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ANTOINE GALLAND'S TRANSLATION OF THE *ARABIAN NIGHTS*

ACCORDING TO CHAUVIN'S most complete bibliography of *Les Mille et Une Nuits*, all twelve volumes of Galland's French translation of the work had made their appearance between 1704 and 1717[1]. The first six volumes, which had appeared in 1704, suddenly made their appearance (in English) under the title of *Arabian Nights Entertainments*[2], a title which has since stuck to the English version of the *Nights* and has even been translated into Arabic for the Calcutta edition of 1839-1842. Il would seem that the first issue of this *Arabian Nights Entertainments* had been well known between 1708 and 1709. For in 1709, *The Golden Spy*, a book ascribed to Charles Gildon, had made its appearance, and in the dedication, its author, who was addressing Jonathan Swift, makes the remark : "The Arabian and Turkish Tales were owing to your Tale of a Tub"[3]. Now, *The Golden Spy*, is a collection of stories of the type of *The adventures of a guinea*. It is also

> A Political Journal of the British Nights Entertainments of War and Peace, and Love and Politics: wherein are laid open, The Secret Miraculous Power and Progress of Gold, in the Courts of Europe. Intermixed with Delightful Intrigues, Memoirs, Tales, and Adventures, Serious and Comical[4].

Evidently, the author of the *Golden Spy* could place some reliance on the recognition by his public of his allusion to it in the title "British Nights Entertainments". The *Arabian Nights Entertainments* must have suggested to him this basically imitative title in the same way it has since done to many a writer. But apart from the title, the *Nights* must have suggested to Gildon the manner in which he has told his own "Entertainments" as well as the frame-work in which he has fitted them. In short, apart from his book serving as external evidence in determining the date of the first English *Nights*, it is also the first book ever to borrow the essentially Oriental story-structure of the *Arabian Nights* for the purpose of telling tales essentially Occidental in nature and content.

The popularity of the *Arabian Nights* since the appearance of this English editio princeps is not difficult to gauge when we remember that the number of English editions derived from the version of Galland amounted to no less than twenty different editions be-

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[1] V.C. Chauvin, *Bibliographie des Ouvrages Arabes*, 1900, IV, note (21a), p. 25-6.
[2] Id., p. 70.
[3] C. Gildon, *The Golden Spy*, 1709, Dedication.
[4] Id., Title-page.

fore the turn of the 18th century[5] and more than forty during the 19th[6]. Parallel to this is, of course, the very large number of editions (many of which are also derived from Galland's French copy) in almost every language. It is interesting to note that Chauvin's bibliography of *Les Mille et Une Nuits*, in all languages, occupies ninety-five full pages of his work[7]. And yet, the enthusiastic reception accorded to the *Nights* after its first publication in Europe is, in my view, due more to Galland as a translator and to the special nature and qualities of his copy than to any other translator after him or, for that matter, to the original Arabic version that he had used and translated. His work possesses – par excellence – those special qualities and characteristics which were instrumental in giving impetus to European imagination and which are reflected in the works of most European writers.

First, then, Galland's original source and his special way of handling it. In his Epistle Dedicatory to the Lady Marchioness d'O, Galland sheds much light on the original sources he used. At a certain point in his epistle, he begs of her "la même protection que vous avez bien voulu accorder à la traduction Françoise de sept Contes Arabes que j'eus l'honneur de vous présenter"[8]. Then he goes on to say:

> Vous vous étonnerez que depuis ce tems-là je n'aye pas eu l'honneur de vous les offrir imprimés.
>
> Le retardement, Madame, vient de ce qu'avant de commencer l'impression, j'appris que ces Contes étoient tirés d'un recueil prodigieux de Contes semblables, et plusieurs volumes, intitulé Les Mille et Une Nuits. Cette découverte m'obligea de suspendre cette impression & d'employer mes soins à recouvrer le recueil. Il a fallu le faire venir de Syrie, & mettre en François le premier volume que voici, de quatre seulement qui m'ont été envoyés[9].

The seven tales mentioned above are the seven stories of Sindbad the Sailor. The original MS from which Galland had translated them is now unknown[10]. But the MS collection which was sent him from Syria had consisted of four volumes, of which the Bibliothèque Nationale at Paris had only three (Biblio. Nat. Ancien fonds Arabe 1506, 1507, 1508[11]; now MSS Arabe 3609, 3610 and 3611[12]). The fourth volume is at present missing[13]. In addition to these two manuscript sources, which Galland had used in the

[5] For some of these, see V.C. Chauvin, op. cit., n° 2, p. 70-74.
[6] Id., p. 70-80.
[7] Id., p. 25 ff.
[8] Galland, *Les Milles et Une Nuits*, 1745, I, Épître.
[9] Ibid.
[10] D.B. Macdonald, "First Appearance of the Arabian Nights," *The Library Quaterly*, 1932, II, n° 4, 390.
[11] Id. p. 390-391.
[12] M. le Baron de Slane, *Catalogue des Manuscrits Arabes de la Bibliothèque Nationale*, 1883, p. 619.
[13] D.B. Macdonald, op. cit., p. 391.

production of his *Nights*, in his *Diary*, published by Herman Zotenberg, we are told of a third source – a man from Syria who had actually recounted certain stories to him:

> Dans les premiers mois de l'année 1709 [we learn] un chrétien maronite d'Alep, nommé Hanna, qui avait accompagné à Paris de célèbre voyageur Paul Lucas, communiqua à Galland, de vive voix, plusieurs contes, entre autre l'histoire de la Lampe Merveilleuse[14].

Evidently, our study of Galland's translation and his achievement can only be conclusive if we take as basis for it the three manuscripts whose Arabic text is known with certainty to have been used by our translator; namely, MSS Arabe 3609, 3610 and 3611, the Sindbad MS being unknown and Hanna's contributions being either suspect transcripts or de vive voix. Here, therefore, is a passage from "The Story of Noureddin and the Fair Persian", which was very popular with the Victorians in 19th century England and which features prominently in many of their works. Noureddin and his Fair Persian have just arrived in Baghdad, two fugitives fleeing from the persecution and "hot pursuit" of the governor of "Balsora" (Basra), their hometown:

> "Quand le Bâtiment eut mouillé un peu au dessous de la Ville," says Galland, "les passagers se débarquèrent, & se rendirent chacun où ils devoient loger. Noureddin donna cinq pièces d'or pour son passage, & se débarqua aussi avec la belle Persienne. Mais il n'étoit jamais venu à Bagdad, & il ne sçavoit où aller prendre logement. Ils marchèrent long tems, le long des Jardins, qui bordoient le Tigre, & ils en côtoyèrent un, qui étoit fermé d'une belle & longue muraille. En arrivant au bout, ils détournèrent par une longue ruë bien pavée, où ils apperçûrent la porte du jardin, avec une belle fontaine auprès.
>
> La porte, qui étoit très-magnifique, étoit fermée, avec un vestibule ouvert, où il y avoit un Sofa de chaque côté. Voici un endroit fort commode, dit Noureddin à la belle Persienne, la nuit approche, & nous avons mangé avant de nous débarquer : Je suis d'avis que nous y passions la nuit, & demain matin nous aurons le tems de chercher à nous loger, qu'en dites-vous? Vous sçavez, Seigneur, répondit la belle Persienne, que je ne veux que ce que vous voulez : ne passons pas plus outre si vous le souhaitez ainsi. Ils bûrent chacun un coup à la fontaine, & montèrent sur un des deux Sofas, où ils s'entretinrent quelque tems. Le sommeil les prit enfin, & ils s'endormirent au murmure agréable de l'eau.
>
> Le Jardin appartenoit au Calife, & il y avoit au milieu un grand Pavillon qu'on appelloit le Pavillon des Peintures, à cause que son principal ornement étoit des Peintures à la Persienne, de la main de plusieurs Peintres de Perse, que le Calife avoit fait venir exprès. Le grand & su-

[14] *Notices et Extraits de MSS de la Bibliothèque Nationale…* Paris, 1887, XXVIII, Pt. I, 199.

> perbe Salon, que ce Pavillon formoit, étoit éclairé par quatrevingt fenêtres, avec un lustre à chacune, & les quatrevingt lustres ne s'allumoient que lors que le Calife y venoit passer la soirée, que le tems étoit si tranquille, qu'il n'y avoit pas un souffle de vent. Ils faisoient alors une très-belle illumination, qu'on appercevoit bien loin à la Campagne de ce côté-là, & d'une grande partie de la Ville[15].

A comparison of this French passage with the original Arabic[16] will not fail to reveal that, to begin with, Galland was not in fact attempting so much a translation as a loose paraphrase. Yet it is true to say that he took care to render, simultaneously, all sentences and phrases that he readily understood or that suited his purpose. This practice has, inevitably, left distinct discrepancies between his version and the Arabic text. These discrepancies are discernible in additions he makes to the original, in no small number of errors consequent upon his misinterpretation of the significations of some words and, above all, in his individualistic, characteristic method of telling the original episodes mainly à la Galland.

I should, however, point out that the Arabic text which Galland had translated is written in a notorious hand and in a hopelessly unidiomatic Arabic that is quite unintelligible in some places and unevenly colloquial in countless many others. And yet the difficult, unfinished, sometimes undecipherable, far-from-exact, and sometimes almost illiterate quality of the Arabic did not deter Galland, writing, as he was, for a reading public of aristocratic tastes and education. But where he was not satisfied with the information supplied by his model he provided his own with extreme felicity. His phrase, for instance, "Par une longue ruë bien pavée[17]", which is not to be found in his original, is perhaps put in to give his readers the feeling that Baghdad was as civilized as Versailles and had the same kind of streets. In the same sort of way he has invented a fountain and elaborated the gardens along the banks of the Tigris. His Arabic original does not mention Noureddin's condition of being a complete stranger in Baghdad. All the same, Galland invents and emphasises this fact and dwells on it, adding that, being perfect strangers in Baghdad, Noureddin and the Fair Persian were "at a loss for lodging". So they

> rambled a considerable time along by the gardens that bordered on the Tigris, and keeping close to one of them that was inclosed with a very fine long wall at the end of it, they turned into a street well paved, where they perceived a garden-door, and a charming fountain near it. The door, which was very magnificent, happended to be shut, but the porch was open, in which there was a sofa on each side[18].

[15] Galland, *Les Mille et Une Nuits*, 1719, VII, 82-5.
[16] Biblio. Nat. MS. Arabe 3611, f. 39.
[17] See ante, p. 20.
[18] *A.N.E.*, 1978, III, 29-30. See the French text p. 20.

Except for the fact that the garden-door is also shut in the Arabic original, the magnificence of the garden, its charming fountain, its long wall and open porch are entirely Galland's invention. These details supplied by him are of interest to the student of literature. For, besides being figments of Galland's imagination, some of his additions: the river Tigris, the long wall of the garden as well as the porch with "a sofa on each side", all of these objects found their way from this English passage into Tennyson's "Recollections of the Arabian Nights". In fact, in "un sofa de chaque côté", we have an interesting example of Galland's misinterpretation of some key words in the text he translated. For the Arabic text which he misinterpreted does not signify sofas, but simply benches of bare stone or brick. A sofa is a kind of divan furnished with mats and cushions, and it is interesting to note that Galland employs the word in other tales in association with cushions of fine silk curiously embroidered with all sorts of flowers. But he is so fond of sofas that he consistently brings them in whenever he describes the interior or, as in the case of the example above, the exterior of any *Arabian Nights* home, mansion, or court-yard.

Be that however as it may, Tennyson's early misconception of Oriental sofas, as shown in the lines

> By garden porches on the brim,
> The costly doors flung open wide,
> Gold glittering thro'lamplight dim,
> And broider'd sofas on each side...[19]

is due to the fact that he was dependent on this particular passage in the English version of the tale of "Noureddin and the fair Persian" when he was writing his poem of the "Recollections". This is borne out by the fact that in one of his notes to the lines above, Tennyson says, apologetically: "I had only the translation – from the French of Galland – of the Arabian Nights when this was written, so I talked of sofas etc. Lane was yet unborn"[20]. Of course, Lane's translation of the passage under discussion has no porch with a sofa on each side.

The purpose of Galland's additions is, in my opinion, two-fold. They help him tell the original episodes as though they were his own creation and enable him to elaborate the total atmosphere of the *Nights*. Indeed, in his invariable efforts to emulate the *Nights* and surpass its romantic and (to him) exotic character by using its glamorous atmosphere for his own purposes, he has certainly "outbid his Omar". He has, in my view, rendered the generally primitive and unsophisticated Arabic original into a polished, smoothly flowing and highly stylized narrative, which is not at all what his original source is. In fact, the original sounds, more often than not, almost like a faint echo when compared with what it becomes in Galland's immeasurably artistic and highly cultivated narrative. And it is this constant practice of expanding the original that really adorns his *Les Mille*

[19] Tennyson, *Works*, 1907, I, 41-42.
[20] Tennyson, *Works*, op. cit., p. 340. Lane's scholarly translation was to appear later between 1839 and 1841.

et Une Nuits with that extra touch of glamour and exaggeration and reinforces its characteristic elements of what is (to a European) "marvellous", "fantastic" and "strange". The Pavilion of Pictures[21] is so called, Galland says, (adding his irrepressible extras by way of embellishment): "à cause que son principal ornement étoit des Peintures à la Persienne, de la main de plusieurs Peintres de Perse, que le Calife avoit fait venir exprès". But of this touch of exaggeration and the persistent effort to heap more glamour on what is glamorous already, I have more to say in connection with the following passage taken from the "Story of the Envious Man, and of him that he envied", an episode related in the house of "Zobeide" by the Second Calender:

A "genie" is about to transform the Calender, a king's son, into a beast or bird for finding him in the forbidden subterranean abode of the Princess of the isle of Ebene[22] where he (the Jinni) had transported and imprisoned her since her wedding night. Imploring pardon, the prince promises, if he is spared, to tell the Jinni "The Story of the Envious Man and of him that was envied"[23], – an offer not inconsistent with the overall theme of the *Nights*, considering that Shahrazâd herself has so far similarly staved off the execution of Shahrayar's vow. The Jinni accepts and the prince proceeds. But for the purposes of our comparative study, the important part of his tale is that which Galland translates as follows:

> Dans une Ville assez considérable deux hommes demeuroient porte à porte. L'un conçut contre l'autre une envie si violente que celui qui en étoit l'objet résolut de changer de demeure, & de s'éloigner, persuadé que le voisinage seul lui avoit attiré l'animosité de son voisin : Car quoi qu'il lui eût rendu de bons offices, il s'étoit aperçû qu'il n'en étoit pas moins haï. C'est pourquoi il vendit sa maison avec le peu de bien qu'il avoit, & se retirant à la Capitale du Païs qui n'étoit pas éloignée, il acheta une petite terre environ à une demi-lieuë de la ville. Il y avoit une maison assez commode, un beau jardin, & une cour raisonnablement grande, dans laquelle étoit une citerne profonde, dont on ne se servoit plus.
>
> Le bon homme ayant fait cette acquisition, prit l'habit de Derviche pour mener une vie plus retirée & fit faire plusieurs cellules dans la maison, où il établit en peu de tems une Communauté nombreuse de Derviches. Sa vertu le fit bientôt connoître, & ne manqua pas de lui attirer une infinité de monde, tant du Peuple que des Principaux de la Ville. Enfin, chacun l'honoroit & le chérissoit extrêmement. On venoit aussi de bien loin se recommander à ses priéres, & tous ceux qui se retiroient d'auprès de lui, publioient les bénédictions qu'ils croyoient avoir reçûës du Ciel par son moyen[24].

[21] See ante, p. 20. The Arabic MS (Biblio. Nat. MS Arabe 3611, f. 39) has a Palace of Statues.
[22] Galland, *A.N.E.*, 1789, I, 125.
[23] Id., p. 135.
[24] Galland. *Les Milles et Une Nuits*, (La Haye), 1714, II, 112-114.

Again, a comparison of this passage with its Arabic original[25], will yield a few more facts about Galland's method and work. As in the passage we have studied earlier, here, too, we have the usual additions, the occasional misinterpretations and the typical habit of glamorizing still further the original episodes that in themselves are already highly romantic in character. One example of an addition, of which the original Arabic does not have the merest suggestion, is Galland's invention of the reason why the Envied Man had to quit the neighbourhood of his envious neighbour, telling many things in the process and wandering off from the original story. The Envied Man, he explains,

> persuadé que le voisinage seul lui avoit attiré l'animosité de son voisin: Car quoi qu'il lui eut rendu de bons offices, il s'étoit aperçû qu'il n'en étoit pas moins haï. C'est pourquoi il vendit sa maison avec le peu de bien qu'il avoit, & se retirant à la Capitale du Païs qui n'étoit pas éloignée[26].

According to the Arabic MS[27], and contrary to Galland, the Envied Man knows no reason for his neighbour's envy. Nor does he remove to the capital city that was near, but rather journey's to a land far from his previous dwelling-place resolved to leave this world for the Envious Man's sake. Galland was telling the story freely and, in the course of its relation, he was cramming it with irrelevances. This, of course, transforms the Arabian tale into one that carries not so much the stamp of the Arabian narrator as that of a European well-versed in the art of fiction-writing, one who is well able to supply his own motifs and embellish the story he is presenting to his reading public. This method of paraphrase makes Galland's tale a different one, at times retaining but the mere skeleton of its original. It is as if his creative imagination and wilful enthusiasm frequently take charge and lead him away from his text to other regions of thought suggested by his understanding or, indeed, his misunderstanding of some important key words or phrases in his Arabic text. And the key-word in the Arabic text under study, which made him wander off onto the world of dervishes and their habits and cells, is the word (zâwiya)[28], which should be rendered in its context as an isolated home or cottage that the Envied Man built for himself. Galland, obviously, took it for an hermitage. Hence the inevitable extras,

> Le bon homme... prit l'habit de Derviche pour mener une vie plus retirée, & fit faire plusieurs cellules dans la maison, où il établit en peu de tems une Communauté nombreuse de Derviches[29].

[25] Biblio. Nat. MS Arabe 3609, f. 51.
[26] See ante, p. 23.
[27] Biblio. Nat. MS Arabe 3609, f. 51.
[28] Ibid.
[29] See ante, p. 23.

All this cannot be found in the Arabic MS. Indeed, nowhere in the original text do I find the Envied Man described as a "Derviche". Nor does Lane's *Thousand and One Nights* (which translates a later Cairo edition[30]) describe him so. The dervish, the dervish's habit, his society of dervishes and their cells are all Galland's invention. His purpose is, of course, self-evident, to build up more of the "strange" and "fantastic" atmosphere of which he is conscious through his wider reading in other tales. The atmosphere of the dervish's cell is all his work. And it was this very atmosphere that had appealed to Christina Rossetti, Galland's "dervise" being the very dervise she, in turn, called "Hassan" and who had fascinated her in her infancy. Her brother, William, relates the following anecdote of his sister's childhood, which confirms that Christina had had her imagination fired at an early age ("she may have been between seven and eight"[31]) by her reading of only a few books "such as the *Arabian Nights* and the lyric dramas of Metastasio"[32]. He says:

> Possibly the earliest thing which Christina wrote (or rather... got some one to write from her dictation) was the beginning of a tale called perhaps *The Dervise* on the model (more or less, i.e. very little) of the *Arabian Nights*. The dervise, I think, went down into a cavern, where he was to meet with some adventures not much less surprising than those of Aladdin. In the thick of the plot it occurred to Christina that she had not yet given her dervise a name, so she interjected a sentence, "The Dervise's name was Hassan", and continued his perilous performances[33].

Thus, Galland's romanticization of the Arabian tale had worked on the imagination of Christina Rossetti even before she could write. But she is no isolated case. George Meredith, too, was so fascinated by the tale of Galland's dervish that he borrowed from it the motif of the potent magic hair[34], the root-idea of his Identical, which is the great image of the whole of *Shagpat* and the most important thing in the entire story.

So much of the glamour of the *Nights* is, therefore, the work of Galland, and it follows that, as a translation, his work is crammed with material that is, strictly speaking, alien to the Arabic original in that it comes from another world – that of Galland's learning. But some of this material was also due to his inability to grasp the meaning of portions of his Arabic, and that caused him to deviate from the original text and digress onto remote realms unheard of by the Arabian story-teller. A third passage, taken from Galland's account of the "Petrified City", will lend support to this argument. Galland's "Zobeide" – her name is also taken from elsewhere – has just heard the voice of a human reading the *Quran* in an oratory of the desolate palace in the petrified city. This is how she tells her adventures in Galland's French:

[30] Lane, *The Thousand and One Nights*, 1839, I, xv-xvi.
[31] Christina Rossetti, *Poetical Works*, 1904, p. xlix.
[32] Ibid.
[33] Id., p. xlix-l.
[34] Galland, *A.N.E.* 1789, I, 321-322.

> Il étoit environ minuit, lorsque j'entendis la voix comme d'un homme qui lisoit l'Alcoran de la même manière & du ton que nous avons coûtume de le lire dans nos temples. Cela me donna beaucoup de joie, Je me levai aussi-tôt, & prenant un flambeau pour me conduire, j'allai de chambre en chambre du côté où j'entendois la voix. Je m'arretai à la porte d'un cabinet d'où je ne pouvois douter qu'elle ne partît. Je posai le flambeau à terre, & regardant par un fente, il me parut que c'étoit un Oratoire. En effet il y avoit comme dans nos Temples une niche qui marquoit où il falloit se tourner pour faire la prière, des lampes suspendues & allumées, & deux chandeliers avec de gros cierges de cire blanche, allumés de même.
>
> Je vis aussi un petit tapis étendu de la forme de ceux qu'on étend chez nous pour se poser dessus, & faire la prière. Un jeune homme de bonne mine assis sur ce tapis, récitoit avec grande attention l'Alcoran qui étoit posé devant lui sur un petit pulpitre. A cette vûe ravie d'admiration, je cherchois en mon esprit comment il se pouvoit faire qu'il fût le seul vivant dans une Ville où tout le monde étoit pétrifié, & je ne doutois pas qu'il n'y eût en cela quelque chose de très-merveilleux.
>
> Comme la porte n'étoit que poussée, je l'ouvris; j'entrai, & me tenant debout devant la niche, je fis cette prière à haute voix : Louange à Dieu qui nous a favorisé d'une heureuse navigation. Qu'il nous fasse la grace de nous protéger de même jusqu'à notre arrivée en notre pays. Ecoutez-moi, Seigneur, & exaucez ma prière[35].
>
> Madame, me dit le jeune homme, [on being asked to explain by what miracle he alone was left alive when so many others had been turned to stone] vous m'avez fait assez voir que vous avez la connoissance du vrai Dieu, par la prière que vous venez de lui adresser. Vous allez entendre un effet très-remarquable de sa grandeur & de sa puissance, Je vous dirai que cette Ville étoit la capitale d'un puissant Royaume, dont le Roi mon père portoit le nom. Ce Prince, toute sa Cour, les habitans de la Ville, & tous ses autres sujets étoient Mages, Adorateurs du feu, & de Nardoun, ancien Roi des Géans rebelles à Dieu[36].

Now, the Arabic original[37] of this text is, in fact, almost half as long as Galland's corresponding translation. This is due to the fact that, though a translator, Galland invariably told the Arabian episodes very profusely, adding to them all the glamour he was capable of mustering. His Zobeide's passing from one "chamber to another", and standing "still", then setting her "torch upon the ground" and "looking through a window" instead

[35] Galland, *Les Mille et Une Nuits*, 1745, I, 321-322.
[36] Id., p. 324.
[37] Biblio. Nat. MS Arabe, 3609, F. 68 & f. 69.

of looking through "the door" of the Arabic original, all these circumstances, added to "the Alcoran" being "upon a desk", the "great devotion" of the man and the joy and admiration with which Zobeide was transported, are only some of the cases in point. They are the work of Galland's usually splendid flair for story-telling and are not to be found in the corresponding paragraphs of his original. They are the result of his persistent practice of expansion and addition.

Galland's additions were, however, dictated by the fact that he was writing with the European reading public in the forefront of his mind. He had to annotate, as it were, and explain to them any Islamic habits or practices that came his way. Examples to support this observation are numerous. One passage from the "Petrified City" contains a few which again shed more light on Galland's method and elucidate even more clearly and conclusively his typical way of narration. If, for example, his Arabic text has an oratory, then he seizes this opportunity to explain its significance among the Muslims. But he incorporates these notes into his translation. It is, therefore, to his credit that the annotations and elucidations never border on parody or burlesque and that it is the pleasant interest and the pure element of entertainment that we seek without wishing for, or missing in the least, that element of entertainment through ridicule or satire, which later Orientalizers from Beckford to Thackeray and Meredith were unable to resist. Galland, though the book bears clear marks throughout of his personal genius, was never tempted to tread on such ground. "The oratory", his Zobeide would add freely and in her most natural sympathy, "had, as we have in our mosques, a niche that shows where we must turn to say our prayers". If the text has "a little carpet" spread on the floor, then she adds, by way of explanation, that it was "laid down like those we have to kneel upon when we say our prayers". If, on the other hand, she enters an oratory, then Galland might as well set his MS aside and compose a certain prayer for her to say aloud and so give his European readers a sample of Muslim piety. And, in fact, that is precisely what happens when he makes her stand before the niche. He puts in her mouth the following prayer:

> Praise be to God that has favoured us with a happy voyage, and may be graciously pleased to protect us in the same manner, until we arrive again in our own country. Hear me, O God, and grant my request[38].

This prayer is not to be found in the original Arabic source. It is a composition of Galland's and its only source is his imagination. Yet it is also probable that he misunderstood his Arabic text, and thus, perhaps unknowingly, altered it. The original Arabic episode does, in fact, contain an entreaty, but it is to the handsome youth whom she has just found seated on the prayer-carpet and chanting the *Quran*. Her entreaty in the original source runs as follows: "I entreat you by the truth of that which you are reciting that you answer my question[39]". Her request, according to Galland, is that the Lord may be graciously pleased to protect them in the same manner as he has favoured them with a happy

[38] Galland, *A.N.E.*, 1789, I, 185. See ante, p. 17.
[39] Biblio. Nat. MS Arabe, 3609, f. 68.

voyage, until they have arrived again in their own country. According to the Arabic *Nights*, the lady praises God for finding such a Muslim youth and requests the man to acquaint her with the story of the inhabitants of the desolate and "petrified" city and the reason why he alone was safe, a request which he readily grants her after he "shuts the Quran and seats her by his side"[40]. No two versions could be more dissimilar.

Regarding the religion of the petrified inhabitants, Galland provides yet another interesting example of a complete departure from his source resulting, as it does, from a misreading on his part. According to him, the lonely survivor of the "petrified" race informs Zobeide that the king, his father, and all the inhabitants of the town were Magians, "Adorateurs du feu, & de Nardoun, ancien Roi des Géans rebelles à Dieu"[41]. Yet in the original Arabic text, I find no such god as "Nardoun" whom the Magians of the city worship as their ancient King of the giants and who rebels against God. And it is this proper noun, "Nardoun", that is a conspicuous example of Galland's frequently imperfect understanding of his Arabic text. The phrase which he failed to understand, or rather failed to read correctly, describes all the inhabitants of the city as "Magians who worship fire in place of the Almighty King"[42]. Obviously, Galland thought the two Arabic words "al-nar doun" (which simply mean "fire in place of") were one word, a proper noun. Thus leaving out "al", the Arabic definite article, he unwittingly coined the compound Nardoun, which he calls a god and uses more than once, in spite of the fact that the original Arabic story does not repeat the words "al-nar doun".

Misinterpretations and additions are not, however, the only defects of Galland's work as a translation. There are also some very significant omissions. Galland does sometimes omit phrases and sentences for reasons sometimes obvious and sometimes inexplicable. In addition to these, he is consistent throughout his translation in omitting a very important feature of the *Nights* stories, that is, the frequent passages of verse. The Arabic MSS of the *Nights* he used are interspersed with verses quoted, or invented, by its Arabian author to illustrate a point, laud or vilify a person or, indeed, any object. The shift in those MSS from prose to verse – a device widely used by some imitative English writers like Thackeray and Meredith, who actually followed Torren's and Lane's more faithful translations – is sometimes so sudden and unwarranted, so arbitrary, abrupt and uncalled for by the occasion that it hinders the flow of the narrative. There is no doubt that, if Galland had attempted a faithful rendering of the verse passages, he would not have inserted them without sacrificing the swiftness of his narrative style. However, his translation incorporates abbreviated readings of certain selected passages, as far as he can comprehend them. The verses are usually very difficult to follow. In fact, they are of very unequal quality, "ranging from poetry worthy of the name to the merest doggerel", so that Galland can hardly be blamed for being selective. To illustrate his method, I want to refer to the two sets of verse[43] which suddenly protrude at the first appearance (in the

[40] Ibid., f. 68 & f. 69.
[41] See ante, p. 25.
[42] Biblio. Nat. MS Arabe, 3609, f. 69.
[43] Biblio. Nat. MS Arabe, 3609, f. 69.

"petrified city") of the lone survivor. The lady of the Arabic *Nights* has just seen this handsome man and fallen in love with him at first sight. At this moment of Erhebung, as it were, and in keeping with his practice, throughout the whole book, the Arabian narrator makes the lady shift to song in praise of the man's face and features that beggar description. Her praise is contained in two verse passages, fourteen lines in all, which can hardly be echoed in the few words which Galland puts in the mouth of his Zobeide: "Je pris ce tems-là pour le considérer attentivement, & je lui trouvai tant de grace & de beauté, que je sentis des mouvemens que je n'avois jamais sentis jusqu'alors."[44]

In conclusion, Galland allows himself to invent details and even episodes which, in my view, are of a kind that his readers, accustomed to the sophistication of French literary taste in narrative, expect in a story. He allows himself to increase the piety, splendour and glamorous nature of the original, adding, as part of his narrative, a running commentary to explain obscurer points for the benefit of Western understanding. He omits all that he cannot handle, including the verses, which, naturally, remained unknown to Western readers until Torrens published his one-volume edition in 1838. He gives, in addition, a somewhat aristocratic and, here and there, moralistic, not to say prudish, tone to the style. Lastly, he sometimes makes blunders in translation but turns these to romantic account (as in the case of Nardoun) because that is how his mind seems to have worked. And it is these romantic embellishments which seem to me to have benefitted the *Nights* and welded the diffuse and uncultivated narration of the original into a closely-knit and cohesive work passing with all authors, especially in England, as the most imaginative of all literary creations, the fascinating tales generated by the wildest flights of extravagant fancy which, as R.L. Stevenson says,

> Charm us in age as they they [*sic*] charmed in childhood[45].

The very tale of Zobeide, which we have been discussing, is a striking example of how these romantic and imaginative creations had influenced the Victorians. For it was soon to inspire Christina Rossetti, George Meredith and James Thomson ("B.V.") in their Juvenilia poems, "The Dead City" (1847), "The Sleeping City" (1851) and "Doom of a City" (1857), respectively, though each reacted to the story in a very individual manner, reading in it his or her own particular vision. James Thomson's word on the subject is perhaps typical of how the Victorian boyhood imagination reacted to the charms of individual tales in the *Nights*. In an explanatory note appended to a manuscript copy of his "Doom of a City", which he had presented to a friend, Mr. John Grant, he says:

> The City of the Statues [Part II of his "City of Doom"] is from the tale of Zobeide in the History of the Three Ladies of Bagdad and the Three Calenders. This episode and the account of the Kingdoms of the Sea in

[44] Galland, *Les Mille et Une Nuits*, 1745, I, 322-323.
[45] R.L. Stevenson, *Collected Poems*, (ed. Janet A. Smith), 1950, p. 288.

> "Prince Beder and – ", impressed my boyhood more powerfully than anything else in the *Arabian Nights*.[46]

Each writer, then, had his favourite tale or tales. William Thackeray "had by heart the Barmecide's feast"[47] and, on the whole, felt sorry for those who did not care for the *Arabian Nights*[48].

Judging by results of popularity and European reaction to *Les Mille et Une Nuits*, Galland seems to have been the right person to introduce the *Nights* to the European reader. He turned his very weaknesses as a translator into strength and "loaded his rifts with ore", so that the book, owing to his additions, amendments and explanations, became one of the great sources of inspiration for European literature during the 18th and 19th centuries. One is bound to ask how much of the popularity of the *Nights* was due to Galland's additions and inventions, which with the consummate merits of his art of narration were instrumental in bringing about that huge mass of "exotic" literature since 1704. One thing is indisputable. The *Nights* would never have achieved such immense and universal popularity in England had it not been for Galland's copy – at least before Torrens and Lane appeared on the scene. It is interesting to note that the "Avertissement" prefacing his work has the following remark about his own translation:

> On a pris soin de conserver leurs caractères, de ne pas s'éloigner de leurs expressions & de leurs sentimens : & l'on ne s'est écarté du texte, que quand la bienséance n'a pas permis de s'y attacher. Le Traducteur se flatte que les personnes qui entendent l'Arabe, & qui voudront prendre la peine de confronter l'original avec la copie, conviendront qu'il a fait voir les Arabes aux François, avec toute la circonspection que demandoit la délicatesse de notre langue & de notre temps[49].

Despite this claim, Galland seldom took special care to preserve the characters of the original Arabic version. On the contrary, he invented some. But by consistently delineating them on his own, at times at the expense of the original, he has certainly revealed himself keen on transmitting his wide knowledge of the Arabians and "showing them" – sometimes over-zealously – to the French. For of Islamic literature in general and Arabic literature in particular, Galland possessed a vast treasure of knowledge. He is the translator of that other book of tales, *Kalila Wa Dimna* or *Bidapai's Fables* – a book better known to the student of Arabic literature than the *Thousand and One Nights*. He is also the translator of *The Remarkable Sayings, Apothegms and Maxims of the Eastern Nations*, which he abstracted partly from printed books, and partly from MSS, Arabic,

[46] J. Thomson, *Poetical Works*, 1895, II, 443.
[47] Tackeray, *Works*, VIII, 194.
[48] Id., XVII, 431.
[49] Galland, *Les Mille et Une Nuits*, 1745, I, Avertissement.

Persian and Turkish[50]. Through his work, Galland familiarized the European for the first time with all this Oriental heritage. He poured forth on the pages of his translation, to inform and delight, his special knowledge of the Eastern nations, Arabians, Persians, Tartars, and Indians, their religions, habits and practices. In a word, Galland was determined that his *Les Mille Et Une Nuits* should enable the reader, without the fatigue of going to see those peoples in their respective countries, to have the pleasure of seeing them act and them recount[51] not only many of their tales of engaging wonder but also much of what he happened to know of their manners and customs from other sources.

I say many of their tales and not all, because then, as Galland had excused himself, the times decreed otherwise. He was obliged to make omissions in deference to European tastes in the matter of propriety. All the objectionable portions of the *Nights* – and these are many – were never translated or even hinted at by Galland (apart from what he refers to as "la bienséance" in his Avertissement). And so, when his tale of Zobeide appeared, to take just one instance, it was a piously decent version and without the frank descriptions of the adventures of Zobeide and her sisters with the porter.[52] Later, however, it was adventures like these that gave a shock to 19th century feeling of moral decorum when Payne and Burton published their unexpurgated translations. Curiosity gave way to reprobation, as may be seen from the reviews and the reactions of the periodicals of the time[53]. Suddenly the whole truth about the *Nights*, as Burton had rendered it, was morally unpalatable. Besides, Galland had asserted that he had shown "the Arabians to the French, with all the Circumspection that the Niceness of the French Tongue and of the Times requires"[54]. To him, those who have "any Inclination to profit by the Examples of Virtue and Vice, which they will... find exhibited" in the *Nights*, "may reap an Advantage by it, that is not to be reap'd in other Stories, which are more proper to corrupt than to reform our Manners"[55]. Evidently, Burton was as yet unborn, and Galland's were the times when the "exotic" tale had to undergo strict expurgation and excision. It had to conform to the decrees of propriety and be made serviceable to the moral designs of those translators and successive Orientalisers and believers in the cult of the Oriental, who felt its forceful impact on their thinking.

Reference: *Revue canadienne de littérature comparée*, Toronto, University of Toronto Press, vol. 54, n° 2, 1980, p. 150-164.

[50] Galland, *The Remarkable Sayings, Apothegms and Maxims of the Eastern Nations*, 1695, p. vi. The work was originally contained in d'Herbelot's *Bibliothèque Orientale* to serve as a continuation of, and supplement to, that work. See *Bibliothèque Orientale* (par C. Visdelon et A. Galland), 1779, p. 407-520.
[51] Galland, *A.N.E.*, 1763, I, Preface.
[52] Biblio. Nat. MS Arabe, 3609, ff. 38-39.
[53] See, for instance, "Burton's Arabian Nights", *Saturday Review*, III (Jan. 2, 1886), 26-7 & "Burton's Arabian Nights Re-Edited," LXXIX (March 9, 1895), 322-323.
[54] Galland, *A.N.E.*, 1763, I, Preface.
[55] Ibid.