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The One Thousand and One Nights in 18th Century France and 19th Century England

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**Orientalism in Translation:
The One Thousand and One Nights in 18th Century France and 19th Century England**

By

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ABSTRACT

The objective of this study is to show how translation contributes to the "Orientalist" project and to the past and present knowledge of the Orient as it has been shaped by different disciplines such as anthropology, history and literature. In order to demonstrate this, I have decided to compare the Arabic text *Alf Leyla wa Leyla* (The One Thousand and One Nights) with the French translation by Antoine Galland (1704-1706) and the English translation by Sir Richard Burton (1885).

According to Edward Said, the Orientalist project or Orientalism is mainly a French and British cultural enterprise that has produced a wide-ranging wealth of knowledge about an Orient that has been represented as an undifferentiated entity with despotism, splendour, cruelty, or even sensuality being its main attributes.

I have chosen these translations because they come from places with a long Orientalist tradition. In 18th century France, the age of the *Belles infidèles*, Galland is a man of the Enlightenment who appears to be a precursor of Orientalism as embodied in Montesquieu's *Lettres persanes* and Voltaire's *zadig*. A century later, Burton's *The Arabian Nights*, backed by a deep knowledge of Islam, is published. Burton is an official in the service of the British Empire — an empire that takes pride in having the highest number of Muslim subjects.

The evolution of *Alf Leyla wa Leyla* and its translations is followed by an analysis of the shifts applied to the representations of Oriental elements found in it (social and religious practices). These shifts as well as the annotations that refer to Arabo-Islamic culture are related to Galland and Burton's intellectual development and to the socio-historical context of their respective translations.

RÉSUMÉ

Cette étude a pour but de montrer comment la traduction participe du «projet orientaliste», c'est-à-dire de la connaissance présente et passée de l'Orient telle qu'elle a été façonnée par différentes disciplines comme l'anthropologie, l'histoire ou la littérature.

Pour démontrer ce projet, j'ai choisi de comparer le texte arabe *Alf Leyla wa Leyla* (Les mille et une nuits) avec la traduction française d'Antoine Galland (1704-1706) et la traduction anglaise de Richard Burton (1885). Selon Edward Saïd, le projet orientaliste ou encore l'Orientalisme est une entreprise culturelle, principalement française et britannique, qui a produit un savoir d'une envergure considérable sur l'Orient : celui-ci est représenté comme une entité indifférenciée dont le despotisme, la splendeur, la cruauté ou encore la sensualité constituent les principaux attributs.

Le choix des traductions a été déterminé par les deux principaux lieux de l'Orientalisme. Dans la France du 18^e siècle, l'époque des « belles infidèles », Galland est un homme des Lumières, qui apparaît comme un précurseur de l'Orientalisme tel qu'il s'incarne aussi chez Montesquieu (Les lettres persanes) ou Voltaire (Zadig). Un siècle plus tard, Burton propose une traduction d'Alf Leyla wa Leyla soutenue par une minutieuse connaissance de l'Islam, mais c'est d'abord un fonctionnaire au service de l'empire britannique, un empire qui se vante de compter le plus grand nombre de sujets musulmans.

L'historique d'Alf Leyla wa Leyla et de ses traductions est suivi d'une analyse des déplacements effectués sur les représentations des éléments orientaux de cette œuvre (pratiques sociales, notamment religieuses). Ces déplacements et les annotations qui renvoient à la culture arabo-musulmane sont mis en rapport avec le cheminement intellectuel de Galland et Burton et avec le contexte socio-historique de leur traduction respective.

INTRODUCTION

The present study, which looks at the translation shifts that the Arabic tales *Alf Leyla wa Leyla* underwent in Antoine Galland's *Les mille et une nuits* (1704-1706) and Richard Burton's *The Arabian Nights* (1885), was born out of a personal interest in the way Arab culture, and Islam more particularly, has been portrayed in Western discourse. The events of September 11, 2001 (known as 9/11), American invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq in addition to the Israeli occupation of Palestine have endowed a traditional Western discourse on Islam and the Orient with an immediate currency and relevance. All these elements combined were behind my attempt to analyze French and English translations of *Alf Leyla wa Leyla* in order to show that today's biased and fragmented images of the Orient are but the outcome of a centuries-long scholarship of which translation is an essential part. In other words, this study tries to locate translation within the vast movement of Orientalism (Said 1978) and to draw a parallel between translation and imperialism (Robinson 1987).

Orientalism

The seeds of the Oriental *other* were sown before and during the Crusades (1095-1270) and developed since then into a vast and coherent body of knowledge most of which persistently strove to degrade and dehumanize the Orient for the sole purpose of controlling it. The extensive past and present knowledge of the Orient has been designated with the

term Orientalism. In his seminal work on the subject, Said defines Orientalism in the following terms:

By Orientalism I mean several things, all of them, in my opinion, interdependent. The most readily accepted designation for Orientalism is an academic one and indeed the label still serves in a number of academic institutions. Anyone who teaches, writes about, or researches the Orient— and this applies whether the person is an anthropologist, sociologist, historian, or philologist— either in its specific or its general aspects, is an Orientalist, and what he or she does is Orientalism. (1978 : 2)

Galland and Burton were translators of an Eastern literary work. They were also interested in the history, the culture and the languages of the East. Consequently, they fall under Said's definition. They also belong to the most pronounced traditions of Orientalism, that is the British and the French. Said further expands his definition:

To speak of Orientalism therefore is to speak mainly, although not exclusively, of a British and French cultural enterprise, a project whose dimensions take in such disparate realms as the imagination itself, the whole of India and the Levant, the Biblical texts and the Biblical lands, the spice trade, colonial armies and a long tradition of colonial administrators, a formidable scholarly corpus, innumerable Oriental "experts" and "hands", and Oriental professorate, a complex array of "Oriental" ideas (Oriental despotism, Oriental splendour, cruelty, sensuality), many Eastern sects, philosophies, and wisdoms domesticated for local European use— the list can be extended more or less indefinitely. (1978 : 4)

The first encounter between the West and the East that generated an unprecedented upsurge of interest in the languages, the religion and the cultures of the East reaches far back in history. Although no specific date can be advanced, historians go as far back as the 7th century when Islam emerged on the world scene as a serious threat to Christianity (Wheatcroft 2003 : 47). A religion that claimed to have sprung from the same Abrahmic tradition as Judaism and Christianity could only be viewed with suspicion and confronted with the fiercest means, especially when this new religion brought a revisionist message and set for itself the divine mission of dechristianizing humanity. Indeed, over the span of a hundred years, Islam enjoyed a territorial expansion (Lewis 2003 : 34) that not only claimed parts of India and China but also reached westwards to conquer Portugal, Spain, Southern Italy and Southern France. The conquering Muslim armies and the religion they represented were seen by the Church as the quintessence of evil (Wheatcroft: 55), the representation of the Antichrist or even the divine instrument for the punishment of sinful Christians. In any way we look at the early relationships between Christianity and Islam, Muslims were seen as an evil that needed to be eradicated. This confrontational relationship was not only given expression in the battlefields but was cultivated into an immense repertoire of knowledge that sought to depict Islam in the most extreme negative terms as a mortal threat opposing Christianity.

During the Crusades, the Christians' successive campaigns to reconquer the Christian lands lost to Islam, various translations of the *Qur'an* saw the light. Far from attempting to discover what the new religion had to offer, the various translations of the

Qur'an were utilized to affirm an already deep-seated hatred towards the infidels and the zealots coming from the East. Translation, even before any serious academic scholarship of the Orient could develop, was instrumentalized by the Church and translators were among the first scholars to portray Islam as a barbaric and backward religion. In the Middle Ages, the first Latin translation of the *Qur'an* was undertaken by the English scholar Robert of Ketton in 1143 under the auspices of Peter the Venerable. In his translation, Ketton was not driven by an objective interest in grasping the meanings inherent to the sacred book of Islam but his translation is one among a series of translations cloaked in ideology. Other translations followed, filled with the same missionary lack of sensitivity towards a book that was foreign to their cultural background. Alexander Ross (1649), George Sale (1734), Simon Oakley (1734), J.M. Rodwell (1861), to name but a few, produced translations that contributed to deepening the confrontation between the West and the East and to the most unfavourable portrayal of the East and its religion. In addition to translation, the rigorous Christian picture of Islam intensified in the Renaissance through poetry and popular superstition to the extent that it became apparent to European thinkers that “something would have to be done about Islam” (Daniel in Said 1978 : 61)

In the 19th century, Orientalist scholarship comprised such disciplines as translation, anthropology, archeology, sociology, history, literature and cultural studies. The list is obviously not exhaustive but it denotes a genuine interest to discover the Orient in ways other than religious by what Said calls ‘Oriental enthusiasts’ who were able to produce a positive knowledge about the Orient that was still combined with a second-order knowledge

manifested in the oriental tales and the mythology of the East, a knowledge that V.G. Kiernan terms "Europe's collective day-dream of the Orient." (Said : 52) However, the general tendency towards the East was in large measure Eurocentric, persistently re-creating the East as a backward place, populated by irrational and passive people practicing a monolithic and violence-driven religion. Orientalist scholarship, with rare exceptions, amounted to a reinvention of the East to sustain Western supremacy and compel Easterners to subservience. For Said, such misrepresentations of the Orient were the counter-image of the West and served to reflect a self-image of the latter that was totally opposed to anything oriental. In his critique of Orientalism, Said brings to light a format for colonialism and its motives by colonial powers. He demonstrates how Orientalist studies fostered a political vision in favour of a direct expansion of Eastern territories and promote a discourse based on the 'us and them' dichotomy for the sole purpose of Western conquest and domination. The following statements made by Lord Cromer (1841-1917) sum up in a very pronounced fashion the Western prejudicial perceptions of the Oriental:

The European is a close reasoner; his statements of fact are devoid of any ambiguity; he is a natural logician, albeit he may not have studied logic; he is by nature skeptical and requires proof before he can accept the truth of any proposition; his trained intelligence works like a piece of mechanism. The mind of the oriental, on the other hand, like his picturesque streets, is eminently wanting in symmetry. His reasoning is of the most slipshod description. Although the ancient Arabs acquired in a somewhat higher degree the science of dialectics, their descendants are singularly deficient in

the logical faculty. They are often incapable of drawing the most obvious conclusions from any simple premises of which they may admit the truth. Endeavor to elicit a plain statement of facts from any ordinary Egyptian. His explanation will generally be lengthy, and wanting in lucidity. He will probably contradict himself a dozen times before he has finished his story. He will often break down under the mildest process of cross-examination. (Said 1978 : 38)

Coming from a politician of Cromer's stature, a diplomat whose role it was to represent his country at a higher level, his words are plain and direct as to the inferior status he ascribes to Easterners in general. The positive *isotopy* (reasoner, fact, [free of] ambiguity, logician, logic, proof, intelligence) associated with the European or the Westerner in general is in sharp contrast with the negative *isotopy* (slipshod, deficient, incapable, wanting, contradict) that is the Easterner's *natural* lot. Indeed, between Cromer's complacent conviction of the Oriental's natural deficiency and his incapacity to govern there is a short step that could be easily crossed. Even if Cromer doesn't plainly articulate it, one feels in his statements an affirmation of the West's right to govern the East. This strikes a chord with Burton's assumptions about the Easterners' acceptance of Western governance, as we shall see later.

Along the same lines, in his *Voyages en Orient*, Lamartine (1790-1869) offers a practical agenda for the annexation of Eastern regions after the fall of the Ottoman Empire. Again, Orientalist contribution to the imperialist project in the East is exposed in the clearest terms:

[...] dans le cas de la chute de cet empire, soit par une révolution à Constantinople, soit par un démembrement successif, les puissances européennes prendront chacune, à titre de protectorat, la partie de l'empire qui lui sera assignée par les stipulations du congrès ; [...] ce n'est qu'une tutelle armée et civilisatrice que chaque puissance exercera sur son protectorat ; elle garantira son existence et ses éléments de nationalité, sous le drapeau d'une nationalité plus forte. (Said 1978 : 111)

Cromer and Lamartine's statements about the East and the West's right to dominate it show that the Orientalist discourse, whether it takes the form of a translation, a traveler's account or a political statement, is permeated by a chain of beliefs and ideas that developed historically into a power knowledge that paved the way to the dismemberment of the Ottoman Empire, the last bastion of Islamic threat, into territories totally controlled, peacefully or militarily, by imperial powers.

Orientalism in translation

Drawing upon Said's definition of Orientalism, I have selected Galland and Burton for my study of the relationship between translation and Orientalism because they belonged to two countries, namely France and England, with a long tradition of Orientalist scholarship and a long history of colonial expansion. In addition to their affiliation to these countries, both scholars had a direct experience of the Orient and its culture on account of their long stays among Arabs. Thus, the two translations fit into two interrelated cultural areas: on the one hand, Galland is considered one of the French precursors of Orientalism

and Burton is historically in the heart of Orientalism in as much as the 19th century is the age where this movement knew a formidable expansion.

As far as Galland's translation is concerned, I have looked at it from the point of view of Galland being a man of the Enlightenment. I was particularly interested in looking at the treatment of religious elements in *Alf Leyla wa Leyla* in an age where reason was the driving principle. I have also looked at Galland's translation synchronically in its relationship with the movement of *Les belles infidèles* prevailing during this age. This aspect of my analysis, in the main, tries to understand Galland's attempts at *domesticating* the Arabic text according to the aesthetics of that time and to the expectations of 18th century French readers. Because Galland's translation came in a period that saw a manifest interest in the Orient notably in literature — Diderot's *Les bijoux indiscrets*, Montesquieu's *Les lettres persanes* and Voltaire's *Zadig* and *Mahomet ou le fanatisme* for example — another aspect of this analysis looks at Galland's translation diachronically. In this respect, my analysis focuses on some characteristics of Galland's translation to see how they relate to the dominant discourses about the Orient before and during Galland's time. In other words, my analysis stresses elements in Galland's translation that would possibly make it an Orientalist translation. Also, Galland's translation, compared to other French translations, is the one that has really withstood the test of time. Jorge Luis Borges, in whose eyes Galland is the founder of the Arabian tales in Western literary tradition, attests to the fact that Galland's translation has remained unsurpassed for centuries:

The mere mention of these names amply demonstrates that Galland *established the canon* [my emphasis], incorporating stories that time would render indispensable and that the translators to come — his enemies — would not dare omit. Another fact is also undeniable. The most famous and eloquent encomiums of *The Thousand and One Nights* — by Coleridge, Thomas De Quincey, Stendhal, Tennyson, Edgar Allan Poe, Newman — are from readers of Galland's translation. Two hundred years and ten better translations have passed, but the man in Europe or the Americas who thinks of *The Thousand and One Nights* thinks, invariably, of this first translation (Venuti (ed.) 2000 :35).

Today, the Arabian tales are read in French in Galland's version mainly because it is the version commonly found in bookstores. I found it therefore more pertinent to analyze this translation rather than Madrus' *Les mille nuits et une nuit* (1899-1906) in which Orientalism is self-evident. Galland's translation, however, because of its appeal to children, reflects an Orientalism that is less visible but potentially more insidious.

Although the approach that Burton adopted a century later in his English translation of *Alf Leyla wa Leyla* is in large measure different from that of Galland, my analysis focuses not so much on the translation per se as it does on the *metatext* in the form of the long pages of notes that Burton used to comment on various aspects of Arabic culture and Islam. My analysis tries to demonstrate that the Orientalist message in Burton's translation

and critical notes is noticeably pronounced, especially when related to other 19th century discourses about the Orient.

In order to guide my research, I have analyzed the shifts in both translations in the light of some theories of translation that foreground the relationship between translation and the target culture: Eugene Nida's *communicative* approach to translation (1966), the *functionalist* approach developed by the German *Skopos* theorists (Vermeer 1986; Nord 1991) as well as Gideon Toury's *descriptive* model of translation criticism (1995). These models are the most relevant to study the dynamics involved in translating the *alterity* of the source language text.

The main objective that this study wants to achieve is to show how Galland and Burton demarcate themselves from one of the commonly held beliefs in translation as a way of bringing an understanding the *other*. On these grounds, this study fits in with the movement of postcolonial translation studies (e.g. Robinson 1987, Cheyfitz 1991, Niranjana 1992, Ramakrishna 1997, Rafael 1998, Tymoczko 1999). These studies have shown that instead of bridging differences, translation can serve to consolidate stereotypes, widen differences and further alienate the other. To relate the translations of the Arabian tales with present day reality, one question comes to mind: could there be a connection between the "Orientalist" translations of *Alf Leyla wa Leyla* and the invasion of Iraq?

CHAPTER ONE

ALF LEYLA WA LEYLA AND ITS FRENCH AND ENGLISH TRANSLATIONS

The origin and evolution of *Alf Leyla wa Leyla*

The One Thousand and One Nights or *Alf Layla wa Layla* stems from an anonymous compilation of popular tales of various origins that stretches over a long period of history. A great deal of research has been carried out in order to trace back the exact origin of the tales but all attempts in this direction have been a very complex enterprise, due, in large measure, to two main reasons: geography and culture. *Alf Leyla wa Leyla* belonged to an oral tradition that not only stretched over a considerable span of time but crossed three vast geographical entities: Persia, India and the Arab world. Although these three regions were ethnically and culturally different from one another, Islam united them under its own banner. It is worth noting that under the reign of the Abbasids,¹ with Baghdad as the political and cultural capital of the Muslim world, Islam included Spain, North Africa, the Arab Peninsula as well as Samarcand, Afghanistan and parts of India and China in its sphere of domination and influence. It is, therefore, not surprising to notice that even though some of the tales are set in China or India, they all reflect a Muslim world that is highly civilized. Told from one epoch to another but often altered or adapted by successive generations of *rawis* (professional storytellers), the tales have resisted any effort

¹ The Abbasids (758-1258) took their name from Al-Abbas, a paternal uncle of Muhammad, the Prophet of Islam, and one of his early supporters. Their close kinship to Muhammad and the position of al-'Abbas as a Companion of the Prophet served them well in gaining support to win the Khilafah (or succession to the Prophet) in order to rule the Islamic world.

effort at localizing their origin. It is only after the death of the Abbasid *caliph*² Harun Al Rasheed (786-809) that a written version of *Alf Leyla wa Leyla* came to existence. In addition to this complex geographical aspect of the tales, it is even harder to go back to their origin when three cultures claim their paternity. The search for an origin to the tales is rendered fruitless by the fact that the Arabic manuscripts that were found are not only incomplete but they also point to more than one origin. There is a consensus today that no one is capable of determining the birth place of the tales. It is certain, however, that an unknown number of tales were being circulated by word of mouth before they were collected and transcribed. The Arab historians of the 10th century, however, believed that *Alf Leyla wa Leyla* find their origin in *Hezar Efsan* (*The One Thousand Tales or Legends*), a Persian book of popular tales. Two Arab authors, Muhammad Ibn Ishaq Ibn Al-Nadim (935-990) in *The Alfihrist* and, especially, Abdul Hasan Ali Al-Mas'udi (895-957) in *The Golden Meadows* attest to the existence of such a book. (Larzul 1996 : 13) The latter, of which no record has remained, tells the story of Shahrazad and Shahryar, two Persian characters, as their names indicate. On the other hand, some elements found in a number of tales of *Alf Leyla wa Leyla* point to an Indian origin that goes as far back as the 3rd century (Laveille 1998: 122). The demi-gods and the human metamorphosis into animals with which the tales bristle are part of Indian mythology. Albeit the controversial nature of the tales with respect to their origin, there is widespread opinion that India is the birthplace of *Alf Leyla wa Leyla*. At a later date that remains unknown, the tales may

² The word 'Caliph' is the English form of the Arabic word 'Khalifa,' which means successor to the Messenger of God. As successor to the Prophet, the Caliph was the head of the Muslim community and his primary responsibility was to continue in the path of Muhammad, the Prophet of Islam. Since, according to Islam, religion was perfected in the hands of Muhammad and the door of divine revelation was closed at his death, the Caliph was to make all laws abide by the *Qur'an* and the prophet's tradition.

the first written version of the tales, may have come to birth. If the survival of these Indian tales in succeeding compilations has not been verified, it is believed that *Hezar Efsan* provided, in addition to the title, the overall structure of the tales (Elisséef 1949 : 98). As years went by, commerce between Arabs and Persians may have allowed the initial compilation of the tales to reach the Arab world. Around the 8th century, the Arabs were believed not only to have translated *Alf Leyla wa Leyla* but also to have modified them and adapted them to their culture, religion and language. This was not going to be the end of the long story of *Alf Leyla wa Leyla*. Other tales, typically Arabic this time, may have been added to the 'original' compilation. The added tales are mainly those that make special reference to the *Qur'an*, to the tradition of the prophet of Islam or to Arabic poetry in order to strengthen the themes of the tales or to convey a particular message that may otherwise escape the reader's attention. Thus, the tales may have undergone an islamization of some of their Persian characteristics (Haddawy 1990 : 12), an islamization that has proven so successful that *Alf Leyla wa Leyla* are now established as part of Arab or middle-Eastern heritage. Among the Arabo-Islamic aspects that pervade the tales are those highlighting the times of the Crusades or those referring to life in Baghdad, Damascus and Cairo and the reverberating echoes of their popular *souks* (markets). The tales also bear many references to renowned historical figures. Though islamised, the tales existed in different written versions and it is not until the second half of the 13th century, during the reign of the Mameluks³ in Syria and

³ The word 'mameluk', in Arabic means "owned by another", a sort of "bondsmen". It does not refer to the idea of 'slave', which is referred to as 'abd' in Arabic. The Mameluks were originally recruited from non-Arab 'slaves' imported to serve various traditional Muslim rulers as soldiers and officials. The Mameluks gradually formed a new institution in Islam and developed into a mighty 'slave' army serving to uphold the authority of the ruler. Between the 13th and 19th centuries, Mameluks regimes appeared throughout the Muslim world. An elite cavalry corps, the Mameluks halted the Mongol invasions of the Middle-East and defeated the Crusaders and helped expand the geographical boundaries of Islam.

Egypt, that they were compiled into a final form considered as the “original” version. Even if no trace of this final manuscript exists, it is believed to be the archetype of all the preceding versions in terms of content, form and style. From this archetype, two Egyptian and Syrian manuscripts, both distinct from one another, emerged (Haddawy 1990 :12). Out of the Syrian version, four manuscripts exist today. The oldest and the closest to the original is the three-volume copy in the Bibliothèque nationale in Paris. There is, however, a major difference between the Syrian and the Egyptian versions. If the Syrian version developed in such a way as to allow the original manuscript to remain unchanged, the Egyptian version, on the other hand, did not meet the same fate. In fact, late copies existed in the second half of the 18th century and in the first half of the 19th. In addition to the overabundance of copies, there was a tendency on the part of story-tellers to systematically delete, add, borrow or modify the Syrian manuscript. Moreover, driven by a desire to complete the number of one thousand and one nights, copyists added fables, anecdotes and popular tales from a variety of oral and written sources, mainly from India and Persia. The outcome was a hybrid compilation of tales that bore the Ottoman cultural mark of the time (Haddawy 1990 : 13) but whose paternity was as varied as the cultures, literary conventions and styles that these manuscripts reflected. This is basically why the numbering of the tales in many manuscripts does not match even if the nucleus story remains that of Shahrazad and Shahryar. Other tales of unknown origin were added to those already existing. Gradually, this continuous process of addition and alteration produced a version of the tales different from the ‘original’ Syrian manuscript said to be the reflection of the life and the culture during the reign of the Mameluks.

The narrative of *Alf Leyla wa Leyla*

The story of *Alf Leyla wa Leyla* is relatively simple when compared to the form in which it is clothed. The story of Shahryar and Shah Zaman, the two brothers who reign over China and Indochina and Samarcand, respectively, forms the introductory frame to the remaining tales. After a long separation, Shahryar sends his minister to Samarcand to ask his brother to pay him a visit. No sooner does Shah Zaman begin his journey to see his brother that he needs to go back to his palace to fetch something he forgot. Back home, he catches his wife, red-handed, in a situation of adultery with a black slave. He kills his wife on the spot and once his revengeful act accomplished, he resumes his journey to visit Shahryar.

In his brother's palace, Shah Zaman is still depressed as a result of his wife's infidelity. His brother tries to relieve him and bring him some comfort but to no avail. One day, when Shahryar is out hunting, Shah Zaman discovers his brother's wife committing adultery with a slave. He realizes, then, that he shouldn't feel any envy towards his brother as both are now victims of the same fate. As soon as Shahryar returns, Shah Zaman informs him of the sad incident. Pretending to go on another hunting expedition, Shahryar surprises his wife in the same amorous situation. As his brother did before, Shahryar executes his wife, her lover and all the slaves involved in the betrayal. He decides, thereupon, to marry a woman every single night and have her killed the next day. Shahryar carries out this revengeful plan for three years until the day when all the women of the kingdom started to shun the fate that Shahryar has

reserved for them. Shahrayar orders his minister to find a woman for him to marry. Shahrazad, the minister's own daughter, a woman of knowledge and intelligence, volunteers to marry the king in order to save the women in the kingdom. To succeed in her suicidal endeavour, Shahrazad has to use her talent of story-telling to escape certain death. She starts to narrate a story in Shahryar's presence but makes sure not to end it before the break of a new day. This careful plan allows Shahrazad to delay her execution. Thanks to her intelligence and to Shahryar's unquenched satisfaction, Shahrazad keeps intact her husband's desire to know the denouement of each story. Curiously enough, the denouement is postponed via an extraordinary textual intertwining and the existence of different levels of narration. The narrator, for example, tells the story of the tailor who, in turn, tells the story of the barber who tells the story of each one of his brothers. Such a juxtaposition of tales in the form of a story-inside a story technique to which Shahrazad resorts not only allows her to stay alive but also to prove to Shahryar her faithfulness and to safeguard the women of the kingdom from a death that would otherwise have been inevitable.

The translations of *Alf Leyla wa Leyla*

The interest that *Alf Leyla wa Leyla* generated was not limited to copying and editing. Before even their appearance in a relatively complete form in the 14th century, there was a strong need for the translation of the tales, heterogeneous though they were, from Persian into Arabic. If it is possible, to a certain extent, to justify their translation from Arabic into European languages, it is not easy to explain the motives that the anonymous Arab translators had in mind when they transferred a

discourse that was favourably regarded in the Arab-Islamic culture. Compared to the dominant literary discourses prevailing before and after the advent of Islam, *Alf Leyla wa Leyla* were viewed as a second-class literature, not worthy of the literary circles prevailing during and after the Abbasid dynasty. The low status attributed to the tales was neither due to their hybrid character nor to their anonymous nature. The tales proliferated at a time when poetry had always been the most conspicuous literary genre that dictated the standards of literary excellence. The Arabs had always erected poetry as a mode of expression whose forms and rhetoric could not be matched by any other form of literary expression (Hasan 1991 : 278). The only exception in the eyes of the Arabs remains the *Qur'an*, seen as the epitome of unparalleled literary genius. The Arabs have always held poets in high esteem and have taken a pride beyond measure in their work. It is, therefore, not surprising that the tales, written in a style close to that of popular literature, could not stand on a par with the refined classical literature of that period. On these grounds, it is quite paradoxical that *Alf Leyla wa Leyla* is one of the most translated and widely read work of literature in the West, whereas the major classics of Arabic literature have almost no existence, not only in translation but in the world of academia at large. While key figures of Arabic literature were unknown, *Alf Leyla wa Leyla*, thanks to translation, was elevated to the status of universal literature. Albeit the high regard with which it was seen in Europe and the tremendous success it achieved during the 18th and the 19th century, in the Arab world, however, *Alf Leyla wa Leyla* never transcended the sheer limits of a vast compilation of tales destined, not to an erudite audience, but to readers whose idea or conception of literature was very much related to entertainment.

Our purpose is not to search for the reasons behind the disregard with which *Alf Leyla wa Leyla* was met in the Arab world and why it has never acquired the legitimate status of a fully-fledged work of art. Our main purpose is to understand the great interest and infatuation triggered by the tales in the literary salons of Paris and London. At this point, one question comes to mind: was the search for the Orient, or anything related to it, and of which translation was one of the principal channels, a reflection of a genuine striving to understand the foundations of a different culture or, one may venture to ask, did this search also serve to consolidate pre-existing prejudices and to strengthen stereotypes regarding this same Orient? In other words, did the translation of *Alf Leyla wa Leyla* fulfill the primary objective generally attributed to literary translation, that is the representation of other works of art for the purpose of informing and enlightening readers of the target culture? Or was translation, wittingly or unwittingly, part of a greater Orientalist project of conquest and domination? A close analysis of the translation of two Orientalists, namely Sir Richard Burton and Antoine Galland, will help us determine if and how both translators might have contributed to the larger framework of cultural transfer, the Orientalist construct.

The English and French translations of *Alf Leyla wa Leyla*

Perhaps the first thing to notice is that *Alf Leyla wa Leyla* was difficult to translate, due essentially to the existence of many editions of the tales, all different from each other. Edward Lane's translation (1839-41), on the English side, was one of the most popular. Few decades later, John Payne completed his translation of *Alf Leyla wa Leyla* between

1882 and 1884, followed immediately after by Sir Richard Burton's between 1885 and 1888. On account of using different versions and editions of *Alf Leyla wa Leyla*, these translators fell short of comparing the various sources so as to come up with a version that closely reflected the 'original' Arabic text. Moreover, the translators altered the 'original' text whenever they felt it necessary. This freedom was largely nourished by the hybrid nature of the Arabic text and also by the constraints that the target culture may have dictated, as we shall see in the next chapters. In the 20th century, other English translations of *Alf Leyla wa Leyla* saw the light of day, notably those of N.J. Dawood (1954), Husain Hadawy (1990) and Muhsin Mahdi (1995).

On the French side, the translation of Antoine Galland (1646-1715), Guillaume-Stanislas Trébutien (1800-1870) and Joseph-Charles Mardrus (1868-1949) are the most prominent in the 18th and the 19th centuries. Between 1704 and 1708, Galland completed the translation of *Alf Leyla wa Leyla* based on a 14th century Syrian manuscript. To his translation, Galland added seven tales drawn from Syrian oral tradition that a Maronite from Aleppo told him, although no one is in a position to confirm whether such additions were already part of *Alf Leyla wa Leyla*. It is believed, too, that the famous stories of Aladdin and Ali Baba were among the added tales (Larzul 1996: 7). Galland's translation of *Alf Leyla wa Leyla* gained a considerable success and was held as an outstanding literary achievement in 18th century France. As previously noted, this translation stands apart as it remains the most widely sold and read in today's French-speaking world.

The translation of Trébutien, Orientalist and assistant at the library of Caen, appeared in 1825, more than a century after Galland's. This translation, unlike Galland's, is based on a manuscript written by Ibrahim Al-Ansari in 1717 (Larzul 1996 : 121). In his translation, Larzul adds, Trébutien arranged the stories as a succession of tales— and not as a succession of nights as is commonly known— and by a series of alterations, he rendered his translation insipid. Consequently, he failed to win the readers' satisfaction. Galland's translation, therefore, remained unrivaled. It was only towards the end of the 19th century that Mardrus' translation was added to the preceding French versions of *Alf Leyla wa Leyla*. Born in Cairo of Caucasian parents, Mardrus spoke Arabic up to the age of twelve and was well-acquainted with Arab story-tellers. His translation appeared in Paris between 1899 and 1904 at a time when the search for exoticism was the distinctive feature of translation. Mardrus translated in an age when literality seemed to be the driving force in translation, a conception of the act of translating that distanced itself from the age of the *Belles infidèles*⁴ in the 18th century and of which Galland was a prominent figure. Mardrus entitled his translation *Le livre des mille nuits et une nuit*, which he considered to be the only genuine, literal translation. As a matter of fact, the note made by the editors of the first edition states the following;

Pour la première fois en Europe, une traduction complète et fidèle
 [...] est offerte au public. Le lecteur y trouvera *le mot à mot pur*,
inflexible (1899 :1) [my emphasis]

⁴ The notions of 'literality' and *Belles infidèles* are looked at in more detail in the next chapter of this study.

What sets Mardrus' translation apart from his French predecessors is the unusual way in which he carried out his translation. Commenting on his own translation to his friends, Mardrus said that "une méthode, seule, existe, honnête et logique, de la traduction: *la littéralité* " [...] (1899 : V. emphasized in the text).⁵ Because it was radically different from Galland's, considered too French and too imbued with the prudish style of 18th century French literature (Chauvin 1905 : 290), Mardrus' translation of *Alf Leyla wa Leyla* was favourably welcomed. Ironically, it fell into oblivion while Galland's version survived. Almost a century later, the only contemporary translation worthy of notice is the collective work of Jamal Eddine Bencheikh and André Miquel, whose translation of *Alf Leyla wa Leyla* appeared in 1991.

Since our analysis will focus on the translation of *Alf Leyla wa Leyla* by Burton and Galland, it is necessary to shed some light on the intellectual development of these two translators. While we believe that their translations were subject to changes from the 'original text', their intellectual development may lead us to understand the motives behind these shifts in relation to the cultural norms or expectations that their respective ages demanded.

Antoine Galland (1746- 1815): the myth-maker

Much of the success that *Alf Leyla wa Leyla* had in Europe is owed to Antoine Galland. In fact, his *Les mille et une nuits*, soon after its publication,

⁵ Mardrus' preface stresses his intention: "J'offre toutes *nues, vierges, intactes*, naïves ces Nuits Arabes [...] (1899 ; V.) [my emphasis]. Notice the prominence of metaphors that already set the tone for a sexualized, lascivious Orient and available for any form of conquest.

triggered an unprecedented cycle of European translations of *Alf Leyla wa Leyla*. In France, however, Galland's translation remained the only translation of the 18th century and made of Galland the person who opened the doors of Europe to the Oriental tales and asserted their popularity. Ironically, the time and efforts that he invested in the translation weren't up to the reputation that the tales attained. According to Galland himself, his translation of the tales was a pastime activity and was thus of secondary importance in comparison to his other commitments as a librarian and as the Marquis de Naintes' private secretary when the latter was appointed ambassador in Constantinople. Despite a harsh childhood, Galland, from the age of ten, showed early signs of erudition: his study of Latin, Hebrew and Greek at the College de Noyon were followed by the study of Oriental languages, including Arabic. In Paris, the then capital of science and culture, his interest in Oriental cultures was growing and the city gave him the chance to deepen his knowledge of the Orient. His work at the Sorbonne contributed immensely to this knowledge as Galland was responsible for listing the Oriental manuscripts of the Sorbonne library. Later, his stay in Syria, Jerusalem and in the Holy Land would turn out to be productive. His excursions in the company of the Marquis, in addition to the intellectual emancipation it gave him, served to enrich the French national collections with the manuscripts he bought. In 1769, he made an eighteenth-month trip financed by *La compagnie des Indes orientales* in order to acquire books and works of art. His continuous efforts in researching and collecting ancient works of art won him the distinguished post of King Louis XIV's first antiquarian. This title opened the way to other official research trips for the study and collection of

Oriental antiquities. At this point, one needs to mention the considerable role played by L'Ecole des "jeunes des langues" in Galland's discovery of the Orient. This school was founded in 1669 to train interpreters and to send missionaries and scholars for the study of the Orient and the search for manuscripts. A substantial documentation appeared in the first quarter of the 17th century that was reflective of an increasing curiosity about the Orient, its religion and its mode of life. In this respect, Galland's first trip to the Orient for the benefit of the Jansenists had a religious nature. (Schwab 1964 :28) His mastery of Arabic, Turkish and Persian deepened alongside his knowledge of Oriental cultures. Galland thus paved the way for the discovery of the mysteries of the Orient, a discovery that, as research developed, was going to lay the foundations of a genuine mode of thought that would later be coined Orientalism and of which Galland was one of the main precursors. It is worthwhile noting that this period saw the birth of Barthelemy d'Herbelot's *La bibliothèque orientale*, a vast repertoire of all the notions related to the history and the literature of the Orient. A similar idea germinated in Galland's mind but Galland had to abandon it upon knowing that d'Herbelot was already advanced in this field. Nevertheless, following d'Herbelot's premature death, Galland contributed to the making of the *Bibliothèque orientale* not only by writing the preface and other supplements but also by being responsible for the posthumous publication of d'Herbelot's massive œuvre. In addition to the time he devoted to the *Bibliothèque orientale*, Galland is also credited for a number of memoirs and dissertations as well as the translation of an Arabic treatise on the origin of coffee. In 1701, Galland was appointed at l'Académie des Inscriptions, and in 1709, he was

appointed to the chair of Arabic at the Collège Royal. The last two positions represented for Galland the crowning of a long life devoted entirely to the search for knowledge and the recognition of his intellectual worth. However, in France and elsewhere, Galland was mostly popular for his *Mille et une nuits*. In fact, the popularity of Galland's translation was at the origin of the emergence of a cultural Orient in Europe. As to the translation per se, the literary context of the time helped Galland entertain the idea of a French version of the Arabian tales. As a matter of fact, the tales, as a distinctive way of writing, were gaining momentum at the beginning of the 18th century at a time when French culture was opening up to the Oriental exoticism of Indian, Persian and Arabic literature. Therefore, Galland began to delve into old manuscripts and it was from a manuscript of *Sindbad the Seaman* that he set out for the conquest of the Arabian tales. His search was rewarded when he got hold of a three-volume copy of a 14th century Syrian manuscript. The text that Galland found consisted of 282 nights. Though Galland felt the urge to complete the collection, his efforts didn't produce the results he expected for the missing tales were already non-existent even before the 18th century. Between 1704 and 1706, the version that Galland published in seven volumes respected the arrangement of tales that the Syrian manuscript encapsulated. However, yielding to the expectations of readers for whom Oriental exoticism embodied in so-called *turqueries*⁶ was the taste of the day and conceding to his editor's request, Galland prepared an eighth volume in which some of the tales were not part of the 'original' manuscript. Consequently, only the first seven volumes

⁶ See, for example, the "grand Mamamouchi" scene in Molière's *Bourgeois gentilhomme*, as a forerunner of French (philosophical) tales "à la turque".

could claim a legitimately close relationship to the Arabian tales. The remaining tales were the result of additions and all sorts of compilations. Even Mme Barbin, Galland's editor, had her share in the process of changing the tales. She inserted two tales translated from Turkish by Pétis de la Croix. (Larzul 1996 : 7) This shows, to a certain extent, how the tales were exploited to attend to the needs and demands of an ever increasing readership and, in this regard, Galland was not an exceptional case. He used his talent as a writer in order to complete the tales according to the cultural tendencies of his time. To achieve his goal, he sought the service of a Maronite from Aleppo who brought him tales that belonged to the Syrian oral tradition. Enriched with descriptions and drawn from other tales, the new stories were added to the preceding tales to form the eleventh and twelfth volumes that were published in 1817, two years after Galland's death. It appears, then, that Galland availed himself of the right to modify and to add so that he could offer his readers a French version of the Arabian tales. His approach could not be put into question or discredited at a time when "*Les belles infidèles*" were very much in vogue. The truth is that Galland unearthed the tales from oblivion and elevated them to the rank of universal literature. In so doing, even though this was not the definite plan in Galland's mind, Galland created a myth that has defied the test of time.

Sir Richard Burton: the multi-faceted scholar

Born in Torquay, England, in 1821, Burton acquired an early taste for traveling when, as a child, he accompanied his father, a high British army officer, in his travels throughout Europe. Burton's constant traveling started around the age of nine and was going to become a lifestyle. His nomadic life began under the reign of Queen Victoria (1819-1901) at a time when England was at the zenith of its glory and its overseas colonies reflected the extent of its powerful empire. The young Richard, on account of his father's position, was destined to a well-ordered existence dominated by the Church and Oxford University and in which Puritanism and respectability were erected into sacred dogmas. While Burton attended Oxford, he never set foot in a church, the teachings of which he considered "insipid", "fallacious" and "hypocritical". Even England was not spared from Burton's vehement criticism whenever he found the chance to channel his contempt. "Of all the various countries I know, I hate England most", he said one day (Abdullah and Pakenham 1968 : 60). Disappointed by an educational system that he considered devoid of any values, he spent most of his time seeking pleasure in hunting, fencing, and the like. *The Book of the Sword*, published in 1884, was a testimony of his love of fencing and his erudition in it. After his eviction from Oxford, Burton displayed a real talent for self-teaching when, unable to find a course suitable to his needs, he started to learn Arabic on his own. In the same fashion, Burton was able to learn thirty languages and dialects. Once he broke off all ties with the academic world, he decided to embark on a military career against his father's will. Then on June 18, 1842, the new recruit became part of the 18th infantry regiment based in Bombay but could not take part in the Afghan war because he was late to join his new service. Having much time at his disposal, Burton

took to learning Hindustan with the help of some local women, who turned out to be, in the words of Burton himself, a valuable source of knowledge, not only of the language but of the local customs and traditions as well. Burton's curiosity and interest in Indian civilization was such that he was nicknamed "the white nigger". He also began the study of Orientalist works and built up relationships with some English scholars. Thanks to Burton's mastery of the local languages and the ease with which he integrated into Indian society, his commander, Sir Charles Napier, saw in him the man capable of investigating the sexual practices of British soldiers and sent him on a special mission to the brothels of Karachi. The detailed report that he wrote focused extensively on the sexual practices in which British soldiers indulged and on the political intrigues which underlay them. Few years later, the report was dug out of Bombay's archives and backfired on Burton. No longer shrouded in secrecy, the report was meant to tarnish Burton's image by establishing a direct link between the content of the report and Burton's personal involvement. The report was behind the demand for Burton's removal from the armies of the Honorable East India Company. This incident had a disastrous effect on Burton, who, after a period of convalescence, decided to go back to Karachi, armed, this time, with Persian, Arabic and a number of other dialects. It was there that the idea of a pilgrimage to Mecca came to his mind. To carry out such a project, Burton needed to learn substantial parts of the *Qur'an* by heart and be familiar with Muslims' ritual prayers. His discussions with Muslim scholars taught him the fundamental principles of Islamic faith. The day for which Burton was yearning finally came. The Royal Geographical Society accepted, upon Burton's insistence, to finance his expedition to the land of Arabia, which began on the 3rd of April, 1853. The first stage of the journey took him to Alexandria

where he could deepen his knowledge of Islamic theology. In so doing, Burton pretended to be a Shiite⁷ Muslim doctor from Afghanistan. At this point, we are tempted to draw a parallel between Burton's mastery of disguise and the Shiites' practice of *Taquiya*, which basically consists of concealing one's identity, convictions and beliefs, be they religious or otherwise, in order to fulfill one's objectives. It is worthwhile noting that such a practice is prohibited in mainstream Islam because it is tantamount to an act of hypocrisy. If Burton's recourse to disguise to thread his way through the natives doesn't make his attitude towards Islam questionable, it, at least, may inform us about Burton's awareness of the split that has always existed between Shiites and mainstream Muslims. Perhaps the reason behind Burton's assuming a Shiite identity was his belief that such a manoeuvre would ward off any threat of disclosing his foreign identity and of subjecting him to unwanted scrutiny. Therefore, one is tempted to believe that Burton thought of moving under a Shiite cover to avoid possible faux-pas. Even his visits to his English friends remained secret in order not to draw suspicion to his activities. Convinced as he was that secrecy alone was the only safe gateway to the lands of Islam, he excelled in it. His stay in Egypt was fruitful for the hard enterprise awaiting him. Combining the spiritual with the carnal, Burton, faithful to his adventurous spirit, did not hesitate to indulge in the pleasures that Cairo offered. He even sought pleasure inside the caravanserai of pilgrims heading to the Holy Land. Women, hashish, alcohol, nightly performances of dancing women were among the many facets of the pleasure that Burton had. The scandal broke

⁷ The Shiite is a name derived from the Arabic word 'Shia', which means party or group. The Shiites constitutes one of the two major branches of Islam, the other more encompassing branch being that of the Sunni. Following the death of Prophet Muhammad, division arose as to the succession of the prophet. The Shiites believed that only a member of the prophet's family, especially the descendants of Muhammed's daughter, Fatima, and her husband, Ali, could qualify for leadership. Since then, the Shiites divided into other groups but the centuries-old division between Shiites and Sunni persists to this day.

when, after a night of excessive pleasure, his unconventional behaviour for a man on a pilgrimage was discovered. Burton had to leave Egypt by sea so as not to jeopardize his chances of success. Later, he joined another caravan of pilgrims from Damascus and thereupon started a long and perilous journey across the desert towards Medina, the second holy city after Mecca. Burton went to extreme lengths in order to conceal the notes he was making all along the journey to spare himself the consequent punishment if discovered in the process. His notes included description of landscapes, Arabs superstitions, a glossary, the possibility of gold development and notes about the conditions of the journey itself (Rice 1991 : 265).

After his visit to Medina, his cherished dream came true when, proud and exalted, he set foot for the first time on the land of Mecca. The hope that Burton had nourished for so long became a reality when he stood facing the *Kaaba* or *Beit Allah* (The house of Allah) as the Muslims prefer to call it. Contemplating the pilgrims as they clung to the black cloth in which the *Kaaba* was draped, Burton couldn't help to compare the pilgrims' fervour to his own. He repeated in his note that "to confess the humbling truth, theirs [the pilgrims] was the high feeling of religious enthusiasm; mine was the ecstasy of gratified pride" (Rice 1991 : 268). Burton's feeling of fulfillment was mixed with a feeling of deception at the sight of the grave of the prophet of Islam. Disappointed with the external appearance of the place, he found it to be lacking in beauty and dignity and resembled a second class museum, "an old Curiosity Shop, full of ornaments that are not accessories and decorated with *pauper* [my emphasis] splendour" (Abdullah and Pakenham 1968 : 74-75). Burton's reaction to the holy places he visited is understandable given the fact that his analysis, comments or remarks are made from an ethnographer's

perspective and worldview. One needs to stress that the apparent simplicity of the Islamic holy places which Burton refers to is intertwined with the Islamic cultivation of modesty and, thus, cannot be explained away as a lack of knowledge of, or disregard for, aesthetics. In addition to his deception, Burton expressed doubts about the very authenticity of the place. While in Mecca, he put his adventurous character to the test by finding time for another amorous escapade with a local woman. Finally, the day that represented the crowning of his expedition came. Burton's happiness was indescribable when he entered the *Kaaba*, "the Holiest of the Holies" as he liked to call it. He was the second European, after the Swiss Burckhard, to elucidate the mystery of the Muslims' sanctuary. Burton provides a detailed description of this shrine in his *Personal Narrative of a Pilgrimage to El-Medinah and Meccah* (1855-1856), a work the success of which was resounding and confirmed Burton's reputation as one of the leading 19th century specialists on Arabia.

The Mecca expedition endowed Burton with more impetus and enthusiasm to brave yet another forbidden territory, the closed city of Harrar in Somalia, followed by another expedition to discover the source of the Nile River. During his stay in Aden, Burton had the opportunity to share his interest in the Orient with his friend John Steinhauser. The two men decided to collectively translate *Alf Leyla wa Leyla* but Burton had to take this project single-handedly after Steinhauser's death. Burton was also ready to collaborate with John Payne, who, in 1881, was going to publish the first volume of the English version of *Alf Leyla wa Leyla*. Such collaboration did not last long owing to fundamental differences regarding certain passages of the tales. In fact, Burton refused to sacrifice his translation to what he considered a fallacious Victorian conservatism and as soon as he

settled down in Trieste in Italy, he started his own translation of *Alf Leyla wa Leyla*. The first volume appeared in 1885 and was hailed as the big event of that year. The other volumes enjoyed the same tremendous success and further consolidated Burton's popularity as an eminent Orientalist. Aside of the translation of *Alf Leyla wa Leyla*, Burton published, with much difficulty, *The Kuma Sutra*, the Indian manuscripts on the art of love.

Burton's unrelenting interest in the Orient was again manifest in the translation of *Le jardin parfumé*, a French version of an Arabic manuscript by Sheikh Nefzawi, a 15th century Tunisian scholar. The French version being incomplete, Burton set off to search for the original Arabic manuscript, which he was able to find in Algiers but only in an incomplete edition. Burton spent much of his time on this translation despite his deteriorating health but did not live long enough to see his last work published. After his death in 1891, Burton's wife set the work afire. The flames consumed the book and what survived were mere assumptions about its content— assumptions that ranged from sexual information of a degrading nature to dangerous material about government policies. The ultimate truth may never be disclosed because those who knew it made sure that no trace of the book should remain before they themselves vanished (Rice 1991 : 661).

The extraordinary nature of Burton's life reveals a man of extreme complexity and a daring personality. Exposing himself to all sorts of perils, Burton dared to defy the barriers of untrodden and often hostile lands in Africa, America and the Orient. His writings about the cultures he came in close contact with represent an invaluable wealth

of information for historians, linguists and anthropologists. Even though his achievements may be open to criticism, this doesn't preclude the fact that his intelligence and the courage of his ideas cannot be questioned when one takes into account the profoundly conservative environment in which these ideas evolved. Despite his notoriety, there were times when Burton was disowned for his unorthodox opinions. The blame that Burton was subject to was largely due to the defiant stances he took vis-à-vis academia and sexual emancipation. His attachment to Islam, though, is of a complex nature and the analysis presented in chapter three may help us understand this complexity.

CHAPTER TWO

GALLAND'S LES MILLE ET UNE NUITS

Narrative shifts: segmentation and register

Alf Leyla wa Leyla, as an oral discourse par excellence, is clearly foregrounded by the first word of the first tale. Conveyed through the word '*hukiya*', which is the passive form of the verb '*haka*', (to narrate, to tell a story), the oral texture of the tales draws attention to itself and implicitly forewarns the reader, or rather the listener, against any attempt at considering the tales as the embodiment of a historical truth⁸. Furthermore, this verb is immediately followed by the expression '*Allahu A'alam*' (Allah is all-knowing), which further accentuates the impossibility of upholding absolute truth in matters of history.

Before looking at the changes or, to use Catford's terminology, the translation shifts, that the Arabic text underwent in Galland's hands, perhaps the major change that took place was the entire transformation of the Arabian tales from an oral to a written discourse. In doing so, Galland not only rid the Arabic text of some of the essential

⁸ One may be even tempted to surmise that this forewarning could be extended to historians of literature or anyone interested in what is commonly called the Orient to hastily correlate the tales with the kind of Orient portrayed in them. Indeed, as the tales reveal names of prominent figures in Oriental history, one may attribute to the tales a ready-made truth that has no bearing on reality. Well-known Orientalists like Lady Mary Wortley Montague and Comte de Gobineau, among others, (Said 1978 : 9) have readily equated the fictional world of the tales with the reality of the Orient, thus considering the Arabian tales as an authentic source of knowledge about the Orient and the societies that inhabit it.

elements that sustain its *oralité* but, in our opinion, dislocated the thematic framework of the tales dramatically. Before examining this point any further, let us have a close look at some of the discursive manifestations through which the *oralité* of the tales as a central theme is expressed.

One discursive technique that the entire collection of tales bristles with is the use of repetitions. It is needless to stress that in any oral discourse, repetitions exist in order to draw particular attention to what is being said or to piece together parts of the narrative discourse or, sometimes, to emphasize the importance of what is repeated. Almost all the tales in the compilation embody repetitions. In this respect, three kinds of repetitions that are central to the oral quality of the tales have no existence in Galland's translation and it is quite obvious that through such omissions Galland wanted to fit his translation into a Western tradition of folk tales very much in the spirit of Perrault's tales, Decameron and others.

The most conspicuous repetition in the Arabic tales revolves around the character of Shahrazad whose narrative seems to be marked by a metronome-like repetitiveness. No reader of the Arabic tales would fail to notice that Shahrazad starts her narrative with the verb '*balaghani*', which means 'it has come to my knowledge' or 'I was told' [my translation]. The significance of this verb in the narrative discourse is twofold. First, it strengthens the idea that Shahrazad is only a recipient of an already existing knowledge and, secondly, the verb draws attention to the mystery that shrouds the transfer of knowledge and its very source. Through this interplay between the transmission of

knowledge and its mysterious nature, Shahrazad seems to point to the elusive nature of truth. Also, each tale, or part of it, is fenced off from the remaining tales by the expression '*wa adraka Shahrazad assabah*' which means 'and the morning came over Shahrazad' [our translation], using a third person narration. Nowhere in Galland's translation is there a constant reminder of the tales' 'oralité' save Sharazad's handful of scattered presences. Her role as a '*rawi*' or story-teller is relegated to a secondary position and her status as a major protagonist seems to evaporate. In the Arabic text, however, the repetitions that begin and end the tales remind us that Shahrazad uses a discourse not so much in order to entertain a blood-thirsty despot but as a technique for a self-liberation. In other words, the repetitions mentioned above are another sign of Shahrazad winning yet another respite to stay alive. In Galland's translation, the shadow of death hanging over Shahrazad is displaced and the tales are tuned to impart a sense of a self-renewing pleasure rather than a lurking threat.

The second kind of repetitions is the constant use of the expression '*Allahu A'alam*', which translates into 'Allah is all-knowing'. We will analyze later the significance related to the expression in Galland's translation. The recurrent presence of this expression in the Arabic tales can not only be seen as a further emphasis of the relative nature of truth but it also refers to Allah as the ultimate source of knowledge.

Through a close analysis of the language of the Arabian tales, one would not fail to observe that the tales are abundantly marked with the expression very much known in Islam as a declaration of faith in itself. The very fact that the tales bristle with the expression '*salla Allahu alaihi wa sallam*', meaning 'peace and blessings of Allah be upon

him 'Prophet Mohammed' is not necessarily a sign of the text's religiosity, as anyone not familiar with Arabic language may think. What the discourse actually does is simply to make use of some of the discursive manifestations that are part and parcel of every day language.

The relevance of the repetitive use of the expressions we have alluded to brings home a number of considerations upon which some light should be shed and that Galland, driven by the need to satisfy his readers, preferred not to heed.⁹ First and foremost, in order to understand the function of the discursive features of the tales, one has to view them not only within the global tradition of Arabic story-telling but also within their *intertextual* relationship to the *Qur'an*, the holy book of Islam and to another genre known in Arabic literary tradition as the genre of *khitaba* or discourse. Failing, as Galland did, to make this correspondence will naturally lead to the distortion of the narrative macrostructure of the tales and, ultimately, to their *domestication* (Venuti 2000 : 469).

The literary significance of the *Qur'an* in relation to the genre of story-telling is multi-faceted and many of the discursive elements found in the Arabian tales, for example, have their origin in the *Qur'an*. We should not be led into thinking that the tales are a direct offshoot of the *Qur'an*. What is relevant here is the reverence beyond measure with which Muslims view their holy book, a reverence that makes them regard the *Qur'an* as the book of all books by virtue of its divine character and also as a result of its

⁹ As far as French is concerned, the use of repetitions has often been viewed negatively regardless of their *raison d'être* and function in the original text. Thus, Meschonnic (1978) criticizes Bible translations, especially those that are based on Nida's (1959) functionalist model because they eliminate the "rhythm" or the "breath", the very signs of the oral nature of the original text in Hebrew.

encapsulation of all the literary genres, including story-telling, known to the Arabs then.¹⁰ Islamic literary tradition informs us that Prophet Mohammed used to walk in the streets of Mecca and call people to worship by reciting verses from the *Qur'an* and telling them stories revealed to him by the angel Jibreel or Gabriel. It is, therefore, not surprising to find some of the formal characteristics of the *Qur'an* used by story-tellers or 'rawis'. Parallel to the influence that the *Qur'an* exercised on the genre of story-telling and on the emergence of a vast amount of religious literature¹¹, the genre of *khitaba* had a distinctive status of its own and it, too, bore some of the formal characteristics of the *Qur'an*, even though this genre was not necessarily religious. This genre, despite its pre-Islamic presence, gained prominence during the Islamic era, notably during the Abbasid caliphate (758-128). Characterized by their directness (with the person delivering the discourse facing his audience) and their lofty style, these discourses ranged from the religious to the political and the circumstantial¹². They were a real gauge by which the political upheavals that changed the course of Islamic history could be measured and some of them were elevated to the status of classics of Arabic literary tradition. Although the genre of discourse vanished from the literary scene, we can still notice today one type of discourse, as part of Muslims' religious rituals, being practiced in mosques in the form of Friday 'khutba', a variant of the old 'khitaba' (or discourse) and reminiscent of it. It appears, then, that the discursive manifestations we are referring to are not peculiar to story-telling but are

¹⁰ When the *Qur'an* was revealed, there was already a rich literary tradition, especially in poetry. In order to prove its divine and unparalleled character, some verses in the *Qur'an* defy those versed in literature to produce a verse of the same quality by stressing the poets' inability to do so.

¹¹ The interpretation of The *Qur'an*, especially after the death of the prophet, led to the emergence of an array of exegeses in Islamic faith and jurisprudence and other related fields. The *Qur'an* was also the major source for laying down the rules of Arabic Grammar.

¹² The genre of 'discourse', in Arabic '*Khitaba*', (from '*khataba*', to give a discourse or a speech) can be equated with the art of rhetoric in the Greek tradition. In Arabic literary tradition, the 'discourse' was a distinctive prosaic genre in its own right whose function was persuasion and argumentation, even though it borrowed from poetry a plethora of figures devices to enhance its themes and capture the listeners' attention.

concomitant to other forms of oral discourse. More importantly, such discursive manifestations are not circumscribed to formal discourses only, be they literary or otherwise. They may be considered as some of the viable means through which daily communication among Arabs takes place. In fact, Arabic language would be lame without them and, therefore, discarding them from any translation in the way Galland did wards off an essential aspect of the naturalness of the language.

Another element as disruptive as the omission of some key expressions of the original text is the segmentation that Galland applies to the narrative composition. While the Arabic tales are disclosed to the reader through an endless succession of nights (which explains the title of the book), these nights, as a significant time expression in the stories on a thematic level, are supplanted by an altogether different segmentation based, this time, on a succession of stories that seem almost disconnected from each other, each bearing a different title. The immediate outcome of this kind of segmentation is to shift the emphasis from the tales being a story of self-emancipation to them being a mere source of entertainment. By failing to consider the tales themselves and the discourse through which they are conveyed as a symbiotic whole, it looks as though Galland severed the content of the tales from its formal characteristics and favoured the former over the latter. In our opinion, the Arabian tales, as an oral text, is both *centripetal* and *centrifugal*, to use Frye's theoretical concepts (Frye 1957 : 74). They not only draw attention to their centre, formed mainly by the tales that constitute the subject-matter, but they also draw attention to the formal characteristics that make up the very essence of their *oralité*. The importance of the unity between form and content is endorsed by Meschonnic:

Sens et style, tout comme langue et culture, sont inséparables... La forme est une manière de sens, et un texte tire son sens et sa spécificité autant de la corrélation de ses formes, de la poésie de sa grammaire pour reprendre Jakobson, que de celle de ses mots (1973 : 329).

In other words, the significance of a discourse is a combination of the content with its semiotic features.

Conveyed almost entirely in prose narrative, the Arabian tales also incorporate an abundant use of poetry. Even though at times the presence of a poem seems to have no real functional value other than mere decorum, it, nevertheless, adds more emphasis to the *oralité* of the tales as a fundamental characteristic. It is indeed very frequent to find Arabic oral discourses marked by versification. Poetry has always been dignified and elevated to an almost sacred status in Arabic literary tradition. Its use in oral discourses, if it is of no semantic value, it is at least a demonstration of the verbal eloquence and dexterity of the orator whose intent it is to captivate his listeners. The use of poetry is a useful device towards this end. In this regard, Galland seems to have preferred to leave no room for poetry by simply omitting it or, on rare occasions, translating it in a generally prosaic fashion. In so doing, Galland further diminishes the oral nature of the tales.

In addition to the different demarcations from the original text referred to above, perhaps the major shift has to do with the very choice of register. The Arabian tales have been transmitted through generations in popular Arabic, a fact that has always cast on the tales an unfavourable reception in Arab literary circles. Galland's translation, on the other

hand, offers a different perspective. Directed towards the literary circles of Paris, a translation faithful to popular Arabic would have been totally out of place. Such disparity between the popular Arabic of the tales and 18th century French consolidates, maybe more than any other feature, the enormous language gap between the original text and its French version.

In the light of what we have mentioned, it seems that Galland's approach was to a large extent dictated by the imperatives of Western written discourse that, in our opinion, dislocated the narrative macrostructure when applied to a different cultural tradition. Galland may have found in the "delicacy" of the French language an argument valid enough to justify his choices. Indeed, the following words from Galland's foreword to his translation of the Arabian tales plainly articulate the spirit in which Galland was to convey his translation:

Le traducteur se flatte que les personnes qui entendent l'Arabe, et qui voudront prendre la peine de confronter l'original avec la copie, conviendront qu'il a fait voir les arabes aux français, avec toute la circonspection que demandait la délicatesse de notre langue et de notre temps. (1960 : I, 2)

In his attempt to view Arabic prose according to the paradigms of French prose writing, Galland adopted what is called today a *functionalist* approach (Vermeer in Venuti 2000 : 221).

Religious (mis) representations

So far we have looked at the alterations in the narrative texture of the tales. We will now try to demonstrate, through a detailed comparison of the source and the target texts, that the changes in the French version of the tales result from the translator's deliberate choice and that they amount to a certain determination to shun some aspects of the original text and to preserve others. This is to say that whenever Galland wanted to apply certain touches of authenticity to his translation, he would remain as close as possible to the Arabic text and would exercise a sensitive keenness in rendering the minutest details. On the other hand, many passages in the Arabic text were occulted by virtue of a systematic and rather disturbing insistence to do away with key aspects of the Islamic faith. Our purpose here is not to indict Galland or ascertain whether he was wrong or utterly justified in his translational choices. Our goal is to relate Galland's translation to the surrounding intellectual and political milieu in which and for which it was produced. Our ultimate goal would be to demonstrate that Galland's *Les mille et une nuits*, despite the sheer entertainment it provided to scores of readers during Galland's time and afterwards, has very deep ideological underpinnings that, unfortunately, continue to resonate as the twenty-first century unfolds, and, by extension, to show the complex nature of the relationship between translation and culture.

Although Galland's translation deviates from the source-text in a countless number of instances, we will focus our analysis on the religious aspects of the Arabian tales and how they are represented in the French text. The way Islamic practices figure prominently in the original text is an indication of the important role that Islam has always played in the

Orient as in other parts of the world beyond its sphere of influence, namely the Christian world. In this respect, Galland's translation, particularly the aspects of the Arabic text that he neglected or altered, are interesting to observe. The changes in the French translation take the form of omissions, adaptations, twisted translations and mistranslations, and in matters of religion, the changes are conspicuously flagrant. One of the features of the Arabian tales is that every tale is impregnated with a particular form of religious manifestation be it at the level of religious practices or at the level of beliefs. As we shall see, Galland devotes to this aspect a pre-eminent place.

Islamic beliefs

Religious beliefs or dogmas often crop up in the abundant religious phraseology that the Arabian tales bristle with. Among the beliefs that play an important part in the tales is the belief in an immutable fate preordained by God preceding individual existence and over which the individual has no control. All Muslim exegeses consider the belief in predestination as one of the pillars upon which Islamic faith is based and, by extension, the intervention of the absolute and divine power of God in shaping the course of human existence is concomitant to this belief. For readers ignorant of, or unfamiliar with, this basic Islamic principle, its omission from the French version would not affect the enjoyment such readers may secure from the exoticism of the tales. Above all, what would a belief in divine predestination weigh in the age of the Enlightenment in which man was gradually shaking off the shackles of religious dogma?

Let us see now how Galland approached those passages that embody references to Islamic beliefs and the different forms of the changes he performed on the Arabic text. Because these changes pervade the tales in their entirety, the choice of any volume is not really significant and, therefore, our analysis focuses mostly on the first volume.

In the tale entitled *Le marchand et le génie*, which represents the second night in the original text, Galland writes:

Ne me faites pas cette question, me dit-il; en me voyant vous voyez tout. Ce serait renouveler mon affliction que de vous faire le détail de tous les malheurs qui me sont arrivés depuis un an et qui m'ont rendu à l'état où je suis. (p. 35)

Whereas in Galland's text the nature of the affliction remains vague, the Arabic text is ~~not merely~~ different in its conciseness but it also highlights the divine agency in the affliction that befell the old man. Thus, we can read in Arabic:

Oh my brother! Allah has destined this to be my lot, and what you say is of no consequence. (p. 46)

In ~~another tale~~, *Histoire du roi grec et du médecin Douban*, Galland approaches the theme of divine intervention in human existence in the same fashion. In Galland's translation we read:

Dès qu'il [the doctor] fut informé de la maladie du roi, et qu'il eût appris que ses ~~médecins~~ l'avaient abandonné, il s'habilla le plus

proprement qu'il lui fut possible et trouva moyen de se faire
présenter au roi. (p. 46)

In the Arabic text, however, the “king’s ailments” take on a religious significance and betray a kind of divine determinism:

He [the doctor] heard about the king and what happened to him as
the result of the leprosy that Allah inflicted upon him and that all
doctors and men of science failed to provide any cure to him. (p. 20)

One has to point out here that affliction, be it in the form of a disease or any other kind of ailment is perceived, paradoxically, as a purification of the believer’s sinful soul and in the face of this affliction, the believer has to show patience, the very quality that demonstrates a strong belief in predestination.

In most cases where divine agency is involved in the Arabic text, Galland tends to replace it with human agency. In other instances, however, Galland equates the divine manifestations that permeate the Arabic tales with a manifestation of a mysterious and elusive nature, but the end result is an utter avoidance of any religious denotation. In the tale *Histoire du premier calender, fils de roi*, Galland’s translation runs as follows :

Mais notre bonne fortune nous ayant conduits devant votre porte,
nous avons pris la liberté de frapper. (p. 103)

In the Arabic tale, God’s intervention is clearly manifest.

We walked and were besieged by darkness and destiny has led us to you. (p.47)

It appears that in the French version, 'fortune' is synonymous of the English word 'chance', which gives the whole idea a purely accidental character. In Arabic, on the other hand, destiny, in Arabic '*kadar*' has as a derivative the word '*kadeer*' or the most able, one of the ninety-nine names of Allah, hence the relationship between destiny and God as the maker of that destiny.

In a similar tone, Galland deprives his translation of any religious resonance in the tale of *Histoire de Zobeïde*. In this tale, God's manifestation in directing the course of events is striking and, similarly, men's subservience to divine decree is manifest, too. Here again, Galland rids his translation of any causality emanating from God. Instead, as he did in many other instances, he attributes causality to circumstances that seem to have a will of their own.

Mais la nuit, pendant que je dormais, mes sœurs prirent leur temps, et me jetèrent à la mer ; elles traitèrent de la même sorte le prince, qui fut noyé. Je me soutins quelques moments sur l'eau, et par bonheur, ou plutôt par miracle, je trouvai fond. (p.163)

Although the Arabic text revolves around the same misfortunes that the prince experienced, it utters a religious note that is totally absent from Galland's translation:

When we were carried away by our sleep, my sisters carried me and the boy and threw us in the sea. The boy, unable to swim, drowned

and Allah decreed him a martyr. As to myself, Allah made me safe, for as I fell in the sea, Allah gratified me with a piece of wood that I mounted; the waves slashed me and threw me on the shores of an island. (p. 64)

If, at times, as we have seen in the examples above, Galland avoids any reference to divine authority over human existence, he, at other times, shuns this aspect by merely avoiding any reference to it as in the tale *Histoire de l'envie et de l'envié*:

Vous êtes donc la cause de tous ces malheurs, dont il n'est pas possible que je puisse me consoler. (p. 127)

The Arabic text is different in more than one way and reveals how Galland chooses to translate the central idea in the passage. This is what we read in the original tale:

Young man! We have been leading our life happily and peacefully until you came and you brought all the tragedies upon us ... but this is not of your own design but the decree of Allah on us and on you, and praise to Allah since my daughter perished while saving your life. Leave my son. We have had enough of what happened because of you. This has all been destined for us and for you. (p. 56)

One may wonder about the reason that led Galland to avoid the translation of a passage so overloaded with the notion of inescapable destiny. First, the passage focuses on the predestined nature of human existence and its acceptance by believers in Islam as a testimony of their total adherence to it. Secondly, praising God for afflictions, as in the case of the ~~sultan~~, is another sign of their religious conviction. In Islamic jurisprudence,

acceptance of one's destiny is an indication of one's subservience to the will of Allah, and when such subservience is coupled with the praise of Allah under any circumstances, this is considered the climax of faith. In the Arabic tale, this perfect surrender to God's decree is exemplified by the sultan himself, the symbol of authority on earth. The Arabic tale has a double significance that Galland chose not to translate: the extreme degree of humility that a powerful monarch manifests in face of a divine authority and the astonishing magnanimity that the same monarch shows to one of his subjects, especially when this subject was the cause of the monarch's afflictions. If one cannot ascertain that Galland was not concerned with this aspect of Islamic beliefs and behaviour so as to give it a place in his translation, one may venture to assume that the sultan/subject relationship displayed in the Arabic tale may have appeared incongruous if compared to the king/subject relationship in 18th century France. In addition to this, as a man of the Enlightenment, Galland's choice could be seen as a reflection of an age where religious beliefs of the kind conveyed in the Arabic tales were no longer appealing even if seen from a Christian perspective let alone from the standpoint of Islam.

What attests to the fact that Galland's translation follows a regular and uniform pattern of deliberate omissions of, or deviances from, anything in the Arabic text that directly or indirectly points to the notion of God's omnipotence is that Galland's approach applies to non-human elements as well. In the tale *Histoire du troisième calender*, a seemingly trivial description of a mountain is quite revealing in this sense. Galland writes:

cette montagne noire est une mine d'aimants, qui dès à présent attire
toute votre flotte, à cause des clous et des ferrements qui entrent dans
la structure des vaisseaux. Lorsque nous en serons demain à une

certain distance, la force de l'aimant sera si violente, que tous les clous se détacheront et iront se coller contre la montagne : vos vaisseaux se dissoudront et seront submergés. Comme l'aimant a la vertu d'attirer le fer à soi, et de se fortifier par cette attraction, cette montagne, du côté de la mer, est couverte de clous d'une infinité de vaisseaux qu'elle a fait périr, ce qui conserve et augmente cette vertu. (p. 130)

Galland's translation of this passage is quite striking. Its attraction lies in the scientific tone in which it is articulated and resembles, to a certain degree, a treatise on the qualities of iron. The Arabic text, however, offers a totally different perspective.

Tomorrow we will reach a mountain made up of rocks of magnesium. The waters will carry us forcefully aside and the ship will break into pieces and every single nail in the ship will be drawn to the mountain and be stuck to it because Allah has placed a secret in the rocks. (p. 57)

***Qur'anic* references and the prophet's sayings**

The examples from Galland's translation of the Arabic tales we have noted above show that Galland applied a systematic exclusion of a very important tenet in Islamic faith, the belief in the preordained nature of existence. However, a further analysis of the French translation reveals a similar approach applied, this time, to passages from the *Qur'an* and the sayings of Prophet Mohammed that substantially pervade the Arabian tales. We need to stress at this stage that the presence of *Qur'anic* references in the original tales is not

merely there for aesthetic purposes or in order to clothe the tales with some religiosity. We can explain the overlapping of two discourses within the narrative macrostructure of the tales (the discourse of the tales themselves and the discourse of the *Qur'an*) by the force of argumentation that the *Qur'an* brings. Indeed, as far as Arabic language is concerned, if there is any discourse capable of adding strength to any other discourse, it is the *Qur'an* par excellence. To miss this point is to ignore a fundamental aspect in the dynamics of Arabic discourse in general. The examples that follow clearly illustrate Galland's tendency to adopt a systematic exclusion of any reference to the *Qur'an* or to the words of Prophet Mohammed.

In the tale *L'histoire du vizir puni*, the confrontation between the genie and the fisherman that sets him free from the vase in which he was jailed by, as the story goes, Prophet Suleiman is conveyed in Galland's translation in this fashion:

Ouvre-moi ce vase; crois-tu que je sois en humeur de faire des contes dans une prison si étroite ? Je t'en ferai tant que tu voudras quand tu m'auras tiré d'ici.— Non, dit le pêcheur, je ne te délivrerai pas ; c'est trop raisonner, je vais te présenter au fond de la mer.— Encore, un mot, pêcheur, s'écria le génie ; je te promets de ne te faire aucun mal : bien éloigné de cela, je t'enseignerai un moyen de devenir puissamment riche. (p. 56)

The story in Arabic is very different:

The genie said: "This is not the time for stories while I am imprisoned. Unless you set me free, I won't tell you everything."
The fisherman replied back: "I have to throw you in the sea and you

stand no chance of being set free.” The fisherman, his heart softened, told the genie: “Listen, genie. Allah said [in the *Qur'an*]: “Fulfill every covenant. Verily the covenant will be questioned about.” You have given your word to me and you have sworn not to betray me. If you do so, Allah will punish you accordingly for Allah gives some respite but He is never neglectful. (p. 27)

For any reader or listener unfamiliar with Arabic, the way the fisherman speaks to the genie sounds unrealistic or even absurd, as the setting brings together a fisherman, that is a human, and a genie, a being that is commonly believed to belong to an extraterrestrial dimension. For a Western audience, the sight of a fisherman practicing some divine sermons that highlight the virtues of loyalty to a genie might seem preposterous. Such is not the case in Arabic as the whole setting is not so much about a genie arguing with a fisherman as about the power of God that controls not only the human being on earth but beings that belong to other realms as well. As much as Galland's translation seems very down-to-earth and realistic, the original story merges the natural with the supernatural into a discourse that foregrounds the domination of god over all things. In other words, Galland's translation remains rational, one-dimensional and much more concerned with the unfolding of the story. On the other hand, the Arabic tale moves into two directions: it is a continuous disclosing of successive events, a pattern that Galland is more or less keen to observe, but more particularly the Arabic text utters a higher discourse or an implicit *metatext* the central theme of which is the omnipotence of God, a theme, as we have observed earlier, that is absent from Galland's translation.

In other tales, the references to, or quotations from, the *Qur'an* are not direct but take the form of a paraphrase of one of its verses. Although the use of situations from the *Qur'an* serves a descriptive or argumentative purpose, it is an indication of yet another aspect of Arabic discourse. It is very frequent in Arabic language, for the sake of comparison, to draw parallels between reality and stories revealed in the *Qur'an*. Most of these have a moral purpose and set guidelines for a religiously accepted moral conduct. It is, therefore, not surprising nor is it anachronistic in Islamic culture to compare a sexually perverted individual to a person from the people of Loth, or a brutal tyrant or a political leader to Pharaoh.¹³ Likewise, the virtue of patience is exalted in the prophet Ayoub and the avoidance of temptation in the prophet Yusuf. Hence, the Arabian tales encapsulate this long-established popular tendency of convening a religious discourse to bear upon an everyday language in order to endow the latter with some degree of veracity or authenticity. The following passage from *Histoire du vizir puni* shows how Galland didn't accord any importance to the *Qur'anic* reference used in the original.

Ce noir avait un habillement d'esclave, il était d'une grosseur et d'une grandeur gigantesque. (p. 59)

The Arabic text is a perfect example of the *intertextual* interplay between the narrative discourse of the tales and the *Qur'anic* discourse. This is how it goes:

¹³ For example, in one of Al Jazeera TV channel broadcasts, Bin Laden castigates American foreign policy and refers to President Bush as the *Pharaoh* of modern times.

A black slave came out of it [the wall] and who looked like a bull or someone from the people of Aad¹⁴.

The mere mention of 'the people of Aad' brings the *Qur'anic* context to mind but the association between the tale and the *Qur'an* requires a keen familiarity with the Arabic language and its culture. In the French translation, the intertextual dimension of the original text is sacrificed to a flat, down-to-earth description of a black slave. Besides, Galland's tendency to suppress *Qur'anic* allusions follows a rigorous pattern which is applied to references not even directly stemming from the *Qur'an* but that are part of the general Islamic lore.

In the tale *Histoire des trois calenders*, Galland again describes the lady who approached the porter in the following manner:

[...] une autre dame, qui vint ouvrir la porte, lui parut si belle, qu'il en demeura tout surpris, ou plutôt, il fut si vivement frappé de l'éclat de ses charmes, qu'il en pensa laisser tomber son panier avec tout ce qui est dedans, tant cet objet le mit hors de lui-même. Il n'avait jamais vu de beauté qui approchât de celle qu'il avait devant les yeux. (p.78).

¹⁴ The reference to the People of Aad or *Kawm Aad* in Arabic is taken from a verse in the *Qur'an* entitled *Al A'raf*. In his interpretation of the *Qur'an*, the Muslim scholar Ibn Kathir refers to the prophet Hud who was sent to the people of Aad in Yemen to remind them not to walk off the path of their Lord and be grateful to him for his bounties which includes the bounty of physical stature, as these people were known for their prominent physical constitution. Part of the verse in question goes like this: "And remember that He made you successors after the people of Nuh (Noah) and increase you amply in stature. So remember the graces from Allah so that you may be successful."

Galland's translation is striking by the simplicity of its diction. Galland was certainly aware of the extreme challenge that the translation of this passage entailed if he were to translate it with total accuracy. The challenge resides in the use of a literary technique called '*sajaa*', a form of poetic prose that is halfway between prose in the classical sense of the word and poetry. What follows is an attempt at conveying some of the literary features and the religious references of the Arabic passage that are conspicuously lacking in the French translation:

The porter looked at the lady who opened the door. She turned out to be graceful in her stature, prominent with her chest. She has such beauty and charm, with eyes that looked like the deer's and eyelids like the crescent of the month of Ramadan and cheeks like wildflowers in their fullest blossom and lips rounded like the roundness of Prophet Suleiman's ring and a face as bright as the moon in its fullness and breasts like pomegranates and a belly folded under her dress. When the porter looked at her, she took his mind away and he almost dropped the basket from on top of his head. (p. 36)

Although our translation of the Arabic passage attempts to convey the descriptive details as they flow in the original tale, it falls short of capturing the rhetorical characteristics that foreground it so distinctively in Arabic. As far as Galland's translation is concerned, two conclusions could be drawn: first, as has been the case with many passages, the allusion to Prophet Suleiman is entirely discarded and with it vanishes any possible linkage of Islam with the belief in other prophets usually associated with Christianity and Judaism. Moreover, the comparison of the lady's rounded mouth to the

roundness of Prophet's Suleiman's ring is not fortuitous nor is it made in order to impart some hidden religious message. Legend has it that Prophet's Suleiman's ring exercised an extraordinary power on human beings and superhuman beings alike. Therefore, it is very likely that the comparison is made to mark the lady's extraordinary beauty and the subduing power that she has on the beholder, a power akin to Prophet's Suleiman's ring. By omitting this historical and religious reference, Galland's translation is semantically weakened and appears to be a mere descriptive banality. Lastly, if one bears in mind the nature of the tales themselves in so far as they were an anonymous compilation of tales handed down by word of mouth from one generation to another, the presence of allusions, religious or otherwise, was a strong landmark of the tales' mingling of different literary genres. What may have appeared to Galland an excessive indulgence into a seemingly erotic praise of female beauty was actually a natural borrowing from a full-fledged poetic tradition known as the poetry of '*ghazal*' or love poetry. Galland's passage is rather striking with its concise way of describing feminine beauty and the expression "beauté surprenante" is all that Galland could use to describe Princess Jawhara (pearl or precious stone in Arabic). What Galland did was not only to shun the religious resonance that is overwhelmingly echoed in the Arabic text but in this passage in particular he seemed to have overlooked a significant aspect of a renowned poetic tradition. We need to stress here that under the reign of Caliph Harun Al-Rashid (786-809), the proliferation of the Arabian Tales knew a formidable success. Worthy of notice also is the fact that during the Abbasid Caliphate, the poetic genre known as '*ghazal*' was an established genre with poets of great renown practicing it. Therefore, the cultivation of feminine beauty in the Arabian tales is

reminiscent of the existence of a vast aesthetic movement and to occult it is tantamount to occulting a whole literary tradition.

Galland's elimination of phrases or expressions reminiscent of Islam swings between a straightforward omission and a partial translation and perhaps the most drastic case of omission applies to Muslims' declaration of faith. The reader of the Arabian tales in Arabic will not fail to observe the countless number of times that the expression '*Ashadu Anna la Ilaha Illa Allah wa Ashhadu Anna Mohammed Rasul Allah* (I bear witness that there is no God but Allah and I bear witness that Mohammed is his messenger) is used. This expression, as every Muslim knows, is someone's entrance door to Islam. Its frequent use in the Arabian tales is not an indication that the stories are about people flooding into Islam but it shows the deep grounding of this expression in Arabic discourse to the extent that it befits a variety of contexts. In Galland's translation, there is no trace of it, not even through some kind of paraphrase.

The second expression, based on a verse from the *Qur'an*, has to do with man's purpose on earth, particularly when this man has taken upon himself the leadership of a nation. The expression '*ameer al mu'mineen wa khalifatu Allah fee al ard*' or 'commander of the faithful and successor of Allah on earth' used in the Arabic tale highlights the principle of '*Shurah*' in Islam, a principle that many Muslim scholars, associate, to a certain degree, with the principle of democracy in the West. The word Shurah in Islam comes from the verb "*tashawar*" or "to concert", which makes Shurah synonymous to concerting, counseling and advising one another before taking any decision that affects the

whole nation. The very election of a leader has to be achieved through this process of collective consultation and advice in compliance with the *Qur'anic* verse “*Wa amruhum Shurah beynahum*” (And who conduct their affairs by mutual consultation, *Qur'an*, Verse 42). This verse shows that the fundamental criterion for the election of “*ameer al mu'mineen*” or “commander of the faithful” is the strong vow to lead the nation in accordance with the tenets of Islam. On these grounds, the expression of “commander of the faithful and the successor of Allah on earth” that pervades the stories in Arabic has as a strong *Qur'anic* resonance, which strongly emphasizes the idea that the leader chosen through the process of Shurah to lead the faithful has been endowed by the sacred mission of fulfilling Allah's word on earth. By omitting the second part of the expression (successor of Allah on earth), Galland obliterated the universal dimension that the message of Islam carries and redeemed the Arabic expression to “*commandeur des croyants*” (p.102), thus circumscribing the Muslim leader's role to a geographical space that doesn't go beyond the Arab peninsula, the birth place of Islam, and its neighbouring regions. In addition to this, Galland annotates his translation with a short footnote as to the meaning of the word ‘caliph’ “*nom que portaient des souverains mahométans. Ce mot signifie, en arabe, successeur, relativement à Mahomet.*” (p.76). From an Islamic perspective, this annotation wrongly reduces Islam to a religious tradition of Prophet Mohammed's own design and any person adhering to it is therefore a ‘mahométan’. Consequently, it is not acceptable in Islam to attribute the adjective “mahométan” to Islam as the Christians associate the adjective “Christian” to “Christ” and “Christianity”. In another annotation, devoted to the notion of funeral in Islam, Galland sheds more light on what he considers “mahométan” and sums up his opinion in this way: “*en un mot, il n'y a pas de deuil chez les sectateurs de*

l'islamisme." (p. 165). Despite the fact that the term "mahométan" is nowhere to be found in the Arabic tales, Galland uses it at will, provides explanations for it and comes to the conclusion that the "mahométans" are the followers of a leader who professes the beliefs of a cult known under the name of Islamism.

Galland follows the same reductive tendency of ridding the Arabic text of its religious colour as in the tale *histoire de l'envie et de l'envié* where the princess subdues the genie. We read in Galland's translation:

Le sultan et moi nous nous attendons à périr; mais bientôt nous entendimes crier: "Victoire, Victoire!" et nous vîmes tout à coup paraître la princesse sous sa forme naturelle, et le génie réduit en un monceau de cendres. (p.125)

By comparing the two texts, one can see that Galland faithfully conveyed the situation as it occurred in the original save the expression of victory. This is what we read in Arabic:

We were certain we were bound to perish but while we were in this desolate state we heard someone shout: "Allah is greater, Allah is greater". It was the princess dragging the genie who had turned into a heap of ashes. (p. 55)

One may be led into thinking that Galland's omission was purely accidental and as long as the idea of victory, whether through a human or a divine agency, exists in the

translation, the spirit of the original text is kept intact. This may be a valid argument if omissions were few and were not limited only to passages that directly or indirectly refer to a particular aspect of Islam or Muslim life. Therefore, one cannot help but ask questions as to the reasons that drove Galland to observe a high degree of faithfulness when one considers his translation as a whole and to discard anything that represents Islam at the same time.

Again, the tale *histoire de Zobeide* is a good illustration of how Galland selectively rids the sentences or words that refer to Muslim's prayers and other religious practices. Let us consider the following passage:

Elle m'a appris à lire en arabe; et le livre qu'elle me donna pour m'exercer fut l'Al Coran. Dès que je fus capable de raison, elle m'expliqua tous les points de cet excellent livre. (p. 161)

Phrased in this manner, the translated passage conveys the idea that the *Qur'an* is an excellent source for learning the Arabic language. The passage in Arabic has an additional idea to offer:

She taught me the religion of Islam, and what it includes in terms of cleanliness, the conditions of ablution, prayer and she made me recite the *Qur'an*. (p. 63)

While Galland's translation is about learning Arabic, the original passage is about learning the fundamental tenets of Islamic religion. Furthermore, we can read a few lines later that:

Depuis ce temps là, je continue de le servir avec plus de ferveur que jamais. (p. 162)

In the Arabic text, this religious fervour in the service of God has a practical manifestation:

Since that incident, I have been praying, fasting, and reciting the *Qur'an* (p. 63)

Sometimes, omissions can only be explained by a possible misinterpretation of the Arabic text itself. In the tale *Le marchand et le génie*, the encounter between the old man and the merchant is conveyed in Galland's words as follows:

Voilà, s'écria t-il, la chose du monde la plus surprenante; et vous vous êtes lié par le serment le plus inviolable. Je veux, ajouta-t-il, être le témoin de votre entrevue avec le génie. (p. 27)

The passage in Arabic embodies more or less the same conversation except for its concluding part. In fact, the old man, after deciding to accompany the merchant and be a witness of his encounter with the genie, adds: "By Allah, my brother, your debt is indeed great and your story is an extraordinary one." (p. 13)

What, then, made Galland eschew the translation of this short passage that naturally ensues from the incidents that proceeded it, for, as we read the story, we learn that the old man has indeed a huge debt to pay and made a strong vow with the genie to honour his debt before meeting with him. The Arabic word “*deen*” may provide us with a plausible explanation. This word means both “debt” and “religion” at the same time. Had Galland, in our opinion, been aware that the word “*deen*” could also mean “debt”, he may have not hesitated to bring the conversation to its logical conclusion by simply choosing this word. If, on the other hand, his knowledge of the word “*deen*” were limited to religion, he may have simply avoided concluding his translation of the conversation with “*votre religion est certainement une grande religion*”, an omission which falls into the natural pattern of exclusions with respect to Islamic religion.

There are instances in Galland’s translation where Islamic references are given ample explanation but the explanation that Galland provides to the reader is framed within a Western worldview and, ultimately, such references lose the local colour that gives them their unique character. In so doing, Galland sometimes adds explanatory phrases, not in the form of an annotation, but within the flow of the narrative itself. Among such instances, we find the following description of a place of worship in the tale of *Histoire de Zobeïde*:

Il était environ minuit, lorsque j’entendis la voix d’un homme qui lisait l’Alcoran de la même manière et du ton que l’on avait coutûme de le lire dans nos temples . . . En effet, il y avait, *comme dans nos temples* une niche qui marquait où il fallait se tourner pour faire la prière, des lampes suspendues

et allumées, et deux chandeliers avec de gros cierges de cire blanche, allumés de même. (p. 159) (my emphasis)

Although the description provided by Galland in the passage in Arabic does refer to the existence of chandeliers in a place of worship, the comparison with the temple was added by Galland's imagination. In fact, Galland's addition is confusing as one finds it hard to figure out whether the narrator is one of the countless narrators embedded in the tales or whether it is the voice of Galland himself. A few lines later, we come to the realization that it is Galland who is adding his own contribution to the stories for the passage offers a very simple explanation:

At midnight, I heard a sweet recitation of the *Qur'an* and I turned towards the bedroom and saw an open door. I entered into the place which was a place for prayer lit by hanging chandeliers.
(p. 62)

In the tale *Le marchand et le génie*, Galland applies a radical transformation of the Arabic text by approaching it from a Christian perspective and the result is a mistranslation in so far as Galland presents Islam as a religion governed by an institution akin to the Church and whose members seem to observe certain duties within the established hierarchy of this institution. The passage in question runs like this:

Comme il voulait que le sujet de sa joie fut rendu publique, il annonça à ses officiers, et fit appeler son grand vizir. Dès qu'il fut arrivé, il le chargea de distribuer cent mille pièces d'or aux ministres de la religion, qui faisaient vœu de pauvreté aux hôpitaux et aux

pauvres, en action de grâce à Dieu; et sa volonté fut exécutée par les ordres de ce ministre. (p.26)

Galland's representation of Islam as a religion governed by an institution similar to the Christian church is further illustrated in *Histoire des amours de Camaralzaman*:

Il fit porter des riches aumônes dans chaque communauté de ces gens consacrés à Dieu; il fit même venir *les supérieurs*, et, après qu'il les eut régalez d'un festin frugal, il leur déclara son intention, et les pria d'en avertir les dévots *qui étaient sous leur obéissance*.
(p. 468) (my emphasis)

These two passages, as do others, show the high degree of freedom that Galland enjoyed in handling the Arabic text in a manner that he saw fit for his readers. Nevertheless, the liberty that Galland took entailed a major consequence. Indeed, the notion of "ministre" or "priest of religion" is not only erroneous but anti-Islamic. Priesthood, as is commonly known in Christianity, not only refers to a religious function within the institution of the Church as presiding over church services but it also points out to a particular rank within the religious hierarchy of the Church. Galland's translation, through the use of 'ministre' and 'supérieurs' misses the fact that Islam is not governed by an institution, which makes the presence of priests of religion totally inadequate for the very simple reason that no intermediary, be it in the form of a religious body or in the form of individuals, should serve as a link between God and his subjects. In this context, the Arabian tales are self-explanatory and might as well have provided Galland with the answer that is absent from his translation. In fact, in the original text, precisely in the tale

The one hundredth and one night, there is mention of the following saying by Prophet Mohammed: "There is no priesthood in Islam." (p. 326)¹⁵

Had Galland translated this saying, he would have contradicted his own adaptation of the passage cited earlier. The examples related to the notion of priesthood in Islam are foreign to Islam but they are by no means an isolated case. The passage that follows shows that the annotation that accompanies Galland's translation is of Galland's own making. In the tale *Histoire du sixième frère du barbier*, we read:

"— Mon hôte, reprit le Barmécide, après avoir si bien mangé, il faut que nous buvions" (p.393). In addition to his translation of this passage that makes a reference to wine, Galland feels the need to inform his readers that les "orientaux, et particulièrement les mahométans, ne boivent qu'après les repas." The way the explanatory note is put leads any uninformed reader to believe that the consumption of wine is rooted in the culinary habits of the Muslims, who are referred to, once more, with the ready-made label of 'mahométans'. For a person who had quite a prolonged experience of life among Muslims, Galland must have known that the consumption of wine and alcohol is strongly prohibited.

Lapsus calami

Up to this point, we have looked at the changes resulting from deliberate omissions of passages in the original text, although the passages we have singled out represent only a small portion of the transformations that the Arabic text has undergone. Let us now consider the changes that are the result of the translator's lack of knowledge of some of the

¹⁵Nowadays, the existence of ministries of religion in Muslim countries working under the authority of the state is a modern invention. It is a way of preventing the religious discourse from posing any threat to the interests of the regime in place and maintaining it in line with the political programme of the State.

linguistic subtleties inherent in the Arabic language, particularly its grammar. The obvious outcome is a translation that sounds illogical if taken within the overall context of the tale in question. In the tale of *Histoire du second calender*, mistranslation is the result of Galland's confusion between the use of "her" as a possessive adjective and its use as an indirect object pronoun. Galland translates a passage in this tale as follows:

Pour épargner la belle dame de venir jusqu'à moi, je me hâtai de la joindre, et dans le temps que je lui faisais une profonde révérence, elle me dit : «Qui êtes-vous ? (p. 108)

In the Arabic tale, the scene is totally different:

I saw a strongly built castle and inside was a gorgeous lady. When I looked at her, I knelt down in prayer to her creator for the beauty he bestowed upon her. (p. 48)

Thinking that the phoneme "ha" in Arabic could only mean "her" as an indirect object pronoun, Galland readily translated this phoneme into "lui" instead of the French possessive adjective "son". Therefore, instead of "Je faisais une profonde révérence à son créateur", as the Arabic phrase goes, Galland chose to translate it by "Je lui faisais une profonde révérence". The strangeness of Galland's translation lies in the fact that Galland may have been aware that reverences to people, whether high or low in social standing, is prohibited, as it is to God alone that Muslims show their reverence in the form of their daily prayers. By transferring the Oriental frame of reference into the Western one, Galland displaces the religious dimension of the original text into an 18th century gentlemanly act of gallantry.

Another example of displacement occurs in the tale *Histoire de Zobeïde*, this time on account of Galland's mishandling of sentence word order. The result is a translation that bears no trace of the original. The passage by Galland goes as follows:

Le prince, toute sa cour, les habitants de la ville et tous ses autres sujets étaient mages, adorateurs du feu et de Nardoun, ancien roi des géants rebelles à Dieu . (p. 161)

The point of contention here is the word “nardoun”, who, if we are to trust Galland, was the king of giants who rebelled against God, despite the fact that the word “nardoun” is nowhere to be found in the Arabian tales.

A close examination of the sentence that Galland translated yields the answer. In Arabic, the sentence reads like this:

This city is the city of my father, of his family and his subjects and they worshipped fire in lieu of Allah. (p. 63)

The three words “worshipped”, “fire” and “lieu of” are the source of Galland's choice. In Arabic, the three words could be translated as “*ya'budun*”, “*nar*” and “*doun*” respectively. What Galland did was to combine the second word (nar) with the third (doun) to come up with the neologism (nardoun) that has an existence only in Galland's mind. Galland even makes the same mistake few lines further when he writes:

Habitants, abandonnez le culte de Nardoun et du feu. Adorez le Dieu unique, qui fait miséricorde. (p. 161)

As the translation of the Arabian tales undoubtedly involves a high degree of familiarity with Arabic, in both its written and spoken forms, the occurrence of a mistake of this kind ultimately leads to a drastic shift from the original text.

Infidèle or fidelity to an Orientalist skopos?

The examples of shifts that the Arabic tales underwent in Galland's translation are numerous and we have discussed a selection of mainly those changes that are in direct or indirect relation to Islam and Islamic beliefs and practices in general, although other shifts, also worthy of consideration and analysis, do occur in the French translation. Confronted with this substantial number of modifications, the question that comes to mind is the following: are we to consider these changes as a natural consequence of a **transfer** of a text from its source language to a target language? Since no two languages are **the same**, are changes, as drastic as they may be, bound to occur, as long as these two **languages** offer two distinct representations of the world? This idea has some validity and has been corroborated by extensive research in linguistics and anthropology, notably by Sapir and Whorf, according to whom our way of thinking is determined by language, and the distinctions encoded in a particular language are not found in another language. Whorf explains his view of linguistic relativity as follows:

[...] the world is presented in a kaleidoscopic flux of impressions which has to be organized by our minds – and this means largely by the linguistic systems in our minds. We cut nature up, organize it into concepts, and ascribe significances as we do, largely because we are parties to an agreement to organize it in this way- an agreement

that holds throughout our speech community and is codified in the patterns of our language (in Crystal 1987 : 15).

Even though the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis did not prove completely valid (Crystal 1987 : 420) since the very existence of successful translations between distinct linguistic families is a strong argument against it, it certainly holds some validity with regard to Galland's approach and may lead us to conclude that his adaptations of some passages of the Arabian tales was carried out for the purpose of enrobing their content in a more familiar socio-cultural context with which an 18th century French audience could easily relate. In doing so, Galland shortened the centuries-long distance between the Arabian nights and his *Les mille et une nuits* through a *domestication* of the Arabian tales that sought to localize the conceptual distinction between the Arabic and the French texts, a strategy which was probably the key to the resounding success of Galland's translation in France.

Perhaps we could look into, and further understand, Galland's strategy by relating his work to that of other similar translators who took upon themselves the task of translating texts older than the Arabian tales. In this respect, a relevant analogy can be made between Galland's work and Nida's translation of the Bible, not only on account of Nida's experience with one of the oldest texts in existence but also of his attempts to study the transfer of the Bible into languages and dialects very remote from English. More importantly, Galland and Nida seem to assign to the culture of the target language a primary importance. Nida's famous concept of *dynamic* or *communicative equivalence* sheds some light on Galland's translation of the Arabian tales.

Nida defines the method of translating that he advocates in the following terms: “Translating consists in producing in the receptor language the closest natural equivalent to the message of the source language, first in meaning and secondly in style (Nida in Brower (ed.) 1966 : 19). This definition sums up the fruit of Nida’s laborious research into the endless translation problems he has encountered. In his work, Nida puts a great deal of emphasis on the concept of ‘dynamic or communicative equivalence’ as opposed to ‘formal equivalence’, thus demarcating his approach from that of comparative linguistics whose exponents see translation as finding equivalences between source and target language in surface structures. Meaning, which appears to be the main concern in Nida’s theory – especially in the context of conveying the meaning of the Bible- has to be sought in the deep structures of language. It is at this level of language only that linguistic correspondences can be found despite the differences separating texts. A narrowly formal approach, for Nida, would obscure the importance of the cultural dimension of the source text and undermine its sociolinguistic features. Therefore, failure to observe the cultural differences between the source language and the target language will, according to Nida, impede communication across cultures. Translation, in Nida’s theory, is more than a linguistic transfer of information as it attempts to bridge two ethnographically disparate worlds. Aware of the fact that no two languages can ever represent the same reality, cultural and linguistic adjustments are therefore necessary and seem to be the only viable option in order to recreate “the closest natural equivalent” to the source language text. Such adjustments, for Nida, are the result of “a high degree of sensitivity to different syntactic structures and clear insights into cultural diversities” (Nida in Brower (ed.) 1966 : 19). Despite all this, Nida remains conscious that total coincidence between source and target

texts is impossible to attain but, nevertheless, endeavours with the rigour of a convinced Christian to show how “dynamic equivalence” practically works. In his approach, any language has the faculty of expressing everything and linguistic and cultural differences between languages could be overcome by dint of an adaptation that would rewrite the source text into a receptor language. To accomplish effective communication and to generate what de Beaugrande calls “intentional coincidence” (De Beaugrande 1991 : 17-53), the translator has to demonstrate a double competence: a linguistic mastery of the target language and a deep knowledge of the nuances that underpin cultural differences.

We can deduce from Nida’s method that the notion of fidelity to the source language is *relativized* and what takes precedence over it is cultural pertinence as well as the “functions” assigned to the target text. For Nida, words, even biblical words, and linguistic structures offer no absolute truth and they function as a medium of communication only within a limited cultural context and, therefore, their semantic and cultural value cannot eternally transcend the borders of the socio-cultural context in which they were produced. “Biblical revelation involved limitations”, says Nida “[...] even if a truth is given only in words, it has no real validity until it has been translated into life [...] The words are in a sense nothing in and of themselves. The word is void unless related to experience” (Nida 1960 : 222).

What Nida seems to say is that as human experience keeps renewing itself, it calls for new words to translate its renewal. If such was Nida’s view vis-à-vis the Bible, what would he have said about a text as anonymous as the Arabian tales that has neither the religious authority nor the recognized authorship to protect it from the adaptations of

translators whose translatative principle is geared primarily towards the expectations of the target culture?

Nida, however, is not the only theoretician that may give Galland justification for his target culture-oriented approach. The German “Skopos” approach (Vermeer 1972; Nord 1991) also seems to place the translator’s role within a definite cultural context. For Nord, “the translator is a figure who is always acting within the boundaries of a particular culture community (Nord 1994 : 94), a definition which establishes a direct link between the translator, the translation and the immediate background of its production.¹⁶ In other words, cultural factors become a decisive criterion for determining the type of translation to be adopted. By affirming that the translator acts within the boundaries of his or her own culture, Nord believes, as does Nida, that the cultural dimension in any act of translation is part and parcel of a functionalist procedure that determines such a conception of translation. Without going back to the genesis of this theory, commonly referred to as *Skopos Theory*, one important characteristic ensues from it: the primacy of the function assigned (by the translator or various other agents) to the translated text. According to the proponents of the functionalist theory, the translator carries out an interpretation and a selection at the level of the original text in order to extract the most pertinent elements to the act of communication, not in function of what the original author intended to communicate to his audience in the source culture but according to the translator’s intention vis-à-vis his readers in the target culture. “Fidelity”, along the lines of Nord’s conception of translation, is no longer determined only on the basis of the content and the

¹⁶ See, for example, the new translation of the *Qur'an* where references to war and weapons are transposed in modern terms including ‘helicopters’.

form of the original text but is rather defined in the light of the role that the translated text is to have within the target culture. In this respect, Nord prefers the notion of '*loyalty*', which creates a binding relationship between the translator and his or her partners in the act of communication. This notion also designates an interpersonal category that underlies a social and even a moral relationship between the translator and his readers. For Nord, loyalty "is a moral category which permits the integration of culture-specific conventions into the functionalist model of translation." (Nord 1994 : 92). We find the same primacy of the target culture in the words of Hans Vermeer (1978), principal founder of the Skopostheory:

In this model, the recipient for whom the target text (TT) is intended is the crucial factor in any translation process. The original has to be translated in such a way that the TT becomes part of a 'word continuum' which can be interpreted by the recipient as 'coherent with his situation' [...] If the skopos demands a change of function, the required standard will no longer be intertextual coherence with the ST, but adequacy and appropriateness with regard to the translation scope." (cited in Nord 1994 : 93).

It appears that the terms '*adequation*' and '*appropriateness*' are key concepts. They represent the driving principle in an act of translation that is oriented towards a goal that needs to be defined prior to translating in accordance with the "needs" of users in the recipient culture.

How much of this “loyalty” towards the original text and the expectations of French readers of the 18th century can be traced in Galland’s translation of the Arabian tales and in what ways does Galland’s version fit into the global cultural background of its time? In that respect, Zuber (1968 : 22) informs us about the cultural background that prevailed before and during the publication of Galland’s work, a period that witnessed an extensive reflection on the status and the role of translation. At around 1530, rules that governed the act of translation started to be established along with the idea that translation was an art, although it could never enjoy the status of literature, especially poetry. Indeed, up until the 17th century translation was not held in high esteem in literary circles. Du Bellay, for example, reminded translators that their task was secondary to that of poets and orators. In 1595, Etienne Pasquier qualified translation as “labeur misérable, ingrat et esclave” (Zuber 1968 : 24) and it took a great deal of time for translation to recover from this state of depreciation. Zuber points to the fact that thanks to Amyot, there was a renewed interest around 1620 for prose writing as a distinctive art form and translation reaped the fruit of this interest, even though translators had to conform to the rules of “*bienséance*” so dear to the cultural milieu of 17th and 18th century France. All along this period, the translator’s major concern was not so much to render scrupulously the original text as it was to make of the newly translated text a literary work worthy of the contemporary reader’s admiration and appreciation. Perrot d’Ablancourt was a model to emulate and Saint-Evremond best sums up the tendency in vogue at the time:

Ce n’est pas qu’une fidélité fort exacte fasse la recommandation de notre d’Ablancourt mais il faut admirer la force admirable de son expression, où il n’y a ni rudesse ni obscurité. Vous n’y trouverez

pas un terme à désirer pour la netteté du sens ; rien à rejeter ; rien qui nous choque, ou qui nous dégoûte. (Abdel-Halim 1964 : 171)

It becomes clear that by aspiring to elevate translation to the prestige of autonomous literature, translators shaped the aesthetic taste of the classical period in their adherence to the then principle of '*Les belles infidèles*'. They espoused the spirit of the time and set the act of translation free from the burden of servitude to the original text it had been accused of and debased with for so long. Therefore, modifications of the original were necessary and gone was the time when fidelity was erected into a virtue. George Mounin, by looking at the different types of translation, best describes the translational tendency of *Les belles infidèles* that governed the classical age.

[...] pour franciser le texte il faudra quelquefois traduire l'originalité d'une œuvre sans l'originalité de sa langue étrangère ; quelquefois, de plus, traduire la saveur de l'œuvre sans s'attacher à traduire l'odeur du siècle où elle fut écrite ; et quelquefois enfin, distance beaucoup plus grande que celle qui sépare deux siècles d'une même civilisation, le traducteur devra, pour franciser son texte, traduire la saveur de l'œuvre sans chercher à rendre l'odeur d'une civilisation totalement différente de la nôtre. (Mounin 1994 : 74))

In order to please his readers and to guarantee the success of his translation, Galland had no alternative but to acclimatize the Arabic text to the esthetic taste and the established literary tradition of his time. His concern for French "delicacy" and "propriety" over accuracy was clearly explained to Gisbert Cuper with respect to the title of *Les mille et une nuits, contes arabes, mis en français*, which he initially chose for his translation:

L'original est en arabe et je dis mis en français parce que ce n'est pas une version attachée précisément au texte, qui n'aurait pas fait plaisir aux lecteurs. C'est autant qu'il m'a été possible, l'arabe rendu en bon français, sans m'être attaché servilement aux mots. (Abdel-Halim 1964 : 193)

Berman coins Galland's approach an "*ethnocentric*" translation and whoever adheres to this ethnocentric perspective does not conceive of translation outside the borders of his or her own culture:

Ethnocentrique signifiera ici: qui ramène à sa propre culture, à ses normes et valeurs, et considère ce qui est situé en dehors de celle-ci – L'Etranger – comme négatif ou tout juste bon à être annexé, adapté, pour accroître la richesse de cette culture. (Berman 1985 : 48-49)

For Berman, therefore, distortions are imposed on the original text in order to ward off its strangeness. Berman sees that Western ethnocentric attitudes towards '*the other*' text have always prevented any access towards knowing the foreign nature of the original texts by a process of appropriation and annexation into the habitual language and aesthetics of the target culture. In other terms, this method tends to 'clean' the target text of any obscurities related to the strangeness of the original because of its obsession with negating any aspect of otherness that doesn't have any pertinence in the recipient culture.

If we are to evaluate Galland's translation solely on the basis of a target language-oriented approach, whether it is functionalist or in the manner of 'communicative

equivalence', it will appear to us that Galland's translation would have had a limited scope and its success would be measured only by the degree of expectancy of exotic fairy tales lovers. In other words, if Galland's translation were to be viewed in terms of its adherence to the literary tradition of its time only, its relevance, and by the same token, its success, would have been circumstantial. In our opinion, Galland's translation gains more significance if placed in a wider cultural context that actually precedes its publication, and its author. In this regard, translation ceases to be seen as an autonomous art form concerned with the transfer of texts between languages. It functions as a system within a variety of other systems or a *polysystem*. In this respect, The Tel-Aviv School of Poetics and Semiotics has attempted to place translation in a wider frame or *polysystem theory*. Starting from the idea that translated literature represents only one element in a more encompassing cultural polysystem, the distinctive quality of the model developed by polysystem theory resides in the fact that it seeks to determine the role played by translation in the target culture and their relationships with the original texts within the same culture. The concept of *norms* acquires a paramount importance. Norms not only determine the kind of texts to be translated but also the languages from which these texts could be drawn as well as the choice of translation models privileged in the target culture. Toury looks at the nature of norms that govern translation activity in the following terms:

Sociologists and social psychologists have long regarded norms as the translation of general values or ideas shared by a community- as to what is right and wrong, adequate or inadequate- into performance instructions appropriate for and applicable to particular situations, specifically what is prescribed and forbidden as well as what is tolerated and permitted in a certain behavioural dimension ...

Norms are acquired by the individual during his/her socialization and always imply *sanctions*- actual or potential, negative as well as positive. Within the community, norms also serve as criteria according to which actual instances of behaviours are evaluated (Toury in Venuti (ed.) 2000 : 199).

Toury suggests that translators do familiarize themselves with these norms and learn to respect them in the act of translating. In The Tel-Aviv School's reflection on translation, the notion of *acceptability* with regard to the expectations of users in the target culture is an essential aspect of this model. This involves not only the readers of the translated text but agents at all levels of the recipient culture. In other words, the notions of adequacy to the source text and acceptability to the target culture circumscribe the translator's role and regulate it according to the norms and criteria established by the cultural institutions in place. If a translation is to play a social role, it has to abide by already existing norms. Failure to observe these norms may lead translation to play a marginal role on the periphery of the system. As Toury puts it:

The acquisition of a set of norms for determining the suitability of that kind of behaviour, and for maneuvering between all the factors which may contain it, is therefore a prerequisite for becoming a translator within a cultural environment (Toury- Venuti (ed.) 2000 :198).

Therefore, as Toury concludes, shifts in translation become an inevitable risk.

The close relationship between translation and the target culture explains why translation can serve to consolidate the *hegemony* of certain representations of alterity.

If we draw a parallel between Toury's approach and Galland's translation of the Arabian tales, we see that the central notion of norms goes beyond the vision of *Les Mille et une nuits* as a mere reflection of an aesthetic taste. What needs to be examined, then, is the nature of the norms along whose lines Galland adjusted his translation of the Arabian Tales to fit it into the global ideological framework of his time. At this stage, Toury's ideas of '*preliminary norms*' are illuminating as they inform us about the existence of a translation policy that governs the very selection of texts for translation at a particular historical period. Seen in this light, the choice of the Arabian tales to be rendered into French was not a translator's singular initiative born out of a whimsical decision to revive an obsolete corpus of tales from the fathoms of oblivion. It was a social enterprise on the part of an intellectual who felt the urgency of his endeavour because his age strongly called for it. Galland's translation came at a time of growing interest in anything oriental. Even before the age of Galland, particularly during the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, two distinct Orientals existed (Abdel-Halim 1964 : 149): the sacred or religious Orient, where Christ was born and used to live, and the other Orient of the Arabs and the infidels. The first Orient was represented by the Holy Land, the birthplace of Christianity. The second Orient was seen only by contrast to the Christian West and whose geographical contours weren't exactly defined. Indeed, the early contacts with this mysterious Orient during the Crusades revealed the existence of another religion, Islam, which was usually associated with idolatry and paganism (Daniel 1960 : 393-487). Therefore, the necessity to know more about the Orient, its religion, cultures and geography grew more intense and those early scholars who were engrossed in this enterprise were generally scholars in Oriental

languages. Even though the term Orientalist was not yet to be used Said (1978 : 49), traces the origin of Orientalism back to the Church council of Vienna in 1312 during which the decision was taken to establish chairs in Arabic, Greek, Hebrew and Syriac at some renowned European universities, such as Oxford, Paris and Rome. As early as the 15th century in Italy and the 17th century in France, Arabic printing emerged and led to the publication of a vast number of works in Arabic, including the translations of works by Muslim scholars in the field of linguistics, medicine, optics and astronomy, among other disciplines (Foz 1998). One can say that at this particular time of Western European history, the interest in the study (and the translation) of the Orient was an established norm in academia, which placed translation itself as a central discipline vis-à-vis other disciplines in the polysystem.

In this respect, *La bibliothèque orientale* (1697), with which Galland was closely associated, is a case in point. Full of admiration for d'Herbelot, Galland wrote the preface to the *Bibliothèque orientale*. In this preface, Galland finds d'Herbelot's *Bibliothèque* "la nouvelle compréhension de l'Islam". He considers it to be the most profound study of all the works that preceded it even if it devotes a particular attention to "la doctrine perverse de Mahomet, qui a causé de si grands dommages au Christianisme" (Said 1994 : 64). This is an ideological position that must have appeased the preoccupations of the Church for two main reasons: it espouses the established ideological tendency— or the ideological norm— of the period that saw Islam as a "perverse doctrine". It also consolidates the strongly held belief in the threat posed by Islam, most likely because of the spread of this religion and its conquest of European territories, particularly when the conversion of Christians to Islam

during the Islamic conquests was still fresh in the mind of scholars and Church officials alike. In the same preface, Galland considers the *Bibliothèque orientale* a pleasant and useful work in so far as it attempted to form in the minds of its readers “a sufficiently ample idea of what it meant to know and study the orient, an idea that would both fill the mind and satisfy one’s great, previously conceived expectations” (Said 1978 : 65). Through a process of classifying and cataloguing the doctrine of Islam, d’Herbelot, as Galland points out, strengthens an already held belief. He confirms it and seals it under a definition that apparently suffers no ambiguity:

C’est le fameux imposteur Mahomet, Auteur et Fondateur d’une hérésie, qui a pris le nom de religion, que nous appelons Mahométane. Voyez le titre d’Eslam (Said 1978 : 65).

Through a textual comparison, we find that this strikes a chord with the shortcuts that Galland takes in his translation as far as his representation of Islam is concerned, a representation that demonstrates how Galland’s translation, his preface to the *Bibliothèque orientale* and d’Herbelot’s work itself complement each other within the cultural social discourse of the time.

By westernizing the Arabian tales in order to freeze them within a more familiar European context , Galland offered a representation of Islam that could be understood and accepted from the Christian points of reference as opposed to a distinct phenomenon in their own right. Consequently, the image of Islam that emerges out of the French tales is at best a religion subservient to Christianity or a distorted version of it and at worst a perverted religion with its prophet as an imposter. As such, Galland’s translation transcends

the limits of story-telling. It instrumentalizes the original text, the objective of which is to be found in the cultural and ideological context of the target culture. It advocates and consolidates the socio-cultural values of the recipient culture. Therefore, Galland's version of the Arabian tales fulfills the taste of a particular readership for exoticism in a cultural environment that was not yet ready to see its centuries-old stereotypes of Islam disrupted. In other words, two predominant norms, in the way Toury explains them, pervade Galland's translation: first, the clothing of the Arabian tales according to the prevailing literary canon so that even if they retain few touches of their original exoticism, *Les mille et une nuits* would not demarcate themselves from the 18th century fairy-tale tradition. Second, it follows an ideological norm that promotes an inferior representation of the *Other*, namely Islam. By aligning itself along these norms, through a systematic and selective process of omissions and adaptations, the translative operation becomes a confiscation of the original discourse whereby the latter is diverted for the realization of purposes within the target culture. Folkart, citing Brisset, defines this type of confiscation in the following terms:

Aux antipodes des traducteurs mimétiques, les praticiens de la traduction-confiscation n'envisagent le texte de départ que comme le véhicule, tout fait ou à aménager, de la vision du monde qu'ils cherchent à promouvoir (Folkart 1991 : 399).

By looking at the relationship between the translator and his society, Brisset (1996) examines how translation is ideologically regulated by having its corpus modified according to the social and political conditions of the period that produces a particular translation. Thus, Brisset proposes a "sociocritique" of translation, an approach which has a

high degree of relevance in so far as Galland's version of the Arabian tales is concerned, despite the translator's claim to faithfulness and authenticity.

CHAPTER THREE

BURTON'S THE ARABIAN NIGHTS

In the previous section, our analysis focused on Galland's translation and its socio-cultural role in 18th century France. Because Galland was considered an Orientalist, by virtue of his interest in Oriental cultures and languages, Arabic in particular, his translation of the Arabian tales has more often than not been regarded as an Orientalist work. Galland's work, as we have tried to show, was impregnated by stereotypes about the Orient that fed into the already existing body of knowledge and conveyed a distorted representation of this geographical part of the world. As an academic discipline, Orientalism is a production of the nineteenth century. This leads us, in this section, to examine the translation of the Arabian tales by Sir Richard Francis Burton, the 19th century British Orientalist, in order to demonstrate that, despite the span of time that separates the two translations, there are similarities between them, especially if we view them as part of a vast Orientalist project. We must stress, right from the outset, that the term 'project' should not be interpreted as denoting some kind of malignant conspiracy against the Orient. Galland and Burton were scholars imbued with a genuine interest in Oriental culture and their contribution to the field of Orientalism was inspired by a keen sense of scientific curiosity. If their translations of the Arabian tales are to be seen along a continuum of ideas about the Orient, it is because their works, whether this was intended by these two authors or not, have become part of a widespread discourse about the Orient. For this reason, our analysis of Burton's translation, particularly if related to his other works, can have more significance if we look at its relationship with other discourses about the Orient in the 19th

century. In this regard, part of this section will deal with the translation, particularly the notes that accompany it and, ultimately, relate it to the Orientalist intertext at the time.

Burton's translation, if compared to that of Galland, embodies a completely different approach. While Galland shows an inclination towards adaptation, Burton strives to render the text as accurately as one can possibly imagine: names of Arab characters are not only kept but they are used in a manner that even retains their Arabic pronunciation. In the preface to his translation, Burton clearly sets himself apart from previous translators, French and British alike, and explains in great detail the method he adopts:

My work claims to be a faithful copy of the great Eastern Saga-book, by preserving intact, not only the print, but even the mécanique [sic], the manner and the matter. Hence, however prosy and long drawn-out be the formula, it retains the scheme of the Nights because they are a prime feature of the original.

(p. xxviii)

Aware that such a technique may not be thoroughly fruitful, however, Burton adds:

Moreover, holding that the translator's glory is to add something to his native tongue, while avoiding the hideous hag-like nakedness of Torrens and the bald literalism of Lane, I have carefully Englished the picturesque turns and novel expressions of the original in all their outlandishness ... These, like many in Rabelais, are mere barbarisms unless generally adopted; in which case they become civilized and common currency. (p. xxix)

Two key notions in Burton's translation emerge: first, translation as a contribution to one's native tongue and, secondly, *Englishizing* whatever is considered by Burton barbaric and outlandish, although Burton, unfortunately, does not tell the reader exactly what falls into his category of barbarism and outlandishness. It is the first notion which is of interest to us, that is the capacity of translation to add to the receptor culture.¹⁷ By analyzing Burton's translation, it turns out that it works in two almost contradictory directions. The translated text follows in a shadow-like manner the original text but the copious explanatory notes that accompany the text belong to a cultural register that is far from the authenticity that Burton made his hobbyhorse in his denigration of other translations, including Galland's.

As far as the 'manner' is concerned, Burton's style is far from reflecting the down-to-earth simplicity that characterizes the diction of the Arabian tales. Burton seems to have neglected the very function of the tales, which was to convey the tales orally to an audience of listeners primarily. What Burton offered his readers was a text shrouded in archaic English and an affected style reminiscent of the kind of English prevalent before the advent of fiction in the English literary scene. Even English prose writers before Burton like Defoe, Fielding, and Richardson, did not venture to use archaisms in their fiction but preferred to embrace the language of their time. Claiming that he preserved the 'manner' of the Arabian tales is a declaration that a reader of Burton's translation will find hard to come to terms with. What Burton did was to freeze the tales in a monolithic language that reflects neither their colloquial nature nor the linguistic disparities existing within the Arabic text

¹⁷ This is a methodology very much in the spirit of German romanticism, as Schleiermacher, for example, exposed it in his well-known conference in 1813. We find it also in the works of Benjamin and later on in the works of Meschonnic (1973, 1999) and Berman (1984, 1991)

itself. Whether it be prose or poetry, Burton's translation articulates the same monotonous tone that puts Burton's claim to accuracy and fidelity at stake. Let us take a close look at the sometimes ostentatiously verbose texture of Burton's translation. The following is a passage from the introduction to the tales:

And afterwards Verily the works and words of those gone before us have become instances and examples to men of our modern day, that folk may view what admonishing chances befell other folk and may therefrom take warning; and that they may peruse the annals of antique peoples and that hath betided them, and be thereby ruled and restrained:- Praise, therefore to Him who hath made histories of the Past an admonition unto the Present! Now of such instances are the tales called "A Thousand and a Night", together with their far-famed legends and wonders. (p. 3)

Whoever the Arabic originator or originators of the Arab tales were, they were incomparably modest in their endeavour, for the Arabic text is, according to critics and readers of the Arabian tales, characterized by an extraordinary simplicity.

As to the 'matter' of the tales, it is undoubtedly the extensive explanatory notes that represent Burton's focal point. Stretching over a hundred pages, they are indisputably a rich reservoir of knowledge about Arabic language and Eastern culture. With a curiosity that only a devoted ethnographer is capable of, Burton does not leave anything that touches directly or indirectly what he loosely calls the Orient without a comment. The particular attention he reserves for the etymology of words shows a linguistic competence that leaves many envious. The following example is but a specimen of Burton's tendency to encompass any word that draws his attention with as much information as he could

possibly gather. Commenting on the Arabic word "*wazir*" (which Galland translated as "vizier"), Burton provides the following explanation:

Galland writes "Vizier", a wretched frenchification of a mincing Turkish mispronunciation; Torrens, "wuzeer" (Anglo-Indian and Gilchristian"; Lane, "Wezeer"; (Egyptian or rather Cairene); Payne, "Vizier", according to his system; Burckhardt (Proverbs), "Vizir"; and Mr. Keith-Faconer, "Vizir". The root is popularly supposed to be "wizir" (burden) and the meaning Minister; Wazir al-Wuzara being "Premier". In the Koran (chap. xx, 30) Moses says, "Give me a Wazir from my family, Harun (Aaron) my brother." Sale, followed by the excellent version of the Rev. J.M. Rodwell, translates a "Counsellor", and explains by "One who has the chief administration of affairs under a prince." But both learned Koranists learnt their Orientalism in London, and like such students generally, fail only upon the easiest points, familiar to all old dwellers in the East. (p. 732).

This note, and other lengthier comments, generally shows Burton's capacity to not only provide comparisons to other translations but also his full acquaintance with the culture he studies. Nevertheless, Burton, on many occasions, cannot resist the temptation of falling into sensationalizing and caricature, which significantly mars the quality of his translation and makes it difficult for us to reconcile his extensive knowledge of the Orient with generalizations that tend to eschew the reality of Eastern life and culture. Had these generalizations emanated from a person not familiar with the East, one could have attributed them to sheer ignorance or a difficulty to understand an alien culture. Coming from a person of Burton's intelligence, depth of knowledge and first-hand experience of Eastern life and culture, these views take on a new value that is inextricably tied to the dominant Orientalist discourse and representations of his time.

To shed some light on the relationship between Burton's views of the Orient as expressed in his notes and Orientalist discourse, we have selected a number of notes that revolve around the notion of slavery, sexuality, ideology and Islam. We should not, however, look at these notions as being separate from each other. As we shall see, these notions merge so much into each other that an analysis of Burton's notes will have to involve them all.

An uncivilized Orient

In the Arabian tales, black slaves are part of a wide spectrum of characters that inhabit the stories. By virtue of their inferior social status, slaves are shown to have no purpose in life but to be subservient to their masters or to plot against them. Numerous are the examples where slaves are depicted scheming the most treacherous plans against their masters and committing acts of adultery with their masters' wives. Despite the enormity of this crime from an Islamic standpoint, the worst attribute used to describe a slave in the original tales is that of 'black'. Here is what we read in the Arabic text when King Shahzaman catches his wife, red handed, in amorous love-making with one of his slaves:

At midnight, he [King Shahzaman] remembered something he forgot in his palace. He went back, entered his palace and found his wife lying in his own bed embracing a black slave. (p. 9) (my translation)

Burton's translation faithfully reflects the incident but portrays the slave in this fashion:

But when the night was half spent he bethought him that he had forgotten in his palace somewhat which he should have brought with him, so he returned privily and entered his apartments, where he found the Queen, his wife, asleep on his own carpet-bed, embracing with both arms *a black cook of loathsome aspect and foul with kitchen grease and grime*. (p. 5) (my emphasis)

As we shall see later on, Burton's aversion to Blacks and his prejudicial treatment of them is commonplace in his translation and in his other works as well. Burton documents all practices of sexual perversion supposedly prevalent in this part of the world. His comments on Eastern sexuality, however, amount to a pornographic fixation on his subjects. The following short passage from his translation of the tale *King Shahrayar and His Brother* illustrates this point:

[...] and then sprang with a drop-leap from one of the trees a big slobbering blackamoor with rolling eyes which showed the whites, a truly hideous sight. (p.7)

Commenting on this 'truly hideous sight', Burton offers the reader a profuse description of black anatomy that is essentialist, unfounded and cannot be accepted uncritically. The note goes as follows:

Debauched women prefer Negroes on account of the size of their parts. I measured one man in Somali-Land who, quite quiescent, numbered nearly six inches. This is a characteristic of the Negro race and of African animals; e.g. the horse; whereas the pure Arab, man and beast, is below the average of Europe; one of the best

proofs by the bye, that the Egyptian is not an Asiatic, but a Negro partially white-washed. Moreover, the imposing parts do not increase proportionally during erection; consequently, the "deed of kind" takes a much longer time and adds greatly to the woman's enjoyment. In my time, no honest Hindi Moslem would take his women-folk to Zanzibar on account of the huge attractions and enormous temptations there and thereby offered to them. Upon the subject of *Imsak* = retention of semen and "prolongation of pleasure", I shall find it necessary to say more. (p. 732)

In addition to the prevalent racial prejudice that Burton nourishes towards the Black race (notice the frequency of the derogatory word 'negro' in his note), his biological classification of other races, especially when combined with the classification of animals, denotes the sub-human criteria that he ascribes to other races, especially the black race. Implicitly, too, Burton, through the use of the expression 'his women-folk' and through the note in general, attempts to impart the idea that polygamy and Eastern women's weakness in face of sexual temptation is a general feature of Muslim society. Amazingly enough, Burton laboriously indulges in the minutiae of Eastern sexuality with the assurance of a self-professed scientist who relies only upon his own experiences of the Orient to come up with assumptions that he holds for well-grounded truths on Eastern reality. Burton seems to enjoy the vantage-point that his close familiarity with Eastern life has offered him, a vantage-point that he believes gives his knowledge of the orient superiority over other Orientalist works. "The accidents of my life", he said, "it may be said without undue presumption, my long dealings with Arabs and other Mahommedans, and my familiarity not only with their idiom but with their turn of thought, and with that racial individuality which baffles description, have given me certain advantages over the average student,

however deeply he may have studied.” (p. xxxii). Armed with this practical knowledge of the East, Burton produces accounts that incorporate everything . Black slaves’ sexual anatomy, eunuchs’ castration and sexual deviations are among the topics which he relishes the most and the reader of his translation is offered an explicitly crude taste of Burton’s perceptions of Eastern sexuality and black slavery. In the context of sexual practices in particular, Burton remains faithful to his subject of predilection and the translation of the *Kama Sutra* and the report he wrote on Karachi brothels all attest to his profound interest in sexuality, obscene though it may have appeared to some Victorian readers. Commenting on the obscenity of Burton’s indulgence in Eastern sexuality, Kabbani analyzes his involvement with pornography. In Burton’s notes, she observes, “what the narrator felt unable to say about European women, he could unabashedly say about Eastern ones. They were there for his articulation of sex. (1994 : 5-6)

Although Burton fills pages with derogatory descriptions of black slaves or “the skunks of the human race (p.119), as he prefers to call African blacks, in order to deprive them of any human attribute, he does not credit slavery, as a social practice, with any attention that may satisfy his readers’ curiosity vis-à-vis a phenomenon so degrading. Instead, we are led to believe that slavery, as far as the East is concerned, is in the nature of things. It seems paradoxical that while Burton devotes his unrelenting mind to examining the inferior biology of slaves and their ‘loathsome’ appearance, he does not attempt to understand and analyze their condition of slavery. One may then venture a possible interpretation with regard to Burton’s silence on slavery and, especially on blacks as the victims of this inhuman practice. Burton seemingly considers slavery the natural condition

of a class of people whose only purpose for existing was to be mastered. Any reflection or indictment of slavery would also open the door on Western practice of slavery — including Burton's own society — which was then taken for granted and coherent with the prevalent view on classes and races.

As far as slavery is concerned, Islam, as Burton may have known, took a strong position against slavery, which was practiced on a grand scale among Arab tribes before the advent of Islam. Burton, who never spares an effort to quote from the *Qur'an* in order to substantiate his ideas about Islamic society, must have come across the following verse that not only admonishes people against slavery but considers the freeing of slaves an act of faith:

It is not piety that you turn your faces towards East and West (in prayers), but piety is the quality of the one who believes in Allah, the prophets and gives his wealth, in spite of love for it, to the kinsfolk, to the orphans, and the poor and the wayfarer, and to those who ask, and to set slaves free. (Verse 2 : 177)

Indeed, the history of Islam is punctuated with examples of slaves who rallied to the message of Prophet Mohammed, whom they saw as a liberator, and the message he advocated as their way of salvation from tyranny and bondage. If some Muslims, especially those who enjoyed the advantages that their high social status conferred upon them, resisted the message of freedom, it is because the new call for an egalitarian society shattered the centuries-long privileges of Arab oligarchy. Furthermore, the egalitarian system that Islam put into place confirmed the dignity of the slave as a human being by

acting upon the rules that governed human relationships (Mernissi 1992 : 189). In this respect, Islam not only prohibited the forced placement of female slaves into prostitution but even encouraged Muslims to marry them and, consequently, to grant them the right of inheritance.

While black slaves are portrayed as deceitful and treacherous characters in some of the Arabic tales, Burton attributes deceit and treachery to some unfathomable biological make-up. Also, by occulting the social and historical condition of black slaves, Burtons' notes sound tendentious, particularly when his treatment of black slaves is limited to simplistic stereotypes and a ludicrous and exaggerated description of their body parts. However, Burton's descriptions and classifications fit naturally into the scientific and social interdiscourse of the Victorian era. Such descriptions could be found extensively in the annals of the learned society and in the scientific works of that time. This interdiscourse, in reality, was not limited to Europe but swept all across the Western world. For example, communications by La société française d'anthropologie or correspondences from European and American naturalists throughout the 19th century all attest to this fact (Khouri 1990).

Another feature of Burton's notes is their propensity towards timelessness. If it is true that the Arabic tales were compiled over a long stretch of time, there is no justification on the part of the translator to ascribe no particular time reference to the assumptions he makes. It is easy to detect exaggerated temporal latitude, on the part of Burton, vis-à-vis some aspects of Easterners' relationships with each other, which makes us question some

of the Eastern expertise that Burton takes so much pride in. The following passage from the *Tale of the Ensorcelled Prince* and the note that comments on it illustrates this aspect. Burton translates this passage in this manner:

In my wrath I cried: - O thou foulest of harlots and filthiest of
whores ever fluttered by Negro slaves who are hired to have at thee.
(p. 41)

In addition to his customary degradation to anything related to blacks, Burton adds the following translation:

The words are the very lowest and coarsest; but the scene is true to
Arab life. (p. 740)

Without substantiating his views with anything that may give his note some degree of truthfulness, Burton astonishes the reader not only by the vagueness of his assumption but also by its ambiguity. How are we to interpret Burton's claim that the scene is true to Arab life? Is it the scene of adultery itself, in which case Burton epitomizes Arabs, or Arab wives to be precise, as the champions of adultery? Or is it the insulting words proffered by the prince to his deceitful wife true to Arab life, in which case, too, Arabs' marital lives become an arena of conflicts whereby husbands and wives settle issues of adultery via the utterance of the "lowest and coarsest words", to use Burton's own words? Or is it that both pictures are implied? Unfortunately, Burton provides no answer. All he does is to freeze his assumption in a timeless zone that bewilders the critical reader. On the assumption that Arab life is the same from the Atlantic to the Arab Peninsula, what particular period in the

history of Arab life is Burton referring to? Is it the Arab life that he, as a Victorian, has witnessed, or is it the Arab life of the story, which, as everyone knows, has no time specificity due to the anonymous nature and antedecence of the tales. In fact, Burton's note generates more questions than it provides answers. By removing any historicity from his views, Burton implicitly expects his (uncritical) reader to hold his views as general truths about the Orient. Unlike the West where time plays an important part in people's lives, timelessness seems to be a distinctive feature of the Orient. The overall picture of the Orient that seems to emerge from Burton's comment is that of a society incapable of evolution and left to its own animal instincts.

The translator's voice or the voice of empire?

Burton devotes a considerable number of notes to the treatment of various aspects of Islamic faith and practices. Quite often, his comments denote a familiarity with Islamic religion in general. On many other occasions, however, Burton's inclination towards generalizations and the distortion of reality discredits his claim to truth. If it is commonly agreed that notes are used in order to ascertain a particular point and to give force to the argument being presented, some of the notes that Burton displays frequently shape the reader's understanding in one particular slanted direction. Burton's treatment of corporal punishment illustrates this very point and shows how subjective Burton is despite the seriousness of the issue. The following passage from the translation of *The Tale of the*

Portress as well as the note meant to make it explicit for Western readers only veil it in more mystery and simplistic caricature:

[...]Then he bade the slaves drag me along the ground and lay me out at full length, after stripping me of all my clothes, and when the slaves had so sat upon me that I could not move, he fetched in a rod of quince-tree and came down with it upon my body, and continued beating me on the back and sides till I lost consciousness from excess of pain, and I despaired of life. (p.120)

"Inspired" by this passage, Burton endeavours to provide information on corporal punishment and comes up with the following note:

When a woman is bastinadoed *in the East* they leave her some portion of dress and pour over her sundry buckets of water for a delicate consideration. When the hands are beaten they are passed through holes in the curtain separating the sufferer from mankind, and made fast a "falakah" or pole. (p. 758) (my emphasis)

The reader is left perplexed at the vagueness of Burton's decontextualized comments about an East that has no geographical limits. Moreover, by conveying this information in a present-tense based syntax, Burton hopes to present Eastern cruelty towards women in a timeless and unchanging picture. It is certainly true, in this context, that corporal punishment was implemented in Islam as a penalizing measure against adulterers, men and women alike, under strict conditions attesting to the occurrence of the

adultery.¹⁸ Despite his knowledge of Islam, Burton does not seem to draw from the learning he received from the Muslim scholars he had the chance to be acquainted with in order to present an objective portrayal of reality. Instead, he conveys a subjective vision without a proper grounding in the real identity of the region and he projects a fragmented and static image of a violent and barbaric Orient.

Another striking feature of some of Burton's notes is their detachment of the issue they are supposed to shed light on. Instead of enlightening the reader with information that enhances the understanding of the cultural or religious aspects of the tales, Burton uses some of the incidents in the story as a springboard to other topics that have no bearing on the original text. Here again, the topics that Burton introduces in his notes are impregnated with his personal perception. Such an example of the translator's voice (Hermans 1995) can be found in a note about a passage in *The Tale of Nur al-Din and His Son Badr al Din Hassan*. Although the story unfolds in a very simple way that does not require an intellectual effort from the reader, Burton adds a note, which ends with the question ("What is truth?"). Burton's personal reflection obfuscates any meaning that the reader might assign to the tale in question. In other words, while the incident of the story is extremely banal, Burton's comment is ostentatiously out of place. The passage in the translation runs as follows:

Whereupon the wazir said to him, "know, my son, that truth hath shown it soothfast and the concealed hath been revealed!" (p. 172)

¹⁸ One needs to stress here that the public lashing of women reported by the media in some parts of the Muslim world does not reflect the teaching of Islam. It is true that incidents of this kind, though isolated, serve to convey an image of a violent religion and, unfortunately, strengthen already deep-rooted stereotypes.

Burton's comment on the above excerpt amounts more to a philosophical speculation than to an explanatory statement:

A popular phrase, derived from the Koranic "Truth is come, and falsehood is vanished: for falsehood is of short continuance." (Chap. Xvii). It is an equivalent of our adaptation from 1 Esdras iv. 41, "Magna est veritas et prævalebit." But the great question still remains, What is Truth? (p. 770)

The relationship between the *Qur'anic* verse that Burton refers to in his note and the translated passage is certainly accurate. The meaning of truth in the tale is quite explicit and the meaning in the *Qur'anic* context, although different, is explicit, too. It is true that in Arabic the generic meaning of 'truth' is the word '*haq*', which Burton knew perfectly well. Nevertheless, had Burton made a genuine analogy between the tale and the *Qur'anic* context, he would have found out that the meaning of the Arabic word '*haq*' is not truth but justice. Therefore, the simple but profound message conveyed by both the tale and the *Qur'anic* verse is the universally held belief in the prevalence of justice over treachery and injustice. This straightforward interpretation leaves hardly any room for philosophical questions, however legitimate in essence. Interestingly, however, the addition points to the translator's own voice — an aspect of translation which, until recently, has been vastly neglected (Hermans 1995; Folkart 1991).

In addition to the treatment of elements related to Islam and the Orient in general, Burton's notes articulate an ideological discourse through which not only the voice of the

translator but also the voice of the British Empire can be discerned. Throughout his long professional career, Burton was a soldier and a secret agent in the British army, a traveler commissioned by the Royal Geographical Society, a representative of the East India Company and finally a consul for the Foreign Office. While Burton was bitterly critical of Victorian society and rebellious in nature, his views on the Orient echo an ideological discourse that was very much in harmony with the spirit of 19th century imperialism. Burton was traveling and writing at a time when Great Britain had emerged as the most industrialized economy and mightiest naval power in the entire history of the world, with many colonies scattered over the continents as far as its ships could reach. Significantly enough, all the lands in Africa and Asia that travelers like Burton set foot on had become imperial territories. This has led many critics of Orientalism to establish a direct link between travels and colonial expansion (Said 1978 : 343).

In this context, Burton's writings, prior to the translation of *The Arabian Tales*, provided a wealth of information on the regions of the world he discovered. Whereas Burton sought to satisfy a personal thirst for knowledge, he could hardly detach himself from the colonial power of which he was the subject. In *The Pilgrimage to Al-Medinah and Meccah* (1855), an essay that established his reputation as a distinguished Orientalist, Burton documents his trip to the Muslim Holy Lands with precise descriptions of places untrodden by Europeans before him. In his expeditions, Burton's close observations could not escape the authority of the power he was representing. Commenting on the pilgrimage to Mecca, the multitudes of pilgrims gathered from around the world in the vicinity of the *Ka'aba* did not spark any religious feeling in Burton. The gathering only triggered a

reflection on the vastness of the British Empire and the subjects that come under its dominion. Describing the mountain of Arafat in Mecca and the congregations of pilgrims around it, Burton offers the following comment:

It was a mountain spur of about a hundred and fifty feet in height, presenting an artificial appearance from the wall encircling it and the terrace on its slope, from which the imam delivers a sermon before the departure of his congregation for Meccah. His auditors were, indeed, numerous, their tents being scattered over two or three miles of the country. A great number of their inmates were *fellow-subjects of ours from India*. I surprised some of my Mecca friends by informing them that Queen Victoria numbers among twenty millions of Mahommedans among *her* subjects (McLynn 1990 : 33). (my emphasis)

The importance of this passage resides in the fact that Burton did not perceive Indians or Africans as capable of emancipation and the only existence they could aspire to was that of subjects of Queen Victoria. Similarly, even if he is convinced enough to embrace their religion, Burton perceives Muslims in the same fashion. The passage is also important in so far as it shows the same perception on the part of Burton with regard to Easterners, Arabs in particular, and their relationship with the British Empire. In other words, although a span of thirty years separates *The Pilgrimage to Al-Medinah and Meccah* and the translation of *The Arabian Nights*, Burton remained convinced of Great Britain's supremacy. The following passage from Burton's translation, and particularly the note that serves to comment it, shows how, intertextually, Burton's writings function within a

master-subject ideological framework. The passage in question is from *The Tale of the Three Apples*.

The Caliph looked at the old man and the young man and asked, "Which of you killed the girl?" The young man replied, "no one slew her save I," and the old man answered, "Indeed none killed her but myself." Then said the caliph to Ja'afar, "Take the twain and hang them both," but Ja'afar rejoined, "Since one of them was the murderer, to hang the other were injustice." (p. 127)

Acting as advisor to the Caliph, Ja'afar wants to prevent him from committing an act of injustice by killing the two men when only one is a criminal. Here is Burton's comment on the notion of '*zulm*', or injustice in Arabic, substantiated by a carefully selected *hadith* or saying of Prophet Mohammed:

Arab. "*zulm*", the deadliest of monarch's sins. One of the sayings of Mohammed, popularly quoted, is, "Kingdom endureth not with kufr or infidelity (i.e. without accepting Al-Islam) but endureth not with *zulm* or injustice." Hence the good Moslem will not complain of the rule of Kafirs or unbelievers, like the *English* (my emphasis), so long as they rule him righteously and according to his own law. (p. 759)

For a Western reader unaware of Islamic tradition the backing of imperial power can never find a better justification than a saying attributed to the most cherished and respected person in Islam, i.e. the Prophet himself. Here, Burton unequivocally advocates the British self-decreed right to rule other people, especially when this rule is supposedly

sanctioned by the divine authority of the people to be ruled. The least that can be said about Burton's statement is that it takes a tendentious short-cut to legitimize British colonial expansion. Moreover, the Prophet's saying that Burton brings forward to show Muslim's support of foreign rule, particularly British, as long as it is done in accordance with the religious laws of the conquered people, is thrown to the reader in an off-hand way, without a reliable source that corroborates the Prophet's saying. In almost all his notes, Burton has accustomed his reader to a critical approach and an inquisitive mind that leave nothing to chance. His legitimization of British colonial rule by dint of a discourse inherent to the would-be ruled, not to the ruler, needs particular attention as it demonstrates either a lack of knowledge with respect to what is known in Islam as the *Tradition* (the body of knowledge that embodies the Prophet's sayings and deeds throughout his lifetime) or a deliberate avoidance of the context of the saying that Burton refers to. What needs to be stressed here is that Muslim scholars have deployed an enormous effort in order to compile, authenticate and classify the Prophet's sayings into true or weak *hadiths*. The meticulous nature of this enterprise led to the establishment of a unique discipline known in Islamic studies as 'the science of men', which looks at the historical chain of references related to the Prophet's sayings in order to validate or invalidate their authenticity. This historical investigation is referred to as '*Isnad*' in the science of *hadiths*. Therefore, what Burton purports to use as the Prophet's saying that justifies the rule of a non-Muslim or even an unbeliever over Muslims is flawed with a flagrant contradiction. Nowhere in Islamic classical scholarship do we find a saying or even an interpretation of it that upholds Burton's conclusion. On the contrary, there are countless authentic sayings that actually call for Muslims to stand against

any Muslim ruler who veers off the path of Islam¹⁹. The saying that Burton uses stresses the incompatibility of an unjust rule with Islam in general, even if injustice emanates from Muslim leadership. To relate Muslims' rejection of injustice to an acceptance of a just British rule, however, is a hasty conclusion that has been refuted historically. It is a matter of fact that the history of Islam has been marked by bloody struggles and rebellions against rulers or political regimes that failed to rule by the Holy Book²⁰. On these grounds, Burton's tendency to compound colonial rule with colonial justice is a difficult equation that only Burton may have been able to decipher. Yet, Burton's subtle but ardent enthusiasm for Britain's strengthening of its colonial supremacy as illustrated in the note referred to earlier is not an isolated case. Indeed, Burton's preface to his translation suffers no ambiguity as to the real motives of Orientalist scholarship and dispels any doubt with regard to the intertwined relationship between "translation" and empire. This is what Burton has to say in the concluding pages of his preface:

Apparently England is ever forgetting that she is at present the greatest Mohammedan empire in the world. Of late years she has systematically neglected Arabism and, indeed, actively discouraged it in examinations for the Indian Civil Service, where it is incomparably more valuable than Greek and Latin . . . Now Moslems are not to be ruled by raw youths who should be at school and college instead of holding positions of trust and emolument. He who would deal with them successfully must be, firstly, honest and

¹⁹ In the classical compilation of the Prophet's sayings by Imam Abu Al-Hussein Al-Nisabury and in other authoritative compilations, the well-known saying "No obedience to a created man who disobeys the creator" is often quoted to reject the idea of a Muslim being ruled by a non-Muslim. (Sahih Muslim 2000).

²⁰ In modern times, the Islamic revolution in Iran and the armed rebellions against secular pro-Western governments in Algeria, Egypt and Saudi-Arabia are an indication of the deep-rooted feeling about the necessity to restore an Islamic system of governance.

truthful and, secondly familiar with and favorably inclined to their manners and customs if not to their law and religion. We may, perhaps, find it hard to restore to England those pristine virtues, that tone and temper, which made her what she is; but at any rate we (myself and a host of others) can offer the means of dispelling her ignorance concerning the Eastern races with whom she is continually in contact. (p. xxxvi).

As the comment above clearly shows, Burton, despite his admiration and respect for Eastern culture, does not put into question British colonial rule and does not seem to envisage the possibility for Easterners to govern themselves.

Distancing himself from other translators, especially Galland, Burton sought to render the Arabic text as accurately as he possibly could but used the technique of annotations as a *metatext* to promote an ideological discourse that turned a piece of fiction into history while at the same time denying the Orientals their real history through a systematic pattern of generalizations and distortions. As we have attempted to show with respect to Galland's translation, Burton's, similarly, has to be viewed within the overall cultural background of its production. Idiosyncratic, rebellious and anti-conformist though he may have been, Burton's voice merges into that of the empire and his individuality is reduced to the role of what Said calls "an imperial scribe". (1978 : 197)

As far as the effacement of the author, or the translator for that matter, for the service of the higher purposes of ideology or empire, Foucault's reflection on authorship (Faubion 1984 : 101-120) helps us understand the complex relationship between the author/translator and the ideology within which he functions. Influenced by Althusser

(1970), Foucault's poststructuralist view of authorship runs counter to the traditional conception of the relation between the writer and his work. Foucault sees this relationship as occurring between language and subjects. In this context, both author/translator and reader are "interpellated as subjects" within a textual ideology. This led Foucault to announce the "death" of the author, for what matters is not so much what the writer/translator has to say by virtue of his creative or translating power. What matters is the function that the (translated) text has within the dominant ideology. In his reflection on authorship, Foucault uses a statement from Samuel Beckett, "What matter who's speaking?" to foreground his view that it is not the author who plays a central role but it is the *oeuvre* that makes the author or "interpellates" him or her as an author. For our own context, Beckett's statement could be changed into "What matter who's translating?" in so far as Burton's translation of *The Arabian tales*, too, can be seen as one element of a discursive panoply of texts that has forged and developed Orientalism into a formidable cultural, political and intellectual system. On these grounds the translation of *The Arabian Tales* is not limited to the transfer of some anonymous compilation of stories belonging to remote Eastern lore. The translated text becomes the expression of a discourse (or an ideology) that, through a cumulative effect, forms a fixed and authoritative knowledge of a certain area, in our context the Orient. Part of the knowledge that Orientalist travelers contributed to Orientalist thought was triggered by a personal zeal and a romantic enthusiasm for the pristine exoticism that images of the distant Orient produced in their consciousness. Disinterested, ideologically speaking that is, these travelers succumbed to the beauty of the East and, despite their will at times, discovered Islam and inherited a unique literary tradition. (Berty 2001 : 26) This, however, does not preclude the fact that a

very substantial amount of knowledge of the Orient has unfortunately been instrumentalized in order to consolidate the hegemony of imperial power over the East. As far as our study is concerned, this knowledge of the Orient encapsulated a variety of disciplines and cultural practices, translation being not the least of them.

CONCLUSION

Could there be a connection between the “Orientalist” translations of the Arabian tales and the invasion of Iraq? At first glance, the question sounds incongruous and perhaps far-fetched. How is it possible to relate an anonymous compilation of tales as ancient as history itself, and what is more, fictional, with a present-day tragedy with regional and international repercussions? The first common ground between the two is the setting itself. Baghdad, the capital of the Muslim caliphate for many centuries and the capital of modern day Iraq provides the setting for a considerable number of tales and the presence of the caliph, Harun Al-Rasheed, as a key figure gives more prominence to this relationship. The second common denominator is that the Arabian tales, in their original and translated forms, are first and foremost a discourse. Likewise, the build-up to the war and the subsequent invasion of Iraq was triggered by a discourse or a multiplicity of discourses, to be more exact. Most importantly, the third common feature between the two is the high amount of fiction that envelops these discourses. The Arabian tales, at least for Orientals, have always been a fictional compilation of stories and Orientals’ interaction with them has always been based upon this fact. The war in Iraq, too, and the motives that drove to it have turned out to be fiction. Through the analogy which we are trying to establish between the translation of the Arabian tales, in their French and English versions, and the war unilaterally waged by an imperial power on an Eastern country, we can see that the war has been a tragic but a logical consequence of a historical accumulation of discourse that nourished and strengthened the cleavage between the West and the East or

the “other”. More importantly, we attempted to show how translation can be made to transcend its primary function of language transfer in order to produce a system of representations that merge into other modes of expression on otherness in the target culture.

The culture-oriented approach to translation is akin to *New Historicism* in literary theory. It helps us understand the relationship between the translated text and the socio-historical context in which the translated text is produced. A literary text, in its original or translated form, is a product of a given historical period written or translated by an author who is himself/herself caught in his/her own historicity. Therefore, if we consider the (translated) text as a verbal icon only, we fail to locate the *ideologemes* that sustain it (e.g. cruelty, despotism, sensuality as descriptive features of the Orient).

New Historicists, influenced by Foucault, conceive of history as a succession of *épistèmes* or structures of thought that shape everyone within a specific culture (Myers 1988 : 27-36). On that basis, New Historicism re-positions the (translated) text within other discourses, literary and non-literary, in a particular historical period. More importantly, far from looking at the (translated) text as a reflection of the age that produces it, New Historicism looks at the ways literature, even in its translated forms, *shape* (my emphasis) our understanding of human experience. In this light, we have seen that Galland and Burton’s translations do not only reflect their own time but they provide an ideological construct of the Orient.

Galland and Burton's translations, each in their own way, are part of the prevailing worldview of their respective culture. The system of representations which exists in the original culture is not restituted without significant modifications. In both cases, the translative operation is coherent with the expectations of the target culture, its "horizon of expectations" (Jauss 1978) or the prevailing "order of discourse" (Foucault 1971).

In that respect, it is important to note that far from being sporadic, the translations shifts in question are *systemic* and tend to apply to aspects of Oriental culture that have always generated a lot of misconceptions, polemical debates and prejudices. What impels us to equate the French and the English translations under study is their cultivation of stereotypes and oversimplifications about Eastern culture, and about Islam in particular. Our analysis shows that they are indeed part of Orientalist scholarship, which, as Said has demonstrated, contributed in shaping an image of the Orient that provided Western powers with the academic justification on which to base their hegemony

Today, even though the term Orientalism, perceived to have an imperialist flavour to it, has been replaced by the more politically correct term of 'area studies', the same misconceptions and prejudices about Islam and Arabs linger on tenaciously in the Western collective consciousness. Today, Western media, in the form of television, newspapers, magazines and the like, are the principal conveyors of information. Substantial distortions of Islam and Arab culture most often occur through these channels of communication. The new postulate, Islam's irrationality, fanaticism and incompatibility with modernity, is a mere reformulation of the old one. These new forms of Orientalist

discourse help shape the foreign policy of imperial powers and provide the academic and moral justification to invade other Eastern countries, the last of which has been Iraq. It is not surprising that Bernard Lewis, the leading Orientalist today, who is hailed as the “world’s foremost Islamic scholar” by *the Wall Street Journal* or even as “the doyen of Middle Eastern Studies” by *The New York Times*, in the path of his Orientalist predecessors Lamartine and Burton, advocates the necessity of direct imperial involvement in the Muslim East (Lewis 2004 : 378). In fact, one of the leading behind-the-scenes advisors to the White House on Islamic and Middle-Eastern affairs, Lewis is considered the guiding hand behind the ongoing US neoconservative drive for regime change in Iraq and the re-mapping of the Middle-East²¹. Now to relate the fiction of the Arabian tales with reality, it is worth noting that American soldiers in Iraq call the Iraqis they encounter by the name of *Ali Baba*, a confirmation of the persistence of the Oriental myth in Western consciousness, a confirmation so strong that the fiction of the tales imposes itself on the reality on the ground. Finally, it is not surprising, either, that translators are being killed by Iraqis resisting the American Occupation, as if the Iraqi Resistance, in its own peculiar way, has grasped the intricate relationship between translation and empire.

²¹ This is how Lewis, at least in the Muslim world, is generally perceived. The same perception is articulated, albeit not with the same force, in the West. See Thompson and Steinberg 2001.

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APPENDIX

الف ليلة وليلة

المجلد الأول



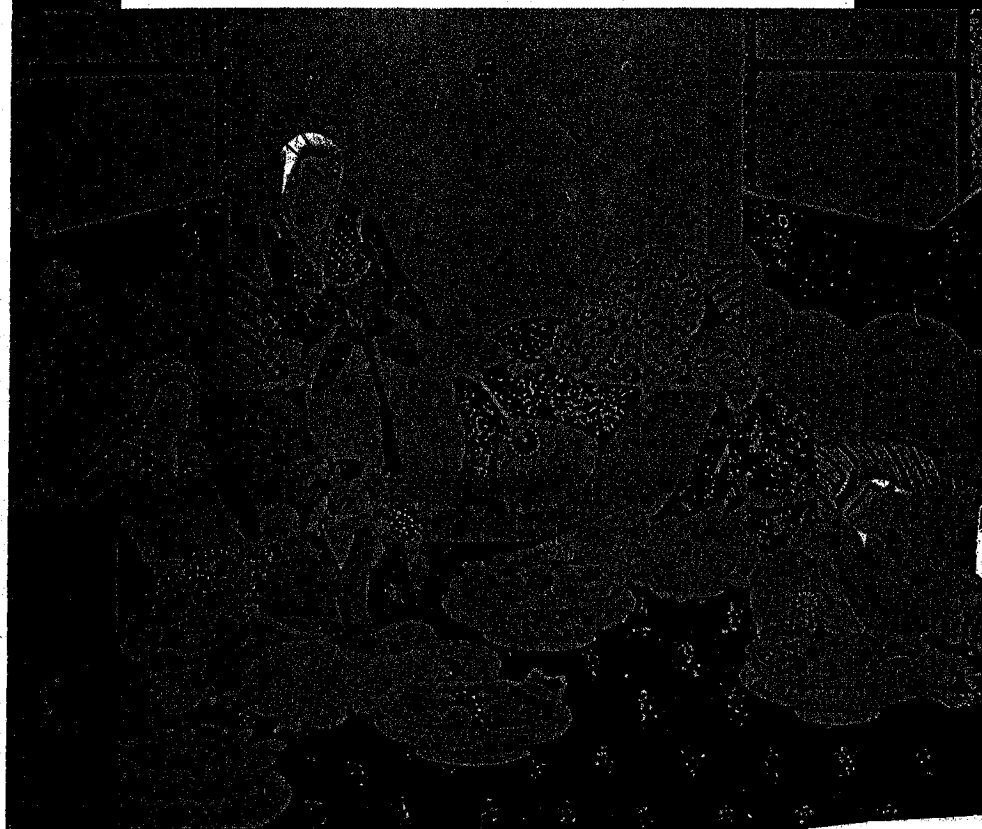
Les Mille et Une Nuits

CONTES ARABES
TRADUITS PAR ANTOINE GALLAND



"[A] book... that captivates in childhood, and
still delights in age." —ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON

THE ARABIAN NIGHTS
TALES FROM
A THOUSAND AND ONE NIGHTS



Translated, with a Preface and Notes, by
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