beirut Art Center, September 23, 2009. The translation from Arabic is italicized.