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المملكـة المغربيـة
سيـدي محـمد بـن عبـد اللـه جـامعـة
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في موضوع :

Visibility, Appropriation and Subversion in English Translations of Arabic Pseudo-Narratives

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Visibility, Appropriation and Subversion in English Translations of Arabic Pseudo-Narratives

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A Dissertation Submitted in Fulfilment of the Requirements for the

Doctorate Degree

By

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المقتضب

تهدف هذه الأطروحة إلى دراسة أشكال العسف والتوظيف والإغراض التي طبعت ترجمة المحكيات الشعبية العربية المجهولة الهوية، وتحديدا *ألف ليلة وليلة وكليلة ودمنة و سيرة عنتر* إلى اللغة الإنجليزية. من خلال تحليل معمق لترجمات هذه النصوص والتي تتراوح بين التنقح والتهذيب النسقي إلى النقل الحرفي الموسوم بالتعلق بغرابة النص الأصلي يبدو أن فعل الترجمة يتحقق فيها أساسا بوصفه إعادة كتابة للنصوص الأصلية، يتيح للمترجم من موقعه المحدد بفائض في إحساس بعلاقات القوة تجاه نص شرقي، أن يجرد هذا الأخير من فرادته وهويته النصية. تحاول هذه الرسالة تفسير سفور المترجم في عميلة الترجمة وحرية تصرفه في النص الأصلي على أنهما نتاج لخيارات واعية وأفعال موجة أكثر منهما تحقيقا لأي لفهم إجرائي متعال لفعل الترجمة، وعلى أنهما لا ينمان عن عجز في التناظر بين اللغتين الأصل والهدف بقدر كونهما تجليا لرغبة في توجيه النصوص المترجمة لخدمة جملة من الأهداف وملاءمتها مع المتطلبات والتوقعات المسبقة والتحيزات الجمالية والأيدولوجية للمنظومة الثقافية المستهدفة.

وقد اعتمدت في هذه الرسالة مقاربة نوعية من أجل تقديم فهم شمولي للظاهرة المدروسة، وهي تشمل المستويات الثلاث المميزة لهذه المقاربة، أي الوصف والتحليل والتأويل. كما أني حاولت في انتقاء الحالات المدروسة اختيار نصوص تستوعب وتنمذج كفاية الظاهرة المدروسة، وتتمتع، بالإضافة إلى ذلك، بأوجه مشتركة وعلاقات تناظر واضحة تجعلها قابلة للدراسة وفق نماذج تفسيرية متماسكة ومنسجمة. وقد قادتنا نتائج البحث والتحليل إلى استنتاجات تبرز بوضوح أن أنماط التوظيف والإغراض مثلت سلوكا ترجميا نسقيا وممنهجا ميّز عبور نصوص الأدب العربي الشعبي إلى المنظومة الأدبية الإنجليزية، وأنها في تحققها في النصوص المترجمة قد تختلف في شكلها لا جوهرها، في تمظهرها لا في ماهيتها.

كلمات مفتاحية: السفور، التوظيف المغرض، المحكيات المجهولة الهوية، وظيفة المؤلف، التغريب، التطويع، إعادة الكتابة

Abstract

This thesis sets out to investigate the heuristic forms of license and appropriation to which the English translation of prototypes of Arabic prose narratives, namely *Alf Layla wa Layla, Kalila wa Dinma and Sirat 'Antara* have been subject. Through a thorough analysis of the various translations of these texts, that vastly range from a bowdlerized domesticating rendering to foreignizing literal rewording, it approaches the act of translation as a rewriting and representation of the image of the original text that permits the translator, from his power-vested position as a Westerner over an Oriental text, to strip the latter of its character and individual identity. This thesis tries to account for the translator's visibility in and appropriation of the original as less emanating from any disinterested theoretical or procedural understanding of translation as from deliberate actions and conscious choices, and as less entailed by a deficit in equivalence between the two natural languages involved in the translation as by a felt need to put the foreign text into the service of a variety of purposes and to make it fit with the poetic and ideological imperatives, expectations and prejudices of the receiving system.

The present study uses a qualitative method that seeks to provide a holistic understanding of the phenomenon under study. The analysis of data involves the three basic stages characteristic of this approach, i.e. description, analysis and interpretation. In investigating the forms of appropriation and manipulation to which Arabic pseudo-narratives were subject in English translations, I tried to make sure that the case studies are adequately representative of and methodologically sampling the topic of the thesis, and also that they demonstrate sufficient similarities and systematic relations that allow for their coding within a comprehensive interpretive model. Our line of inquiry led us to conclude that appropriation was a systematic and regular translation behaviour in the transfer of Arabic pseudo-narratives into English and that despite the wide differences that existed among the individual translators, its realization in their actual translations differs in form not in essence, in manifestation not in character.

Keywords: visibility, subversive uses, appropriation, pseudo-narratives, author function, domestication, defamiliarisation, rewrite.

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Acknowledgment

Now that this thesis has been completed, I must mention with gratitude the names of those who have greatly helped in its production. I would like to express my sincere gratefulness to my supervisor, professor Abdelhamid Nfissi, who guided me throughout the execution of this project with generous support, unrelenting patience and incisive comments. His gracious efforts and prompt and able assistance at every turn were very valuable and kept me on track during the course of this thesis. I am equally obliged to professors Tawfiq Sakkkhan, Zineb Zine El Abidine and Youssef El Kaidi for their constant encouragement and unfailing advice. Special thanks should also be extended to my professors Drissia Chouit, Samira Chakroune, Rida Bernouss, and many others. Without the gracious efforts and useful counsel of my supervisor and the help and support of my professors and colleagues, this study might have never come to its finished form.

Introduction

Background

It is a recognizable fact that literary translators have always enjoyed more liberty vis-à-vis their object of interest as their approach to the system of signs of the texts they translate is less instrumental than poetical, more privileging the signifier than the signified, and- to borrow from classical poetics- more weighted toward delighting than instructing. For what they set out to carry across into another language is, more than anything else, the poetic effect, or *literaliness*, that abounds in these texts and that did not only accrue them a literary value in their original field of cultural production but also made them worthy of being reproduced and transplanted into a foreign literary system.

The history of translation from Saint Jerome to the present day provides us with ample instances of such liberty; omissions, adaptations, bowdlerization, additions, elisions, misprisions, etc. that, on account of their recurrences and inevitability in actual translations, have been acquiesced as forming, or at least falling within, the conditions of possibility of literary translation. Generally, one can- following André Lefevere- define three distinct areas into which these instances of interference varyingly fit. First, there is *poetics*. Translators very often feel themselves called upon to act and interfere with the original whenever they find that an unbridgeable gap exists between the poetic system of the foreign text and that into which they are translating; e.g. when a generic form, a stylistic feature, a narrative technique, a metrical pattern, a figure of speech, etc. retains appeal and elegance within the poetic system of origin, but is felt to be insipid and even nonsensical if it is literally applied

to a different poetic system. Secondly, there is *ideology*. It is not infrequent that translators may interfere in a variety of ways with the foreign text to water down its ideological import and trim off any elements that rest uneasily with the established ideology at home. Sexual explicitness, religious attitudes, spiritual visions, and political pronouncements, which in the original reflect the nature of things, may be seen by other ideologies as intolerable blasphemy, indecent obscenity or insufferable dissidence. And as translators are ipso facto situated at the interstices of these categorizations, they are almost always the auxiliaries of ideological surveillance through whom the process of selection, exclusion and compromise is first enacted. Lastly, *economic* considerations also come to play in translation practices. Like other agents operative in the field of literary production, translators too are not unmoved by some vested interests; and indeed it passes as a rule that the more these interests are directly sought, as for example in the translation of some forms of commercial literature, the more the translated works will tend to be poetically and ideologically conservative. There are also cases where questions of profit seem to roundly determine the type of translation required, as is frequently the case in some intersemiotic translations, e.g. the stage performance of plays, the casting of film fiction, etc. While these three spheres (the poetic, the ideological and the economic) may be singly or dialogically nascent in other types of translation(technical, legal, etc.), they are quite manifest in literary translation that one cannot imagine a serious translation of a literary work to have been carried out in complete indifference to their determining factors. And where this situation holds fast, it has a twofold effect on both the original text and its translation: the former is recognized as being never fully exhaustible by or entirely realized in any single translation and hence arises the possibility for other concomitant or potential translations of the same text; and the

latter essentially unfolds as an act of rewriting insofar it contents itself with providing its readers with an image of the original and does not lay the claim to being its exact- and hence its only possible- replica.

Given the fact that a certain degree of license is allowed in literary translation, and some leeway is grudgingly tolerated to make sense of the original and bring it to terms with an alien literary system, still sight must not be lost of the foreign text; since, as Walter Benjamin has remarked, translations do not so much serve the originals as owe their existence to them. If this basic fact is overlooked, we will lose all sense of what makes a good translation, or of even what counts as translation in the first place as a form of composition clearly distinguished from other forms of intertextuality whose relation to and affinity with the original is fainter, indirect and intricately disguised. Unless this primeval distinction is preserved, and the ontological dependence of the translation on the original is kept clearly in view, we will end up in a chaotic state similar to that of Pierre Menard as portrayed by Jorge Luis Borges. In one of Borges' flights of fancy, Menard is said to have composed an exact replica of Cervantes' *Don Quixote*, not by copying the text, but by reinventing it, by managing in some way to produce a copy of the original by utter coincidence. Although, in the field of translation, this example remains a mere fancy, a fruit of a bout of literary creativity unleashed by a fine mind, it still has the merit of reminding us of the extremity we may anchor to if the translation cuts too loose from the original, i.e., if the relation of essentialist causality between the ST and TT is mitigated, adulterated, and obscured.

Undeniably, Borges' phantasmagoria is not without parallels in actual translation practices. Ample examples are found where the translation breaks free

from the original in striking ways. One may think, for example, of the English edition of Olivier Todd's massive biography of Albert Camus which omits almost a third of the original, of some English renderings of Greek verse epics into prose forms, of Edward Fitzgerald's freehand translation of *Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam* in which he found that Persian poets *"are not poets enough and really do want a little art to shape them"*, etc., etc. Nevertheless, where this situation reigns supreme, it is bound to breed the suspicion and mistrust of the original writers. Of this mistrust none was perhaps more conspicuously emblematic than the Czech novelist Millan Kundera. When his reputation as a writer resounded beyond the boundaries of his native language and his works started to win the attention of translators, Kundera was in earnest to oversee and keep the transfer of his works under heel. He wanted the translation of his works to be a replica of and read just as the originals, and the translator to be an extension of himself and act as his own surrogate. Thus, he inquisitively probed the translated versions of his novels, made corrections, and even insisted on his favourite translation methods and practices in appended prefaces and separate essays. When a translation of his novel, *The Joke*, appeared in 1967, he was exceedingly appalled at the extent to which it had been edited, excised and rearranged in chapters. Another version of the same work was published two years later and made him bristle with ire so that he could not help condemning it as bastardised version, calling it "not my text". Undeniably, Kundera's attempt to control and delimit the potential uses of his texts is decidedly quirky and, from the point of view of the sociology of literature, can be dismissed as a utopian fancy, since the ensemble of factors that affect texts circulation and consumption lie within a self-regulating process of negotiation between the text itself and its milieu of reception and, therefore, objectively lies beyond his ability of control. Yet, Kundera points in his

own way to a yet unresolved problem which has always been in the heart of translation scholarly commentary, and which- after the many turns in translation studies- we can formulate in the following terms: does the Horacian antinomy between allegiance to the word and libertinism of the sense still retain any relevance?

This antimonial relationship has been extensively theorized and reconceived under more up-to-date and rigorously systematic approaches; e.g. Nida's formal vs. dynamic equivalence, Catford's formal vs. textual equivalence, House' overt vs. covert translation, Vinuti's domestication vs. foreignisation, etc. However, regardless of which stance is advocated or which is gaining momentum, the taxonomy itself still makes sense of the divide and therefore always presupposes an evaluative benchmark by which a distinction between what falls within the domain of translation proper and what constitutes an intolerable departure; between what passes as a standard recoding and what is condemned as a perversion, in a word between orthodoxy and heresy is rendered meaningful. Unmistakably, it is this divide that allows Kundera to say *"it's not my text"*, and it seems that oversensitivity on the part of the translators to keep it well demarcated that they always tend to disguise and pass such forms of perversions as either well devised or otherwise unavoidable contrivances. For a translator enters his field with the claim of, as Walter Benjamin put it, saying the same thing twice; a fact which led such people as John Dryden to pejoratively denigrate the whole realm of translation as *"labouring on another man's plantation"*. But whenever such claims can no longer be enforced due such departures in the first place, translators are quick to ensure their readers- e.g. in a footnote, a preface, a terminal essay, etc. - that their versions are by no means unmoored from the original, but rather that these departures were the best or perhaps the only way to make the translation live up to the original.

Yet, it is not departures in themselves that may mar a translation and dilute its affinity with the original but the degree and intensity into which they have been inflicted upon the original. It is indeed this intensity that makes a difference between a *translation shift* which serves- only when other options are exhausted- to bridge the linguistic and cultural gap between the ST and the TT and thus remains present in and characteristic of every act of translating, and *appropriation* which involves premeditated and superimposed poetical, ideological and - explicit or covert- economic choices of the translators. The former is intrinsic and indicative of the impossibility of absolute equivalence between two texts; the latter is extrinsic and symptomatic of the prejudices, uses and abuses to which a text may be put in the course of its transplantation outside its original space of production.

Statement of the thesis

Against this backdrop I argue in the present study that the English translations of prototypes of Arabic pseudo-narratives, namely of *Alf Layla wa Layla, Kalila wa Dimna, and Sirat 'Antar* have been subject to systemic appropriation and manipulation, that this appropriation was not the result of equivalence imperatives but of deliberate choices and considerations, and that it does not only signify the translation behaviour of the individual translators, but it is also expressive of a collective consciousness and has a binding character rooting in the culture and the circumstantial realities of their age, and finally that it is relational and history-bound in the sense that it makes manifest an imbalanced relation between two cultures coming into contact with one another at a fraught historical juncture.

This thesis conceives of translation as a polarized activity whose extreme ends are typified by Kundera's unremitting adherence to the original and Borges'

postulation of loose correspondence to the original. Indeed, the more a translation leans toward Kundera's position, the stronger is its affinity with the original and the more it is likely to be described as literal; the more it sheers off to the opposite pole, the greater is its autonomy from its antecedent and the higher are its odds to be seen as free-handed and appropriative. This thesis takes up the hypothesis that the English translations of Arabic pseudo-narratives fall somewhere within the appropriative part of the curve, that their appropriation is not the result of equivalence deficit between the natural languages of the ST and TT, but of conscious choices, decisions, and actions made by their translators, while having a full range of other alternatives handily accessible to them, to suit their translations to specific poetic and ideological purposes; and finally that the driving force behind these translations was not an interest in their literary merits and qualities, but in their folkloric elements, eccentric otherness, and exotic worlds, and therefore their position vis-à-vis the receiving polysystem was essentially peripheral in the sense that they carried no innovative forces, and they do not participate actively in shaping the home literature or supply alternatives.

Relevance of the thesis

The line of inquiry which informs this thesis retains special relevance in present-day translation debate in the Arab world, and fills in an important research gap in this area of research. Surprisingly, the prejudice of Arabic medieval scholars toward these forms of popular literature still lives with us today, though in quite different forms. While previously this prejudice was expressed in strong-worded statements, pronounced mainly by religious ideologues who looked down at popular fiction as frivolous pastimes and distractions from the more worthwhile duties of men, it is now

manifested in the contempt of high culture vis-à-vis lower forms of popular culture. Prejudice is now no longer expressed in deprecations and calls for prohibition (which is not quite a thing of the past either), but in the negligence, marginalisation and exclusion of a large sector of culture by the guardians of canon and advocates of refined taste and in its dismissal as unworthy of serious scholarly investigation. Unlike other canonised forms of high-brow literature, the strategic milieu for the circulation and consumption of these genres of popular fiction was not the prestigious circles of academia but squalid marketplaces, jammed coffee shops, and exuberant festivities, a fact which obviously explains the prevalence of its oral and performative character over written forms. Also, the disregard with which this popular literature was met until recently is clearly manifest in the slight academic interest it aroused among scholars and in the limited number of serious researches that have been produced about it. One is indeed astonished by the dearth of materials when embarking upon exploring this subject. A turning point from this general trend was only marked with the publication of Suhayr al-Qalamawi's book on *Alf Layla wa Layla* in the early sixties. Al-Qalmawi breakthrough was followed by few other endeavours such as Abd al-Fatah Kilito's *al-'Ayn wa al-'Ibrah*, and some valuable contributions by Muhsin Mahdi, Hassan Mussawi, Amir Learner and Abd al-Jebbaral-Samera'i aiming at eliciting aspects of the reception of *the Arabian Nights* in the Arab world and in the West. Nevertheless, large areas of indeterminacies and blind spots are still unexplored by scholarly inquiry. Paradoxically, this stand in sharp contrast with the huge popularity which these woks enjoyed in the West and with the immense critical interest they generated, so that, for example, *Kalila wa Dimna* is said to have been more read in medieval time than the Bible, and the publication of Alf *Layla wa Layla* was enough to trigger off a literary movement, as one critic once remarked.

Objectives

This thesis is an attempt to chart one important aspect in Arabic popular literature which still begs investigation; namely how the transfer of some of its prototypes was mediated, which considerations and imperatives came into play in this transfer, and what forms of loss and gain arose from it. My scope of analysis does not stop at the descriptive level; i.e. it does not only follow up aspects and levels of alignment between the ST and TT and enumerates units and levels of equivalence (or the lack thereof); rather it seeks to penetrate deeper into the interior patterns, systematic relations, and unconscious structures that operate within these translations, to situate translation and transfer within higher frameworks and hierarchies under whose synergy a certain number of procedures are enacted and a set of norms and structures are activated to make the translations fit with some well-defined purposes, interests, and agendas. In other words this thesis does not only engage with the question of how some translations of Arabic pseudo-narratives materialised, but also addresses the more cumbersome question of why they materialised in the way they did.

Methodology

This thesis is an analytical-critical study of the translators' behaviour, actions and practices in their transfer of Arabic popular narratives into the English literary system. It employs a qualitative method that seeks to provide a holistic understanding of the phenomenon under study. It looks at the larger picture to explore its systematic relationships. The analysis of data involves the three basic categories characteristic of the qualitative approach, i.e. description, analysis and interpretation. In investigating the forms of appropriation and manipulation to which Arabic pseudo-narratives were

subject in English translations, I tried to make sure that the case studies are adequately representative of and methodologically sampling the topic of the thesis, and also that they demonstrate sufficient similarities and systematic relations that allow for their coding within a comprehensive interpretive model. Theoretically this thesis is informed by the theoretical insights of what has come to be known in translations studies as *the cultural turn*. Since the eighties of the last century, there appeared in the field of translation a new critical and theoretical trend that approaches translation and tackles its problems from a cultural perspective. This trend was championed by Susan Bassnett's *Translation Studies*, André Lefevere's *Translation, rewriting and the Manipulation of Literary Fame*, and some jointly written or edited works such as *Translation, Culture, History, Constructing Cultures*, etc. It was soon joined and enriched by the insightful contributions of such scholars such as Theo Hermans, Snell-Hornbell and many others. What this group have in common is, as James Holmes notes, a view of literature as a complex and dynamic system; a felt need that there should be a continual interplay between theoretical models and practical studies; a shared understanding that literary translation should be descriptive, target oriented, functional, and systemic; a particular attention to the norms and constraints as having directive or regulatory function in the production and reception of translation, and a recognition of the relation between translation and other types of text processing, and of its function within a literary system as well as with other literary systems. This new trend came to unloose translation studies from the deadlock which the normative/prescriptive (i.e. the linguistic) model has brought it into. With the shift in focus from the worn-out concept of *fidelity* to *equivalence* as a key entry of analysis of translation practices and behaviours, and with the move from impressionistic approaches to more rigorous scientific and systematic endeavours, translation studies

achieved tremendous advances and turned translation, both as an act and process, into an object of scientific or quasi-scientific contemplation. But its excessive- or perhaps exclusive- interest in the linguistic aspect of translation confined scholarly research to the interiority of the source and target texts and disregarded other exterior factors which are equally and effectively operative in determining the range of possibilities and decision-making strategies for the individual translators. This branded this approach as essentially prescriptive, source-text oriented, linguistic, atomistic, and static. In the new light of the cultural turn, the cornerstone of the scientific model (i.e. equivalence) as the model itself has been progressively questioned in favour of the more dynamic concepts of norms and social constructs, and translation started to be conceived of and addressed as a particular mode of discursive transfer between cultural circuits and systems; that is, as a communicative act that takes place in a concrete social context of complex structures, relations, conflicts and interests, and enacted by real social agents who are actants in their spatial temporal context. Without overlooking the linguistic features of the ST as the central issue in studies of translation, the cultural approach assigns special attention to the function and effect of translation in the target culture, and opens up new streams for research consisting of an ensemble of factors that affect translation from without. This recognition and inclusion of new aspects and features as integral parts of translation as a social phenomenon allowed for establishing a new paradigm for the study of translation on the basis of comprehensive theory and empirical investigation. Therefore, this thesis borrows its tools of analysis, concepts and technical terminology from this functionalist approach. In tune with its line of thought, it charts such areas poetics, ideology, norms, conventions, patronage, commission, interest, value systems, etc. as underlying factors that influence translation practices, set the horizon for translators

and delimit their options, and in effect impose certain particular types of transfer and downplay, side-line or eliminate others.

This thesis is also guided by the theoretical exploits of the postcolonial theory. It draws and builds on the assumptions that were first initiated by Edward Said and later debated and developed by such critics as Homi Bhabha, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Aijaz Ahmad, Bill Ashcroft , Kwaim Anthony Appiah and many others. As a cultural mode of analysis and a critical underside of imperialism, postcolonial theory anatomises and deconstructs discursive practices and forms of ideological and cultural hegemony that underpinned, sustained and supported the European imperial expansion in foreign lands or were born out of the consequent encounter with foreign races and cultures. Of particular interest to me was Said's *Orientalism* which maps out the relationship between the Oxidant and Orient as a relation of power, of domination, of varying degrees of a complex hegemony, and posits that Orientalism- as a systematic knowledge of and about the Orient- was generated out of strength and a sense of superiority over it. By employing the theoretical postulates of the postcolonial theory we are allowed not only to address the embeddedness of translation in given cultural situations, and of translation as taking place not between isolated linguistic fragments but between cultural systems, but also, in our case, to put into perspective that translation of Arabic pseudo-narratives took place between two contiguous cultural systems- the Arabic and European- that had been tied to one another by a long history of ebb and flow of bloody military clashes, mutual hostilities, commercial exchange, cultural transfer, transient coexistence, etc. and that, therefore, translation was at the heart of and bears the traces of this encounter. Without taking full account of these facts, appropriation- the main theme of this

thesis- would lose essence as an exercise of power by one culture over another and remain a mere technical issue that is unaccounted for by any causal or teleological factors.

Outline

In its outline, this thesis is divided into two parts. The first part deals with the cultural encounter between Europe and the Arabs in two differentiated historical moments: in the medieval period and in the post-renaissance period. It problematizes the fact that this cultural encounter unfolded in two paradigmatic forms both of which were inscribed by the relation of powers that obtained between the two cultural and civilizational entities: in the first, imitation appear as the prevalent form of encounter in the sense that the Arabs were conceded military and intellectual superiority, and therefore their models were regarded in some respects as worthy of emulation; in the second, when Europe rose to prominence via humanism, the scientific method, and the cult of reason, appropriation, manifested in the variegated streams of Orientalism, asserted itself as the prevalent form of cultural encounter between Europe and the Arabs. The second part of this thesis unearths forms of appropriation and manipulation in specific examples of Arabic Pseudo-narratives. It explores instances of license and formal departure from the originals through omissions, adaptations, bowdlerization, additions, elisions, misprisions, etc. as revealing the translators' conscious choices and decision-making strategies that in effect demonstrate the extent of their involvement and interestedness in the foreign text. To avoid the uneasiness and aesthetic discomfort that may result from the inclusion in the same pages the graphically distinct scripts of English and Arabic, I have attached an appendix in which I placed along with the samples of the translations and originals that have been

analysed in the course of this study as typically representing the appropriative actions of the translators my own translation of the same excerpts to the end of forming a better idea about the elements that have been suppressed, mitigated, and polished or added, invented and interpolated, and that in effect brand the act of translation in these texts as an appropriative rewrite.

I. Western encounter with the East: from imitation to appropriation

1 Early cultural encounter

Before the arrival of Muslims in Iberia in 711, the peninsula was hardly a prospering civilization; its culture was only poorly developed, its lands mostly untended. Once the Arabs gained controlled of it, a matured civilization started to brood over it and its fruition rapidly impregnated all aspects of life with its ethos. In less than a century, particularly with the succession of Abd al-Rahman to the throne, the soils were cultivated, deserted cities were populated, monumental castles, riveting minarets and splendid palaces were erected, and strong commercial bonds with other nations were boosted.[1] Meanwhile, the blossoming civilization picked a strong curiosity for knowledge and an inborn and rigorous inclination for advancing arts and science. Driven by a desire to develop these activities to rival or even best the achievements of the Abbasid empire in Mesopotamia, the Arabs of Andalusia immersed themselves in translating the rich fund of Greek and Latin scholarship, built schools, libraries, and labs across different parts of their dominions, and diligently engaged with studying such sciences as mathematics, astronomy, alchemy, medicine and accomplished extraordinary feats.

As with all full-blown and well established civilizations whose feats and achievements become the envy for their rivals and their manners and models set good

[1] Describing the situation in Spain, Gustav le Bon states : « Sous les rois visigoths, l'Espagne chrétienne avait été dans une situation peu prospère. Sa culture était celle d'un peuple à demi barbare. Aussitôt que les Arabes eurent terminé leur conquête, leur oeuvre de civilisation commença. En moins d'un siècle, ils avaient défriché les campagnes incultes, peuplé les villes désertes, créé des monuments magnifiques, établi des relations commerciales avec tous les autres peuples. Ils s'étaient ensuite adonnés à la culture des sciences et des lettres, traduisaient les auteurs grecs et latins, et fondaient des universités qui furent pendant longtemps les seuls foyers intellectuels de l'Europe ». Gustave Le Bon. *La Civilisation des Arabes.* Paris, Firmin-Didot, 1884. Pp,140-41.

examples for emulation, the Arabs' achievements in Andalusia were viewed by the non-Arabs with awe and admiration. On the other part of the divide, *"Latin was outgrowing the narrow ecclesiastical disciplines of the Dark Ages; men were becoming curious about matters which they had hitherto accepted on authority. Unable to find satisfaction in the narrowness, poverty, and lack of originality of such Latin literature as they possessed, they were forced to look elsewhere for what they desired. To the Islamic world they had hitherto conceded – and that grudgingly- only a military superiority; now they realized with shame that was also their intellectual superior"*[2]. By this time Arabic language already asserted itself as the major medium of textual communications that is used by Muslims and non-Muslims alike. And through it a rich amalgam of Hellenistic, oriental and Arabic knowledge was made available for European scholars who were attracted from different parts of the continent by the tolerance and blossoming cultural life under the Islamic rule in the Iberian Peninsula. The communal interweaving between a motley mixture of ethnicities and cultures- Arabs, Berbers, Muslims, Christians, Jews, etc. - through incursions, marriage, trade, conversion and day-to-day dealings allowed for a rich cultural exchange and provided an ideal environment for the burgeoning of *"translation activities the maintenance of which were only further stimulated by the enormous quantity and variety of newly rendered materials that continued to reach the peninsula from the East"*[3]. The fecundity of these activities and the richness of intellectual life which upheld them turned such centers as Cordoba with its well-

[2] H. A. R. Gibb. "literature" in the legacy of Islam. Ed. Sir Thomas Arnold and Alfred Guillaume. Oxford, Oxford UP. 1931. P,197.
[3] Ibid. P,196.

furnished libraries and prodigious collections, as the German nun, Hroswitha of Gundersheim once said, into *"the brilliant ornament of the world"*[4].

Translation activities rapidly flourished in the big centres of Iberia such as Seville, Cordoba and Toledo, etc. even in times of strife and communal unrest within or between the rivaling states and viceroys; or during the ensuing incursions by the Moroccan monarchies of al-Moravids and al-Mohads; or when some of these centres were overtaken by the Spanish rulers such was the case with Toledo in 1085, intellectual and translation activities continued undaunted. When al-Fonso VI of Castile retook Toledo, for example, the city became a major place for cultural exchange and translation and a school of translation was established in it by a Christian archbishop which was to attract translators from across the continent. One figure whose name was associated with this school was Peter the Venerable, an abbot of the French Benedictine monastery who came to Toledo driven by an unconcealed interest in and a surge of anxiety about Islam. Being himself unacquainted with Arabic, Peter sought the services of another translator to render into Latin the sacred text of Muslims. The requirements and qualifications of this undertaking found a best candidate in Robert of Ketton, a prolific translator, English by origin, who was then bent on translating some Arabic mathematic treatises on algebra. In the year 1143, Robert put the final touches on his Latin version of the Koran and the final work appeared under the title *Lex Mohemut Pseudoprophete*[5]. Of note was also another translator: Moses Sefaradi, born a Jew and rechristened as Peter Alfonso after his conversion to Christianity. His reputation, however, rests chiefly on his voluminous collection, *Disciplina Clericalis*, which contained motley tales and moralizing animal

[4] Ibid.
[5] Ibid. P,197.

fables that were clearly drawn from oriental materials. Undeniably, this collection epitomizes clear instances of the presence and earliest traces of Arabic popular narratives such as *Kalila wa Dimna*, *One Thousand Nights and one Night*, *Sindbad*, etc. in Western fiction[6]. Indeed, *the aphoristic collection, with its framing techniques and variegated source material, provided one source of inspiration for such foundational classics of western literature such as Boccaccio's Decameron, and Geoffrey Chaucer's Canterbury Tale*[7]*s*.

One important aspect of this translation activity that flourished under the Islamic dynasty in Andalusia is that it was not driven by a local or temporary urge, but had an international influence, a long lasting effect and a rich cultural output that intricately fed into the streams of the cultural and intellectual life of medieval Europe. This fact is clearly understood from the names of translators associated with it. These include, among so many others, Adelard of Bath, Plato of Tivoli, Dominicus Gundisalvi, Michaeles Scotus who, in addition to his fame as a prolific translator of philosophical and natural science texts, gained wide popularity by being consigned to hell in Dante's *Inferno*[8]. But while the cultural transfer which was made possible by this translation movement was rich and monumental, it could not completely transcend the nature of the relationship between the parties involved in it, between the lender and borrow, so to speak. Much as translators and their patrons valorised the material they translated they did not lose sight of the fundamental antagonism they feel toward their true owner; the *Saracens*. Therefore, at the heart of this translation

[6] Abd al-Jabbar al-Samarra'i. "Alf Layla wa Layla fi al-Adab al-Uropiya". *Al-Adab*. V. 3-4. 01-March 1973. P,68.
[7] Roger Allen. "Arabic and Translation: Key moments in Trans-Cultural Connection". Op.cit. Pp, 197-98.
[8] Ibid.

movement, particularly at its inception, was a deep sense of ambivalence, an admixture of awe and fear.

2 The anxiety of influence: awe and fear

The depth and fecundity which the west's actual and textual encounter with the Islamic east yielded up is, in one important aspect, unreservedly expressed in Mackail's statement that *"as Europe owes its religion to Judaea, so it owes its romance to Arabia"*[9]. Of course there was more to the cultural transfer from the east to Medieval Europe than met Mackail's eyes. Indeed, compared to the output of other disciplines, namely science and philosophy, the ratio of the literary elements in this transfer may seem quite disproportionate. Following Hamilton Gibb's categorization, the encounter between the two civilizations occurred in two differentiated moments and took two distinct forms: (1) *"in the Middle Ages when there was a substantial identity between the civilization of Islam and Christendom, imitation on the part of the latter may well have been fruitful; (2) after the Renaissance, it could produce at best only harmless curiosities"*[10]. Stripped of their subtlety, Gibb's words point out that imitation prevailed when the whole of Europe stood in a relational inferiority to the east; when the latter, having already brought big stretches of European mainland under its control, represented a prodigious political, military and economic power, and- religiously and culturally speaking- manifested itself as Europe's antagonistic Other and the arch-enemy of its Christian faith. It was therefore natural that an overwhelming sense of enmity couched in religious polemics appeared to predominate this first phase. What is even more striking is how limited and superficial was Europe's understanding of the east. The faint and uncontested ideas which Europe first entertained about Islamic Arabia crammed its whole gamut of ethnicities,

[9] H. A. R. Gibb. "Literature". Op.cit. P,191.
[10] Ibid. P,209.

cultures, linguistic and religious variations, and historical experience, etc. under the totalizing word: *Saracens*[11].

Before coming upon the scene as a full-fledged superpower, Europe had heard of Saracens long before they espoused Islam. Then, they were no better than other barbarous peoples *"who depend for their living on the power of the bow and looting"*[12]. As long as they were content with shutting themselves in their Bedouin enclaves, they aroused little intrigue except among some chroniclers who mistakenly traced out their lineage to Sarah, Abraham's wife, despite the fact that they descended from Hajar (Hagar), the mother of Ishmael (Ismail)[13]. This simplistic image about the Arabs continued well undisturbed and was later lavishly nourished by popular perceptions and representations that *"belong less to the history of Western thought about Islam than to the History of Western imagination"*[14]. Central to these mythical representations was the image of the prophet as drawn from the stock of folkloric beliefs, Byzantine tales and from what R.W. Southern calls the triumphant fancies of ignorance. His branded image was one of an impostor who deceived people through magic and fraudulence, destroyed the church in the East and Africa and permitted sexual license[15]. His followers, as described in the *Songs of Roland* and other *chansons de geste* literature, were regarded as polytheistic idol-worshipers, with Mohamed being their chief idol and his statutes were said to be carved out from

[11] Saracens was the pejorative term used to signify Muslims and became later exchangeable with Muhammadans. The word Islam is a comparatively recent improvement. It was first used in English in 1613 and in French in 1687. See David R. Blanks' "Western Views of Islam in the Premodern Period" *Western Views of Islam in Medieval and Early Modern Period*. Ed. David R. Blanks and Michael Frassetto. New York, St. Martin's Press,199. P,14.

[12] Maxime Rodinson. "Western Image and Western Studies of Islam" in the Legacy of Islam. Ed. Joseph Schacht, Clifford Edmund Bosworth. Tran. Mohamed Maher al-Samhuri et al. *'Alam al-Ma'rifa*. V.1 No.11. 1978. P,30.

[13] Ibid.

[14] Hugh Goddard. *A history of Christian-Muslim Relations*. Edinburg , Edinburg UP. 2000. P,92.

[15] Maxime Rodinson. "Western Image and Western Studies of Islam" in the Legacy of Islam. Op.cit. P,34.

precious materials and big rocks[16]. That these commonly cherished ideas about the east and easterners were completely ungrounded and starkly incongruent with general facts were no issue even for people who could rise above the ignominious ignorance of lay people. Their veracity demanded no proof. Their mere articulation was enough evidence for their truthfulness. And the more they were shared and repeated, the more they rang truer. When Guilbert de Nogent was, for example, once faced with the wild absurdity of these clichés, he said it is not harmful to speak ill of those whose filthiness is unimaginably second to none[17].

However, when these *Saracens* anchored to European shores and started conquering long stretches of land in Spain, Corsica, Galicia, Sicily, etc. Europe woke up to the fact that the images and ideas which it had formerly formed about them had no touch with the actual reality, and therefore were of no use to cope with the imminent threat looming in the horizon. Then, a more accurate knowledge of the conqueror, a more realistic understanding of its capabilities and character, and a more informed insight into its customs, manners, languages, history, political institutions and religious teachings was needed. Not only was the enemy capable of routing out Europe's militaries, taking over its lands, and controlling its resources; it was also menacing its cultural identity and jeopardizing its faith and value system. It was therefore natural that first attempts at serious intellectual efforts to understand the nature of the threat came from places where the threat was most imminent; i.e. in Spain where the Arab civilization was at its most vibrant, where its achievements bore witness to and validated the driving force behind them, i.e. Islam, and where its cultural influence already seriously contaminated the Christian community.

[16] Ibid.
[17] Ibid.

The self-validating popular speculations were later supplemented by more reasonable judgments that were now worked out not from polemical and free flowing suppositions, but from direct contact with and study of Islamic sources. This earnest and more informed attitude towards the Arabs originated in the translation activities that took place in the 11th and 12th centuries. The already mentioned Jewish convert, Petrus Alfonsi, produced a *Dialogue against the Jews*, presumably taking place between a Christian and a Jew; between himself as a Jew that he once was and a convert that he now is. The dialogue was meant to lash out at his old beliefs but also a good portion of it was assigned to refute the faith of the Saracens. Surprisingly, it shows a more in-depth exploration of the Islamic teachings and of the historical situation in which they emerged which - though serving the same ends- displaces the mere conjectural impressions which had hitherto been in vogue. Alfonsi's line of thought could still afford quoting directly from the Koran, drawing on historical incidents that took place during revelation, spanning or establishing aspects of affinity between the Islamic text and the New and Old Testaments, though with the free play of a zealot and an experienced polemicist whose ultimate purpose was not to find out about the validity of a religion by some disinterested measures of truth, but to justify to the public- and maybe to himself- his conversion to Christianity. Although critics like Southern, N. Daniel praise his work for its grains of objectivity or factual elements, this cannot hide the fact that he most unabashedly bends facts to his will. More understanding responses to Islam continued to surface here and there during the subsequent few decades. In 1120 William of Malmesbury noted that Muslims were not idolatrous or pagans and that Muhammad was not their God, but their prophet. In Germany, the chronicler Otto Freising laid bare the fact that Muslims worship one

God, respect Christ and his apostles, and that they only erred in not acknowledging Christ as God and the Son of God[18].

The significance of these testimonies lies not so much in their humanistic tones or willingness to recognize facts in their externality, as in the fact that they mark a growing tendency that was gathering pace to the effect that wishful thinking and commonly entertained polemics could not be conducive to fruitful knowledge of the east- which is to say of the Saracens and their world- and that such knowledge was only attainable through thorough and firsthand inquiry into the East's textual productions. Direct contact with the funds of Eastern riches was bound to trigger a reconsideration of the premises and perspectives by means of which the existential threat posed by the East was to be coped with. Here tribute is usually paid to Peter the Venerable whose contribution both laid the ground for a more systematic approach and inspired others to follow suit. Though he was a close friend of Bernard de Clairvaux, a monk and a fanatic preacher of the crusades, Peter suggested an alternative track to deal with Islam. This basically resided in investigating Islam from its own sources, which required engaging with extensive translation activities that soon evolved into a well oriented programme. And as the mainstay of Arabic and Latin Knowledge was not to be found in France, but in Toledo where the intellectual exchange and translation activities were at their zenith of development, Peter moved there in 1142, and his travel was seen by many as *"a momentous event in the Intellectual history of Europe"*[19].

Under Peter's patronship, many works- known collectively as *"corpus toletanum"* - were translated. These include a densely polemical harangue against

[18] Hugh Goddard. *A history of Christian-Muslim Relations*. Op.cit. P,93.
[19] Ibid.

Islam by an Egyptian Christian named Abd al-Masih ibn Ishaq al-Kindi (not to be confused with the Muslim notable philosopher Abu Yusuf ibn Ishaq al-Kindi); but the most important was his Translation of the Koran into Latin- carried out by Robert of Ketton- which provided the first serious instrument for Western scholarly inquiry into Islam. The work which appeared under the title *Lex Mahumet Pseudoprophete* was completed in 1143 and was used along with other translated materials as a basis for his two major works: *The Refutation of the Sect or Heresy of the Saracens* (Liber contra Sectam sive Heresim Saracenorum) and *The Summary of the Entire Heresy of the Saracens* (Summa totius heresis Saracenorum). Peter's works, in which the apologetic thread of his precursor- Peter Alfonso- strongly resonates- were widely celebrated and propounded some of the stigmas and stereotypes- particularly the view that Islam is a perversion and a heresy of Christianity- that remained so intimately attached to Islam for centuries to come. This group of scholars were unified by a zeal to achieve by peaceful means what others, like Peter the Hermit and Bernard de Clairvaux, set out to achieve by the sword; i.e. striking back against Saracens, retaking the old Christian dominions that had fallen into their hands, refuting the doctrine of Islam and proving to their coreligionists the validity of Christianity. Though their voice was only faintly heard in the midst of the clatter of crusaders who were vested with the power of the European monarchs and Popes, their impact however was of enduring effect.

The effort of Peter the venerable broke the ground for and animated later scholars to join in the project. Roger Bacon wrote a treatise for Pope Clement IV, arguing that *"Christendom had been misguided in its aim, which were more concerned with domination than with conversion and had relied on inadequate*

methods"[20]. Preaching not warring was Bacon's conceived means to ensure widest expansion for Christianity. And to this end, he tried hard to persuade the Pope with the idea of establishing schools of Oriental languages, but apparently his proposition fell on deaf ears. Though it was, decades later, seriously considered by the council of Vienne in 1235, and plans were laid to study languages such as Arabic, Greek, Syriac and Hebrew in Paris, Salamanca, Bologona, Oxford, etc. they remained mere plans and never actually materialized.

This heightened interest in Islam along with the categorical shift in perspective towards it was inseparable from the cultural situation that obtained in two contact zones between Muslims and Christians: Spain and Sicily. Spain was, in the 12th century, as Hugh Goddard nicely described it, a *"kind of mirror image of the 9th century in Baghdad, with an active translation movement making accessible works of philosophy and science to a new audience. Whereas in Baghdad, however, the translations were from Greek and Syriac into Arabic, in Spain they were from Arabic to Latin"*[21]. Within a relatively short period of time key Arabic and Latin works were translated in philosophy, medicine, astronomy, mathematics, politics, geography and figures such as Avicenna, Averroes, Ibn Rush, al-Ghazzali along with Ptolemy, Euclid, Aristotle, Galen, and Hippocrates, etc. were all made accessible in Latin. Gerard of Cremona alone is credited with translating more than eighty Arabic works to Latin. This moment of intensive cultural exchange and transfer marked a period in the history of Islamic rule in Andalusia in which the latter turned out into the cradle of philosophy to such an extent that being a Muslim was in the collective unconscious of

[20] Ibid. P,96.
[21] Ibid. P,97.

the age synonymous with being a philosopher[22]. Also, more works aiming at presenting more meticulous descriptions of the Islamic system of belief- or unbelief as was more frequently the case- continued to pour out. Another, more literal and less popular, translation of the Koran was carried out by Mark of Toledo, sometimes with glosses from Islamic sources incorporated into the translations to ease up its interpretation. The French Dominican friar of the Cistercian monastery, Vincent of Beauvais, composed a work, *Speculum Historiale*, which was widely read in the Middle Ages, and later became a source of portrays of the prophet, historical accounts of the Koran and descriptions of the Islamic teachings. This increasing access to Islamic materials did not however diminish the firmly established Christian view that sees in *"Islam the single-most obstacle to Christianity and ... [its] devilish apostasy"*[23]

Sicily was the other contact zone through which Islamic philosophical and scientific learning warmed its way to the West. This small Italian Island was wrestled out of the Byzantines and brought under Muslims' control as early as 827, after continuous raids from Tunisia. But Muslims' grip over the island soon loosened, as a result of the incessant disputes between local princes which paved the way for the Normans of the north to capture it. The last Arab stronghold in Sicily, Palermo, was lost in 1072, but the pipeline of cultural exchange was not completely disrupted by this event. In the following years, particularly during Roger II's reign, court documents continued to be issued in Latin, Greek and Arabic and Arabic culture continued to exert vital influence that both Roger II and Frederic II were called

[22] Maxime Rodinson. "Western Image and Western Studies of Islam" in *the Legacy of Islam*. Op.cit. P,38.
[23] Jo Ann Hoeppner Moran Cruz. " Popular attitudes Towards Islam in Middle Ages" in *Western Views of Islam in Medieval and Early Modern Period.* Op.cit. P,65.

"*baptized sultans of Sicily*"[24], a fact which, at least in the latter's case, was sure to gain him the enmity of papacy. It admits of no doubt that Arabic poetry was cultivated at Frederic's court, and as with Alfonso the Wise of Castille, Arabic ballerinas and singing girls were to be found in his suit[25].

In this phase of encounter when *imitation* reigned supreme, the West looked to the East with "anxiety and awe"[26]- as would normally obtain in a relationship of an inferior looking up to a military, political and cultural superior. Attention then was almost exclusively focused on those elements which were thought to be behind the latter's power or that would provide a basis for a solid understanding of this power; with power here meaning both wealth and might. Typically, in such an imbalanced relationship, obsession with the victor's manners is the responsive mechanism of the weak to live up to its weakness. Ibn Khaldun already sketched this condition in his *Prolegomena*, stating that people tend to presuppose perfection to be intrinsically characteristic of the victor to whom they submissively succumb. The reason for this, he said, is:

> The soul always sees perfection in the person who is superior to it and to whom it is subservient. It considers him perfect, either because the respect it has for him impresses it, or because it erroneously assumes that its own subservience to him is not due to the nature of defeat but to the perfection of the victor. If that erroneous assumption fixes itself in the soul, it becomes a firm belief. The soul, then, adopts all the manners of the victor and assimilates itself to him. This, then, is imitation. Or, the soul may

[24] Hugh Goddard. *A history of Christian-Muslim Relations*. Op.cit. P,98.
[25] [25] H. A. R. Gibb. "literature" in the legacy of Islam. Op.cit. P,191.
[26] See more on this in Daniel J. Vitkus. "Early Modern Orientalism: Representations of Islam in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Century-Europe". In *Western Views of Islam in Medieval and Early Modern Period*. Op.cit. p,209.

> possibly think that the superiority of the victor is not the result of his group feeling or great fortitude, but of his customs and manners[27].

Though his quote nicely unravels what one may call the social psychology of the vanquished which universally holds of a situation when two unequal parties are brought by historical contingencies to rub shoulders in a fraught scene, it cannot be said to describe fastidiously the case that prevailed in medieval Europe. This condition may only be said to have prevailed in those places that fell to the Muslim's lot; in most of Spain, Southern part of France and of Italy. For the rest of Europe and its centres of Gravity from which Reconquista and crusades campaigns were launched, the victor's manners were not a lived reality but, a potential threat that had to be handled. Furthermore, Islam allows its subjects from other- basically Christian or Jewish- religions who are unwilling to convert to maintain their manners and customs and only pay a small tax in return for their protection. This fact, though remained largely subject to historical vicissitudes of all sorts, must have encouraged religious communities to stick to their systems of values and enabled minorities to retain the integrity of their cultural identities. But in the more learned circles *imitation* was not without advantages. It's not a mere tautology to say that the translation activities, as charted above, represent the most direct form of this imitation, given that at a narrower level imitation is inherent in the very act of translation; and indeed, the more perfect an imitation is the more it counts for the faithfulness of a translation. But imitation in the sense that Hamilton uses it has a wider signification. It points out not to a single text or group of texts, but to a model, to a prototype, a paradigm which, to the imitator, is always vested with or representative of the superiority of the victor.

[27] Ibn Khaldun. *The Muqaddimah: An Introduction to History*. Tran. Franz Rosenthal. Princeton UP, Princeton, 1967. P,116.

This *"willingness to take what the other [the East] has to give, an implied recognition of its superiority in one or another field"*[28] found expression in the Western collective scholarly efforts to implant the body of the East's literary, philosophical and scientific learning in the European soil. And here too, what Ibn Khaldun said of the vanquished predisposition to mimic the manners and actions of the victor seems to apply in full measure. This is because the power of the victor is in one important aspect accounted for by the excess of knowledge and learning it has cultivated and developed.

Approaching early Western translation activities of Arabic materials in both Spain and Sicily in this light gives us some insight into the imperatives and priorities that brought to bear on the process of translation. A quick look at the list of works that were translated between in the 11th and 13th centuries makes it clear that the focus of individual translators and the patrons behind them was overwhelmingly addressed to rendering into Latin religious texts and commentaries, philosophical works and scientific treatises. This means that the considerations that sparked these translations were utilitarian in the first place. They were driven by the bated angst-ridden biblical polemics to engage in systematic tirade to the effect of demonstrating to the Christian co-religionists the heretic nature of Islam and corroborating the validity and righteousness of the Christian faith, or by the pressurizing urge to profit from the achievements and inventions accomplished by the Arabs in such fields as medicine, agriculture, astrology, maritime commerce, etc.

Translation, as the most direct form of imitation, then could be seen as effective and instrumentally productive only insofar as it can retrieve or generate- one may feel

[28] H. A. R. Gibb. "Literature" in the legacy of Islam. Op.cit. P, 181.

tempted to use the Marxist term- "use value" abounding in the funds of Eastern knowledge that can feed into the Biblical scholarship in its invective against Islam, or that can otherwise serve some practical purposes. Thus Peter the Venerable's first translation of the Koran gave Western scholars exposure to the basic tenets and teachings of the Islam and therefore enabled them to produce more effective criticism grounded not on mere fancies but on factual elements. Avicenna's *The Canon* was used as a base of medical education for the practice of doctors in the course of many generations, and as a manual for the diagnosis, prevention and treatment of internal diseases, and for handling a whole gamut of problems relating to physiology, fitness, pediatrics and pharmacology. But some of his philosophical and theological ideas about the status of the *Imam* were used for example by Roger Bacon to consolidate the pope's position and expand his powers. Later on, Thomas Aquinas based much of his *Summa contra Gentiles*, which he intended to argue powerfully against Islamic teachings and to make *"the truth of Catholic faith manifest to those who did not hold it"*[29], on the theological postulates of Avicenna and Averroes. This accentuation of the practical value in the translated works appears to have defined the order of priority in selecting from a range of available Eastern materials what was deemed as commanding translation, and in turn placed restrictions on a range of other equally available materials which were left out as unworthy of translation. To this latter category belongs the East's edifice of literary works and belle letters whose presence in the West was initially worked out not through direct *imitation* but through *hybridization*.

[29] Hugh Goddard. *A history of Christian-Muslim Relations*. Op.cit. P,103.

Although one may find very few complete or wholesome translations of serious or typical examples of Arabic literature among the inventory of works that were translated to Latin in Medieval times, Medieval Europe was not quite unfamiliar with the literary creations of the East. Through twisted and indirect means many Arabic works- both prosodic and prosaic- unfailingly worked their way to European readers. Most striking examples of this poetic influence are found in troubadour poetry; a type of courtly love verse that appeared and flourished in Provence, having no antecedent in the Western literary system but displaying close affinity with a prosodic form that originated and was in wide circulation in Andalusia. The appearance of this new type of poetry in south-eastern France between the 11th to 13th centuries was intriguing to many. The question as to how this *"new type of poetry, with a new theme, a new social psychology, and a new technique suddenly came into existence … at the end of the eleventh century"*[30] was not easy to resolve. The anxiety of influence which overbears this question is nuanced by the cultural aloofness that seemingly set apart the troubadours from their possible inspirers. For one, none of these Provencal poets was known to be conversant with Arabic language, a most basic condition for them to have access to the riches of Andalusian poetry. Also, the thematic gist of their poetry, their palpitating love, their sentimental doctrine and romantic cult- as Hamilton Gibbs would say- that *"finds its ideal not in the maiden but in the wife, from whose worship and service derives an ethical force by which the poet's is enriched and ennobled"*[31]had thematically and formally no match in any known literary genre. Hamilton exhausts several possibilities in a bid to trace out the roots of this platonic image of love and the beloved, but in none were his postulates satisfactorily

[30] H. A. R. Gibb. "Literature" . Op.cit. P, 183
[31] Ibid. P,185.

conducive to his findings. Neither in the bourgeois manners of the time which treated women as a trifle as in any brutal system; nor in the chivalry ideals or the Church's values of virginity; nor even in a possible relation between the poet and his patroness which would require a humbler overtones. None of these hypothetical possibilities was found by Gibb to sustain such an idealized image of the woman. The odds for this type of poetry against having nascently developed out of some germs in the Western literary system were so high, and no evidence- whether in the metrical scheme or in its content- could be found to support such a supposition. In turn, plenty of evidence- not the least plausible was the fact that the stanzas are skillfully constructed with a view to the needs of choral singing and minstrels' performance with musical accompaniment- removed all doubts about the identicalness of Provencal courtly poetry with the Andalusian *zajal*. After weighing aspects of affinities, Gibb was led to conclude that the transmission of this poetic art to the Troubadours must have been through the mediation of the 'Moors of Andalusia' or the *Mozarabes* who *"understood and spoke Romance familiarly and habitually….and were often conversant with Arabic literature and in turn contributed many seeds of Islamic culture to the northern kingdoms"*[32]. Whether this artistic transfer occurred through the mediation of these *Mozarabes*, as Hamilton suggests, or through some other means the truth remains that it signalled a singular instance of an East's poetic form being absorbed, assimilated and hybridized within the Western literary system.

Nonetheless, the imprint of influence which Arabic literature left on the Western literary system was no less traceable in prose than in verse. It is true that, like in poetry, no major Arabic prose work (except *Kalila wa Dimna* which was translated

[32] Ibid. Pp,187-88.

to Alfonso the Wise as early as 1251) was translated to Latin or other European vernaculars before the renaissance. But this fact does not preclude the now the established reality that many Arabic prose works worked their way to European literary field, unfazed by adversaries, hostilities and fault-lines of cultural divisions of the Middle Ages. Many Arabic works, genres, styles, and techniques crept to the European mainstream. Men like Bernard Lewis- on whom the anxiety of influence works most- lament the feeble and disproportionate weight of influence of Arabic literary creations in medieval Europe, but this lament- if truly felt- sits uneasily with historical facts[33]. Not only did influence occur, but it occurred to such a degree and extensiveness that make it easily noticeable in even the most celebrated masterpieces of the age.

In all probability, early signs of Arabic belle letters influence occurred first through oral transmission. Through trade, pilgrimage and crusades' expeditions Western travellers and crusaders gained more exposure to the stock of tales that were then in wide circulation in the East. Gibb provides ample examples in which traces of Eastern literary elements are most clearly stamped. Affinities, for example, are found between Arabic romances and the story of *Isolde Blanchemain*, the German *Rolandslied*, etc. Also, the author of Grail saga names an Arabic work as his source. Palpable impress is even clearer in the French romance *Floire et Blanchefleur*[34]. The strong presence of Oriental elements in this tale made scholars at loss over whether it

[33] See in this regard Bernard Lewis' *Islam and the West*. Oxfor UP, Oxford, 1993. Pp,61-2.
[34] H. A. R. Gibb. "Literature". Op.cit P, 193.

is an oriental tale adapted for Western audiences, or a tale whose European author simply supplied it with an oriental setting[35].

Just as merchant and crusaders brought with them wares, booties, silk and spices, etc. they brought with them stories of marvels, legends, romances and apologues. From these oral sources were drawn some oriental tales and incorporated into the narrative frame of many well-known Western narratives such as Boccaccio's *Decamorone*. Chaucer also was not beyond the spell of Oriental influence. His *Squieres Tale* features a story from *the Arabian Nights* in which the setting is laid in a Moghul Khan's court. In the course of the 14th century, orally transmitted stories were supplemented by more translations of Arabic repertory of fabulous tales to entertain new reading classes. And "*These oriental tales were preferred to the popular medieval stock, not only because of their variety and polished literary presentation, but above all because they displayed a richer imagination and a more edifying aim*"[36]. What made the demand for this type of tales greater is that their edifying content was largely unmoored from Islamic teachings in the strict sense, and therefore was not incompatible with the Christian value system. An immense part of these tales was derived from Persian or Indian narrative traditions, and expounded such universal values and wits as the sublimity of love, the ignobility of treason, the supremacy of reason, the inevitability of justice, the duty of good living, the art of good governance, etc. which have boundless and ultra-historical application.

A number of such works, including the *Book of Sindbad* whose Arabic version and Sanskrit origin were lost, most likely reached Europe in thirteenth century. This

[35] Kathleen Coyne Kelly. "The Bartering of Blauncheflur in the Middle English". *Studies in Philology*. Vol. 91, No. 2 (Spring, 1994), P,102.
[36] H. A. R. Gibb. "Literature". Op.cit P,194.

last book was the probable origin of the Spanish *Libro de los Enganos* and the Latin *Hisoria Septem Sapientium* which inspired many other verse romances including *Seven Sages of Rome*[37]. The more conspicuous Arabic recast of *Kalila wa Dimna* was translated to Alfonso the Wise in the mid thirteenth century, but for the rest of Europe it was available only in Greek and Latin renditions such as that of John of Capua. The indirect and disguised presence of this collection of fables in such epochal classics as Boccaccio's *Decameron* and Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* was not lost on many critics[38]. They did not fail to unravel its general thread in both their narrative construction and edifying aim.

The most astounding impress of Arabic literature on its Western counterpart, however, is that which some critics tried to ascertain in Dante's *Divine Comedy*. The claim that Dante was heavily indebted in his visionary scheme of the afterworld to Ibn al-'Arabi was first advanced by Asin Palacios and found support in Reynold Nicholson's thorough analysis of oriental mysticism. Both critics are at one in suggesting that some features in Date's portrayal of Hell, Paradise and the Beatrice are owed to Ibn al-'Arabi mystic fits. *"The infernal regions, the astronomical heavens, the circles of the mystic rose, the choirs of angels around the focus of the divine light, the three circles symbolizing the Trinity- all are described by Dante exactly as Ibn al-'Arabi described them"*[39]. Nicholson does not pursue aspects of similarities only in the spiritual journeys and trances of both men but also in their personal experience and eventual fiascos. The parallelisms that he found, both general and particular, were far too systematic to be dismissed on account of coincidence. In

[37] Ibid. P,195.
[38] Roger Allan. "Arabic and Translation: Key moments in Trans-Cultural Connection". Op.cit. Pp, 197-98.
[39] Reynold Nicholson. "Mysticism" in *The Legacy of Islam*. Op.cit. P,227.

the face of them only one conclusion appears tenable: that the Muslim religious traditions, e.g. the Mi'raj (Ascension of the Prophet) coupled with popular and philosophical visions and images of the afterlife- derived from Muslim traditionalists and scholars such as Farabi, Avicenna, Ghazali and al-'Arabi- must have passed into the common stock of literary culture that was accessible to the creative minds in Europe during the Middle Ages[40].

Building on the above, the Western encounter with the Islamic East, both real and textual, left ineffaceable imprints on the cultural life and character of Europe. Despite the pervasive sense of enmity that underpinned this encounter and generally demarcated its scope, the cultural transfer contingent on it was so fecund and far-reaching. Although the East first unfolded for the West, foremost, as a misguided or heretic imitation of Christianity that sweepingly jeopardizes its authentic origin (Christianity) in the same way that Christianity itself claimed its origin in Judaism only to displace or dislodge it, this could not hide other aspects (e.g. accomplishments in architecture, arts, science, philosophy, music, literature, etc.) that were equally intrinsic to this archenemy and variously representative or explicative of its superiority. These other aspects which in their synergy defined culturally, intellectually and spiritually the physiognomy of the Islamic East against which the Christian West stood- in every respect- unified as its opposite Other, could not be grasped or handled without a deep sense of ambivalence, a mixture of awe and fear. When the East was not merely a place in which one traded or crusaded, it was a source of rich scientific, philosophical, literary and theological funds of knowledge that one can turn to for practical or entertaining purposes. To these funds, one may

[40] Ibid. P,228.

say- not without caution- that the West methodologically responded in two distinct ways: (1) one *utilitarian* seeking to transfer, make available and put to good use the Arabic scholarship, applied crucially in such fields as philosophy, history, science and theology and aspiring to serve such practical purposes as improving medical practice, facilitating maritime trade, providing systematic understanding of Muslims' system of belief, churning out polemical tools and arguments in the debate on Islam, etc. (2) the second is what one may call *humanistic*, manifested in some men of letters' tendency to borrow, adapt and hybridize some genres, themes, stylistic features, poetic schemes typical of the literary tradition of the East and to transplant them into the Western literary system. From this basic distinction follows a dichotomic series of characteristics marking each method. In the utilitarian, the medium of transmission was direct, fulfilled through a verbatim translations of select Arabic texts that were mostly associated with some practical ends; the humanistic was indirect, carried out through the borrowing and assimilation of some artistic elements and textual features of Arabic -mostly literary- texts or sometimes through a loose and free-floating recast of these texts. Also in the former, the visibility of the social agents, i.e. translators, through whom mediation was achieved was all too obvious, usually manifested in their names being attached to the works they translate, in the accompanying annotations and paratexts which narrow down the possibilities of interpretation, and in some cases in the subsequent commentaries occasioned by the translation of these texts (one may think for example of Peter the Venerable). In the latter, mediation was almost entirely invisible as the agents who execute it, act not as reproducers of other people's texts, but as their own texts' firsthand producers. Finally, the condition of receptivity within which both methods functioned was underpinned by well-defined

relations of power whose milestone was, as one critic put it, the West's nagging sense of inferiority vis-à-vis the East.

3 The rise of orientalism: appropriation

As history had it, Europe underwent dramatic changes, social, political, cultural, spiritual, demographic, etc. whose effect was to thrust Europe out of its self-contained Latin Christian identity to become *"more notably Western European, via humanism, the scientific method, and the cult of reason"*[41]. It is commonly accepted that the last decade of the fifteenth century marked a stringent shift in the balance of power between the Christian and Muslim worlds. The rise of Europe to prominence in the heydays of the Renaissance diametrically coincided with a plunge of the Islamic East to the gutter of what is called in Arabic historiography the Age of Decadence. In the year 1492, the Muslims lost their last stronghold in Granada to the 'Catholic monarchs' (Ferdinand and Isabela). In the same year, Christopher Columbus arrived in the 'New World' and tempted other adventurers and explorers to follow suits and zealously engage in Europe's expansionist project known as the Geographic Discoveries. Vasco de Gama's state-funded voyage to India via Cape of Good Hope was of paramount importance with regard to the Christian-Muslims relations. His discovery of a sea-route to India did not only pave the way for global imperialism or enabled the newly emerged power, Portugal, to establish enduring imperial footings in Asia, but it also made possible for the first time direct contact between Europe and Asia without the need of European travellers and traders to traverse Muslim lands. This brought about a very significant psychological change. For while previously Europe was flanked by the Muslim presence, that situation was increasingly reversed, and the Muslim world began to feel itself being contained by a growing European

[41] David R. Blank. "Western Views of Islam in Medieval and Early Modern Period: A Brief History of Past Approaches" in *Western Views of Islam in Medieval and Early Modern Period*. Op.cit. P,13.

influence as European travellers and explorers penetrated deeper across the Asian ocean.[42] It remains, however, to mention two important events that seem to run counter to this general trend of things. The first was the irredeemable failure of the several crusading expeditions- the first imperial project in the post-Roman era- to maintain any long-lasting control in the Levant and North Africa; the second was the coeval rise of the Ottoman empire and its swift expansion across eastern Europe to reach as far as Vienna. Given the paramount cultural and geopolitical significance of these events and of their future ramifications, the fact remains that, for the emergence of Europe upon the scene as a full-fledged super- and later colonial- power, they were no more than stumbling blocks against which Europe had to grapple and overcome, but they were of little significance with regard to the power balance between the West and Islamic East (particularly the Arab world which is here of interest to us) and burgeoning of Europe self-identity that was now grounded not in the trinity of Christianity but on the trinity of science, reason and humanism.

> For good or for evil, the mind of the West suddenly swung farther away from the East than ever. Distracted by its new philosophies, its new political ideas, its new inventions, its immense industrial development, it was in no mood to listen to the East, still less to seek patiently to understand its thought[43]

For all the world-shaking changes which in effect prefigured the departure of *the spirit of the age* from the East to the West as this quote unflatteringly captures, the East could not be dispensed with altogether. Though no longer an imminent threat and still less an enviable or imitable example, it continued to be an attraction; first, for politicians and military leaders who eyed it with a colonial ambition; then, for

[42] Hugh Goddard. *A history of Christian-Muslim Relations*. Op.cit . P,109.
[43] H. A. R. Gibb. "Literature". Op.cit P, 205.

scholars, biblical specialists, adventurers, philologists, misfits, in a word for men who made of the orient their domain proper of interest and earned themselves the then rewarding and ostentatious title of orientalists. This should not suggest that in orientalism- the overarching field of study of things, materials and peoples deemed oriental- the political (imperial) interest and the scholastic efforts followed intelligibly separate courses. Quite the opposite; the one was so intricately intertwined with and inseparable from the other that a distinction between them may seem only methodologically possible. Most typically, the streams of information and knowledge which European specialists, say in oriental languages, traditions, laws, music, literature, religions, etc. gathered about the orient serviceably fed into the Western imperial enterprise in the Orient. In many cases, as for example in William Jones's, both qualities met in the same person and the scholar was meanwhile acting as a political agent.

Edward Said traces back the formal birth of Orientalism as a field of learned study to the decision of the Church Council of Vienna in 1312 to establish a series of chairs in Arabic, Greek, and Syriac at Paris, Bologna, Avignon and Salamanca[44]. One of the things which Said finds striking about this field is its scope, or more specifically its time and geographical broadness. Whereas other learned disciplines tend to focus on relatively modest portion of the world as would be, for example, classist, a Romance specialist or an Americanist, etc.

> Orientalism is a field with considerable geographical ambition. And since Orientalists have traditionally occupied themselves with things Oriental (a specialist in Islamic law, no less than an expert in Chinese dialects or Indian religions, is considered an Orientalist by

[44] Edward W. Said. *Orientalism*. Vintage Books, New York, 1978. Pp,49-50.

> people who call themselves Orientalists) we must learn to accept the enormous, indiscriminate size plus an almost infinite capacity for subdivision as one chief characteristics of Orientalism- one that is evidenced in its confusing amalgam of imperial vagueness and precise detail.[45]

Within this all-encompassing discipline the human reality of the Orient was explored, investigated, handled and- when needed- put to use. The fund of knowledge of and about the Orient- both practical and academic- that was gathered within its confines was so fecund, systematic, and covering every aspect of the Orient perceptible to the Orientalist; its creeds, races, traditions, culture character, society, and possibilities. A self-proclaimed zealot as Bernard Lewis in whom a residue of the Orientalist spirit still lives finds nothing harmful about establishing a field of study unified by its subject matter just as, say, a classist may specialize in Latin or Greek antiquity without provoking the rage of the people who are studied. Lewis who seems to regret the fall into disuse of the once proudly borne title of Orientalist suggests a more unmarred definition of the discipline as one which originally subsumed two distinct professions: *(1) "a school of painting-that of a group of artists, mostly from western Europe, who visited the Middle East and North Africa and depicted what they saw or imagined, sometimes in a rather romantic and extravagant manner. (2) The second, and more common… unconnected with the first, has hitherto been a branch of scholarship"*[46]. Having whitewashed the discipline, Lewis moves to slate those who raised "a hue and cry" against it. With the keen eye of an assured polemicist he picks his opponents with utmost care. Among these he mentions unnamed imams from

[45] Ibid. P,50.
[46] Bernard Lewis. *Islam and the West*. Op.cit. P,101.

Karachi and al-Azhar, few Arab Marxists whose identity is only revealed in footnote, Anouar Abdel-Malek whom he can still afford to put up with, but it is to Edward Said that he reserves his all-out grudge. Lewis passionately dwells on what he professes to be lethal pitfalls in Said's treatise which roughly includes neglecting the German and Russian share in Orientalist scholarship, one *confusedly* cited historical incident, the absence of some key names in his analysis, and the misrepresentation of the whole discipline of Orientalism as interested and power-vested. But in none of Lewis' passionate rant, which very often degenerates into an ungrounded slander, were any of Said's main arguments substantially challenged. Indeed what Lewis meant for a critique of anti-orientalism discourse is vocal expression of how Orientalism outlives its formal decay.

It is in Said's sober analysis, not in Lewis' regressive tirade that we gain a deep and insightful understanding of the scope, episteme, functionality, effectiveness, and discursive mechanisms of the all-inclusive discipline of Orientalism. In his *Orientalism*, Said's use of this term is intricately multilayered. In its most basic denotation, it refers to a branch of knowledge that takes of the Orient; i.e. the Oriental and his world, its strategic area of interest. But it also has other shades of meanings that develop out or are somehow contingent on this broad definition. For example, it is used to mean *"an exercise of cultural strength"*, and in the sense of *"a set of constraints upon and limitations of thought"* and *"a political vision of reality whose structure promoted the difference between the familiar (Europe, the West, us) and the unfamiliar (the Orient, the East, them)"*, or *"a library or archive of information commonly and, in some respects, unanimously held*". This oscillation between a sphere of knowledge and its general applications; between the realm of ideas and the

realm of things was more concisely reformulated in another article which Said intended to address some of the issues which the publication of his book had provoked and to stress on the bottom-line of his postulates:

> As a department of thought and expertise, Orientalism of course refers to several overlapping domains: firstly, the changing historical and cultural relationship between Europe and Asia, a *relationship* with a 4000 year old history; secondly, the scientific discipline in the West according to which beginning in the early 19th century one specialized in the study of various Oriental cultures and traditions; and, thirdly, the ideological suppositions, images, and fantasies about a currently important and politically urgent region of the world called the Orient[47].

This quote posits Orientalism as being tensely situated within a triangle whose sides are (a) international relations (4000 year old relationship between the East and the West), (b) learned scholarship (specialized study of the Orient) and (c) a body of ideological representations (suppositions, images, fantasies, sterotypes, etc.). The dialectical relation between these three sides strongly underpinned the field itself. Sketched roughly, a longstanding relation between the East and West made imperative by geographical adjacency, conquest, trade and spiritual expeditions, led to the emergence, in the leaned circles, of a field of systematic learning and scholarship whose backbone was a cross disciplinary mania-like scrutiny of this relation and whose effect was the production a body of both *pure* and *political* knowledge to which suppositions and fantasies were integral part. That a strong and bonding relationship had always existed between knowledge and power even in such

[47] Edward W. Said. "Orientalism Reconsidered". *Cultural Critique*. No. 1 (Autumn, 1985), P,90.

seemingly disinterested fields as psychiatry and medicine is something that has been made evident since Foucault. But whereas elsewhere this relationship is only latent and indirect, in *Orientalism* it manifests itself most starkly, and those in whom it is represented hardly find it necessary to conceal it. It was indeed one of Said's great contributions having run down this relation to its roots. Central to the constitution of the field orientalism itself was the disproportionate and lopsided standing of a potent West vis-à-vis a degenerating East, out of which the former discovered its capacities for encompassing the latter militarily as well as intellectually. Because of the fact that knowledge about it was gleaned out of a sense of superiority over it, scientific inquiry into its riches took the form of the appropriation of one culture by another. Aside from the positive knowledge that was yielded up by this inquiry, a good portion was fictitious or imaginative. For to the Orientalist- a philologist, a specialist in Oriental law or religions, a sinologist, an expert in Eastern cultures, histories, ethnicities, arts, etc. -there was always more to the Orient than its empirical reality. Two features that Said found fairly characteristic of Orientalism are: (1) knowledge about the Orient was generated out of strength and as such *"in a sense created the Orient"*; and (2) -based on the former- the Orient is *"depicted as something one judges (as in a court of law), something one studies (as in a curriculum), something one disciplines (as in a school or prison), something one illustrates (as in a zoological manual)*[48].

Within these frameworks of containment and representation a significant paradigmatic discontinuity in the East-West relationship is signalled. The Old East which in Medieval times commanded mixed feelings of awe, fear, and disquiet and sparked desires for both confrontation and imitation *"could after the Renaissance*

[48] Edward W. Said. *Orietalism*. Op.cit. P,40.

produce at best only harmless curiosities"[49]. In adventurers, explorers and colonial enterprisers; men like Marko Polo, Ferdinand Magellan, Vasco de Gama, Giovanni da Verrazzano and East India Company administrators, curiosities produced an unrestrained urge to encroach upon previously unknown terrains; in men of letters and scholars like Barthélemy d'Herbelot, Comte de Volney, Anquetil Duperron, etc. curiosities provide a strong stimulus to penetrate into a previously uncharted textual universe. The synergy of both made the orient increasingly accessible, unprecedentedly exposed and vulnerably susceptible to containment and domination. As a direct corollary of this was that:

> Systematic knowledge in Europe about the Orient, knowledge reinforced by the colonial encounter as well as by the widespread interest in the alien and unusual, exploited by the developing sciences of ethnology, comparative anatomy, philology and history; furthermore, to this systematic knowledge was added a sizable body of literature produced by novelists, poets, translators and gifted travelers[50].

Thus, territorial and textual appropriation of the East went hand in hand; each was energized and made more effective by the advances and successes achieved in the other. On the one hand, the encroachment upon new Oriental lands particularly in the far East, in India, Persia, China opened up the horizon for scholarly inquiry to reach and cover areas previously unattained; on the other, the archive of information and knowledge that was gathered rendered the East as a phenomenon possessing regular characteristics and made the control and domination of its provinces easier and more effective.

[49] H. A. R. Gibb. "Literature". Op.cit P, 209.
[50] Edward W. Said. *Orietalism*. Op.cit. Pp,39-40

This schematic presentation of Said's basic arguments on Orientalism is quite useful in explaining the condition of European receptivity of Arabic cultural texts after the Renaissance. Now that the Renaissance has relegated the East to the background, Western interest in Arabic text was no longer driven by imitative motives that find in them something worth emulating; a generic form, a literary theme, a metric scheme, a narrative frame, a colourful style on which the ethos of a masterful East was elaborately incarnated. Interest in literary text was now fuelled by quite different considerations which, originating in the now repositioned relations of power, sought in the East not an image of a master, but of its irrecoverable degeneration. The very mention of the East now became evocative of a romantic hue, of reminiscences of a faded glory, of epitomes of grotesqueness, sensuality and exoticism. Emblematic of this new trend was the emergence in Europe of a highly demanded and vastly growing literary genre that came to be known as the Oriental tale; a popular narrative that, though lacking in the complexities and refinement of highbrow literature, was seen as richly imbued with the Oriental spirit, deeply expressive of its colour and character, vociferously divulging its marvels, mysteries and absurdities. The European public was before the sixteenth century only narrowly familiar with some forms of Oriental fiction. As we saw earlier, a few Eastern stories drifted across Europe by way of Syria, Byzantium, Italy and Spain. Travellers, adventurers, missionaries, merchants, crusaders *"aided the oral transmission of this fiction; and scholars gave to Europe Latin translations of four collections of genuine oriental tales: Sindebar; Kalila and Dimna, or the Fables of Bidpai; Disciplina Clericalis, and Barlaam and Josaphat"*[51]. But such stories, supplemented by

[51] Martha Pike Conant. *The Oriental Tale in England in the Eighteenth Century*. Columbia UP, New York, 1908. P, xix.

descriptions of Indian and Persian life by Tavernier, Chardin, Bernieir and others, contributed to only a more or less vague acquaintance with the Orient. However, as interest in the Orient intensified among travellers, historians, translators, dramatists, Orientalists, etc., yielding up more knowledge about it at first hand, e.g. through translation, "*by travel and residence in the East, by contact with Eastern peoples, as well as by study of Oriental history, literature, and philosophy*"[52], a new leaf in the Oriental fiction was turned, and a new mode of its being and reception was ushered in. This dramatic change was preluded by the publication of Marana's *Turkish Spy* and dramatically signalled by the advent of *The Arabian Nights*.

If we piece together what Edward Said posited about Orientalism as a systematic power-vested knowledge about the Orient; as a political vision that promotes domination of a strong over a weak, as a set of constraints upon the thought of the social agents who come under its influence; and as a daydreaming taking the Orient as its fetish, if we piece all this with historical and textual facts which the publication of *The Arabian Nights*- as one of the most important events in the cultural encounter between Europe and the Arabic East- the heuristic manner through which the latter was constructed, translated, received, and rewritten, may then be qualified as characteristically appropriative. To advance this claim, we need to turn to Antoine Galland who fathered the first translation of this work to appear in Europe, mediated this massively important cultural event, and pioneered the cultural appropriation of a once 'inscrutable Orient'.

To Galland we owe a lot. He is often described as an Arabist of note, a born story-teller, an indefatigable classist and, more ostensibly at his time, an Orientalist.

[52] Ibid. P,xviii.

To him is reserved the honour of having first introduced *the Arabian Nights* to the West. A few years before he embarked on translating the *Les Mille et Une Nuit* in 1704, Galland was wrapping on a prestigious introduction to one of the key contributions to the orientalist project; Barthelemy d'Herbelot's *Bibliothèque Orientale*. In the latter he states: *"d'Herbelot's read a great number of works in Arabic, Persian and Turkish with the result that he was able to find out about matters hitherto concealed from Europeans"*[53]. In this time-honoured alphabetically arranged book, the author tried to provide his readers with systematic knowledge about the Orient that spans a huge arena ranging from history, theology, geography to science, morality, law, and art, with the purpose *"to form in the minds of his 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*"[54]. But no matter how wide-ranging and all-encompassing this knowledge was, it fell within the category of positive or quasi-positive knowledge. What was missing in this huge compendium, namely the mythic, was provided by Galland through his translation of the *Nights*. And to this he attended full-heartedly till his death in 1715.

In a time when *"the virtual epidemic of Orientalia was affecting every major poet, essayist and philosopher",* expressing itself in an unquenchable enthusiasm for everything Asiatic, which was almost always synonymous with the exotic, the mysterious, the profound, the seminal…[55] Galland turned up on the stage and catered for what would both quench and reignite this enthusiasm. In 1704, he set himself the task of translating the *Nights* which took 11 years of laborious work and appeared in 12 volumes. Nevertheless, his task did not proceed smoothly; it was hurdled by

[53] Edward Said. Orientalism. Op.cit. P, 64.
[54] Ibid. p.65.
[55] Ibid. p,51.

formidable difficulties. His translation was loosely based on Leiden MS but significant portions were also included from several sources. After translating the first four volumes, Galland exhausted his materials, but notwithstandingly strove to complete his project by all means. At first, he inserted in his compilation (in the third volume) the story of Sindbad the Sailor which in its Arabic version never made part of the *Nights*. In his Journal, he admits that he had translated this story years before he knew about the existence of the *Nights*.[56] To this, he added the story of *Camaralzaman*, prince *de l'Isle des Enfans de Khaledan*, the story of *Aboulhassan Ali Ebn Becar*, and the Story *of Nouredin and the Beautiful Persian*; none of which appears in the Syrian (Leiden) MS.[57] The next volume (XIII, published in 1709) contained the story of *Ganem*, *Zeyn Alasnam*, and *Codadad*; only the first was translated by Gland, the two others were translated by Petit de la Croix but published under the former's name without none knowing of this fact. This is said to have exceedingly angered Galland who promised to remove these stories from forthcoming editions, a pledge that was not honoured.

At this same year, Galland, through the good offices of his friend Paul Lucas, met an Oriental story-teller, Hanna Diab, in the flesh. It is reported that the latter proved himself a mine of stories which Galland described as "fort beaux".[58] He furnished Galland with a huge number of stories, both orally and in manuscripts. Out of these stories, Galland wrote three other volumes which include the stories of *Aladin, the Sleeper Awakened*, *The Blind Man Baba Abdala*, *The Adventures of the*

[56] Duncan B. Macdonald. "A Bibliographical and Literary Study of the First Appearance of the Arabian Nights in Europe". *The Library Quarterly*. Vol. 2, No. 4 (Oct., 1932) P,390.
[57] Ibid. Pp, 392-3.
[58] Ibid. 394.

Caliph Haroun Alrachid, the Forty Thieves, and *Cogia Hassan Alhabbal*[59]. Galland finished his arduous translation of the Nights in 1713 but the last two volumes were published only two years later after his death in 1715.

This is how the *Nights* made its first appearance in Europe and this is how one of the core avenues of *"Europe's collective daydreaming of the east"* was nurtured; and to Galland goes the pride of the initiative. Undeniably, Galland endowed the *Nights* with a new life and a new mode of being. He wrestled it out of its degenerate orality that pre-empted it for long from retaining a fixed identity, put an end to the whimsical interference of the scribes whose excessive liberty adulated its narrative and textual fabric, and brought into question the scorn and contemptuous airs with which the Arab highbrow culture always viewed the Nights and reduced it to a bawdy tasteless form of popular literature. For only after Galland published his translation did the first Arab Editions; i.e. Calcutta, Boulaq and Breslau see the light.

This however should not blind us to seeing the other face of the story. Indeed, Galland did not, in the strict sense, translate *The Nights*, but created its image, its silhouette. His composite rendition coincides only with a quarter of the Arabic MS. The rest was drawn from a variety of sources; from Persian, Turkish and Arabic fictional stockings or otherwise from what Hanna Diab delivered to him orally or in writing. Therefore, to know the Nights through Galland is- to use Richard Hole's fine trope- very much like telling the beauty of a human body from contemplating its skeleton[60].

[59] Ibid. Pp,396-7.
[60] E. K. Salis. Op. cit. p,67.

Nor was Galland less manipulative in his method of translation. Being himself a born story-teller, as many critics prefer to brand him, he could not refrain from embroidering and polishing the Arabic text to make it *"satisfy one's great previously conceived expectations"*. He altered the style, tone and content of the original to appeal to the exotic and the outlandish, magnified its elements of magical fairy-tale and reduced the text to the pleasing essentials of his times[61]. It is through these appropriative measures that Galland may justly be credited with creating in the western collective imagination what Neil Macmaster and Toni Lewis called the 'Scheherezade syndrome'[62]. Ironically enough, Galland was the first to experience the symptoms of this syndrome. The fame which the publication of the Arabian Nights gained him also brought and when young Parisian lads were stopping at his windows in the early morning and chanting Scheherezade's narrative pattern through which she opens or ends her stories to the bellicose king[63].

[61] Ibid. P,66.
[62] Neil Macmaster, Toni Lewis' "Orientalism: From Unveiling to Hyperveiling" in *Women and Islam: Critical Concepts in Sociology*. Ed. Haideth Moghissi. Vol. I. Routledge, London, 2005. P, 148.
[63] Abd al-Jebbar al-Samera'i. "Alf Layla wa Layla fi al-Adab al-Uroupiya". *Al-Adab*. Vol.25.1977.P,70.

II. Arabic pseudo narratives in England: instances of visibility, appropriation and subversion

1. Arabic pseudo-narratives and the question of authorship

1.1. Textual anonymity and author dys/function

The death of the author which in twentieth century literary criticism constituted a mood of the age is not without some precursors in Arabic literary tradition. Many literary narratives were cherished, by the learned and the common, reproduced, consecrated, accorded a literary value, and handed down over generations without being attributed to a definite author, singular or collective; to a creator, famous or otherwise, in whom they claim their origin. This state of orphanage, as one may call it, did not seem to impede their circulation or to demean their value. A good deal of Arabic tales survived for many hundreds of years, in oral or written forms, without there being any need felt by those who cherished them to ascribe them to specific creators. Some of these tales were of Arabic origins; others were mainly drawn from the stock of Persian and Indian fiction. Insofar as they were found entertaining and beguiling to their audience, little or no heed was paid to the real persons who composed them.

But as is now well known, the category of authorship is no longer reducible to the flesh-and-blood person who did the writing. Aside from this most basic conception of the author as a creator, it has also other bearings and implications. Above and beyond, it is an organizing principle, a function, an interpretative authority, a consecrating value, etc. whose presence or absence brings to bear on the ontological status of a text. The desacralization of the image of the author was one of Structuralism's contributions in its privileging of the universal over the particular, of

structure over subject and event. Roland Barthes, whose herald of the death of the author was emblematic of the whole trend, suggested that the construct of authorship and the figure of the author is a relatively recent phenomenon.

> The author is a modern figure, a product of our society insofar as, emerging from the Middle Ages with English empiricism, French rationalism, and the personal faith of the Reformation, it discovered the prestige of the individual, of, as it is more nobly put, "the human person". It is thus logical that in literature it should be this positivism, the epitome and culmination of capitalist ideology, which has attached the greatest importance to the 'person' of the author. The author still reigns in histories of literature, biographies of writers, interviews, magazines, as in the very consciousness of men of letters anxious to unite in their person and their work through dairies and memoires.[64]

Barthes strongly militates against a well-established author-centred tenet in classical criticism that seeks the meaning of a literary text in the passions, tastes, personality and preoccupations of its author; that professes the incarnation of the author's spirit and earthly experience in his text; that maintains that: *"Baudelaire's work is the failure of Baudelaire the man, Van Gogh's his madness, Tchaikovsky's his vice"*[65]. In turn, Barthes redefines literary texts as a horizontal space; as a tissue of quotations drawn from innumerable centres of culture. The text in Barthes' new light does not signify a single theological meaning, the message of the Author-God. His point of departure is *'at first there was the word'* not *the author*. The latter he reduces to a scriptor, depersonalized and paralyzed, whose powers rest not expressing

[64] Roland Barthes. "The Death of the Author" in *Modern Criticism and Theory: A Reader*. Ed. David Lodge and Nigel Wood. 3rd Ed. Routledge, London, 2008.P,313.
[65] Ibid.

emotions, passions, impressions, but on ordaining signs, imitating gestures, mixing writings, and counter the ones with the others just like an immense dictionary. Barthes' favourite texts would be the pseudo narratives which, cut loose from their creators, roam freely, unmolested by their power to speculate about them; those texts that live in complete orphanage, unabashed by their anonymity and unknown origins.

Nevertheless, insofar as Barthes portends the death of the author as an annihilation of all signs of his a posteriori presence in his texts, as a severance of all ties of parenthood by means of which the text was to remain bound by some terms of allegiance to its creator, it seems that he is not heralding but culminating a literary tendency in the direction of which several theories of the formal method had been varyingly but steadily pushing. This common thread to sideline the author and to focus exclusively on the text as an adequate and self-enclosed system of signs is found in different forms and couched in different theoretical terms. Barthes' pronounced-dead author shares much with, for example, T.S. Eliot's notion of the poet as a depersonalized vehicle in *Tradition and the Individual Talents*; with W. K. Wimsatt Jr. and M. C. Beardsley' detaching the work from its author and redefining the former as a linguistic feat and not as a codified personal experience in *Intentional Fallacy*; with Russian formalist' definition of literary texts as an interiorly self-regulating system, as for example, in Shklovsky's *Art as a Device*. It even shares with the German reception theorists bringing forth the reader as an indispensable element in the aesthetic experience, as the cornerstone in activating or, in Barthes' words, disentangling the text's signification. But in all this, the author's presence in his text is conceived- and ultimately fought out- as a manifestation of the empirical traces of his personality, as a projection of his self into the text, a full cognition of which had long

been held to be indispensable in the reading process, in the retrieval of the text's true meaning. In other words, the author's presence is seen as both empirical and interior to the text, and therefore its amputation is posited to be satisfactorily achievable if only alignment between the world of the text and that of its writer is eliminated.

Foucault was, however, more circumspect in declaring the death of the author because, for him, the latter leads a more complicated life than is commonly thought. It would have been much easier for the critic and certainly more fruitful for literary criticism if this complicitous act, which somehow evokes the Oedipus complex, were to be achieved, in the sly, simply by jettisoning personal traces and imprints, conscious or coincidental, left by the author dispersed across the texture of his texts. What makes it even more difficult to untie the text from the author is that the latter does not presumably live only inside his text, but also outside it, in its bushy outskirts. The author is a complex construct that far surpasses the biological life of the writer. Therefore, undoing his presence inside the text; that is, bringing to an end the classical practice of reading the text in the light of the psychology and life experiences of its producer, covers only one aspect of the author, and does not completely cancel out this intricate category. Authorship is more complicated than a proper noun, more effective and enduring than an element of speech, more heterogeneous than a singular person, less personal than functional. Above all, it is a discursive function. When the author is a producer of not only one text but of several texts, he serves to group a number of texts together and thus differentiates them from other texts. The fact that a number of texts are attached to a single name indicates that a relationship of homogeneity, filiation, reciprocal explanation, authentication, or common utilization

is established among them[66]. It also defines, in one way or another, the manner of existence and reception of discourse. Discourse that possesses an author's name is not to be immediately consumed and forgotten as any ordinary fleeting words[67]. It is accorded a particular status, a certain degree of graveness, solemnity, formality, contemplativeness, and possible reproducibility that makes its reception and circulation starkly different from instantaneous everyday speech.

Authorship as a function of discourse has other features and manifestations and Foucault runs them to their grassroots. First, the author function is an object of appropriation; the form of property it has become is *of "a particular type whose legal codification was accomplished some years ago"*[68]. It is important to note that the development of authored texts into forms of property was historically contingent on and preceded by their acquisition of a legal status arising from their being subject to surveillance and punishment. Foucault remarks:

> Texts, books, and discourses really began to have authors (other than the mythical, 'sacralised' and 'sacralising' figures) to the extent that authors became subject to punishment, that is, to the extent that discourses could be transgressive. In our culture (and doubtless in many others), discourse was not originally a product, a thing, a kind of goods; it was essentially an act- an act placed in the bipolar field of the sacred and the profane, the licit and the illicit, the religious and the blasphemous. Historically, it was a gesture fraught with risks before becoming goods caught up in a circuit of ownership.[69]

[66] Michel Foucault. "What is an Author?" in *Modern Criticism and Theory*. Ed. David Lodge. Longman, London, 1988. P,201.
[67] Ibid.
[68] Ibid.
[69] Ibid. P,202.

Thus, the metamorphosis of texts into property value was inseparable from the desire to keep them in check, ward off their danger and establish censorship and accountability as intrinsic features of discourse production. Since the eighteenth century, the system of ownership of texts was given a fixed legal form expressed in copyrights strictures.

The other feature which Foucault finds characteristic of the author function lies in its historical variability and contingency. The author function is neither historically static nor symmetrical. This means that not all types of texts relate to their authors in the same way at all times. Some texts may require the names of their authors be attached to them as a requisite; for others the presence of their author may be unnecessary or ornamental; for a third category, the author is entirely effaced or eclipsed behind his text. Thus, as Foucault notes, a private letter may have a signatory but not an author, a contract may have an underwriter but not an author, and in many cases the identity of the author remains entirely irretrievable, as in a wall poster for example. Nor is this author-work relationship fixed and historically invariable even for the same types of texts. The scientificity and validity of treatises in the Middle Ages in, say, medicine, physics, chemistry, etc., was indispensably dependent on and corroborated by the attachment of the names of their authors. Scientific texts were not then accepted on their own merits. Rather the name of their authors served as an index of their truthfulness. This situation was to veer off, since the seventeenth century, toward the acceptance of such texts within *"an anonymous and coherent conceptual system of established truths and methods of verification"* which required no reference to be made to their producers. This dramatic change had its reverse parallel in the field of literature. Starting from the seventeenth century, the author's name became so

pivotal to the recognition and appreciation of literary works. Texts of poetry and prose were required to be attributed to individual producers and to provide other relevant details about the place, date and circumstances of their writing. Even when some writers chose to remain unknown as, for example, when they wrote in unpopular generic forms, or when gender bias was still firmly rooted in the literary field and excluded female writers from joining in, fictitious names had to be conjured up instead of the real names of the writers. The centrality of the category of the author to the circulation and consumption of literary works would not tolerate absolute anonymity. And if by accident or design a text came up pseudonymously, it quickly stimulated an eyebrow-raising intrigue in whose solving no effort was spared. Summing up the author function in its different forms and manifestations, Foucault states:

> The author function is tied to the legal and institutional systems that circumscribe, determine, and articulate the realm of discourses; it does not operate in a uniform manner in all discourses, at all times, and in any given culture; it is not defined by the spontaneous attribution of a text to its creator, but through a series of precise and complex procedures, it does not refer, purely and simply, to an actual individual insofar as it gives rise to a variety of egos and to a series of subjective positions that individuals of any class may come to occupy[70].

Building on Foucault's description of the author function, it follows that authorless texts, texts that pseudonymously circulate with no claimed origin or fixed identity, have a different manner of being and receptivity. When a text is not attached to a named author, it loses some characteristics of the author function charted above,

[70] Ibid.

and features some others only in an indirect way or after undergoing significant changes. For example, a ‘no man’s’ text’ is unmoored from a significant explanatory principle, from a matrix of personal and circumstantial information that have varying degrees of relevance not only for the trends of criticism that seek the understanding of the work in some aspects of the life of its author, but also for the more recent theories of intertextuality which regard every text as intricately bound up with and inexorably entangled in other texts. Pseudonymous texts nuance and disrupt this textual continuity in one important aspect. Such texts live ipso facto in relative isolation and singularity and never in plurality as one cannot logically attribute many unknown texts to one unknown author (without external clues revealing the identity of the one or the other, in which case they cease to remain anonymous), and as such are not only disconnected from their authors, but are also disconnected from other texts which might have been written by the same author, and for which the latter would act as an Archimedean point, as an organizational principle by means of which a number of texts are grouped together on the basis of a relation of affiliation and reciprocal explanation that exists among them. Finally, the other feature of author function, i.e. the realization of the text as a form of property, though is not completely lacking in authorless texts, unfolds only in altered way. In the absence of the real owner, property rights pass to third parties; e.g. editors, publishers, storytellers, stage performers, etc. Although this latter feature seems to relate only externally to the pseudonymous text, it affects in the last instance its manner of existence in terms of its accessibility, reproducibility, and currency.

1.2.Arabic pseudo-narratives

That the author function features are culture-bound is a qualification which Foucault was quick to add. In fact, although they hold true for the category of the author as a function of discourse, their concretization varies from one culture to another. The order in which Foucault presents them is typical to the Western culture. In the Arab culture the author was since antiquity so vital an element for the proper signification of the work. This is because the aesthetic value of the text was inseparable from other social and political functions which the author, particularly the poet, assumed within his society. Reynold Nicholson noted that the ancient Arabs used not to wish one another joy but for three things- the birth of a boy, the coming to light of a poet and the foaling of a noble mare. When a poet appeared in a family or a tribe they would gather, rejoice, and receive plaudits from other tribes, for the poet epitomized, for his folk men, "*a defence to the honour of them all, a weapon to ward off insult from their good name, and a means of perpetuating their glorious deeds and of establishing their fame forever*"[71]. Then the act of attaching one's name to a poem was socially and symbolically lucrative. And although the literary work had not as yet materialized as a thing or a possession that one owns, as this was contingent on the development of the means of mechanical reproduction; namely print industry, it was nevertheless rewarding through the prestige and the privileges that were lavishly conferred on its producer. At a later stage, when in the course of events pre-Islamic poetry was canonized, institutionalized and hysterically drawn upon for a variety of purposes; e.g. by some tribes to highlight the great deeds of their ancestors when chivalry ethics were reignited in the fraught atmosphere ensuing the death of the prophet; by scholars and philologists who were bent on deciphering some mysteries

[71] Reynold A. Nicholson. A Literary History of the Arabs. Op.cit. p,71.

and ambiguities in the sacred text by taking recourse to pre-Islamic parole; by political stakeholders who sought to support their claims and interests by the well-established authority of a poet, by some chroniclers and storytellers who wanted to lend credibility to their narratives by inserting lines of poetry here and there, etc., a significant change seemed to have affected the author function. This change did not came as a result of the author's repositioning himself vis-à-vis his own text through some loosened or asserted presence as one may expect, but by being himself forcibly positioned towards other texts and producers. In the Arabic literary tradition, there is a sizable portion of poetry that was falsely attributed to some poets, and which later research proved to be sheer forgery. In his book, *Fi al-Shi'r al-Jahili*, Taha Hussein laboured the point that much of what we call pre-Islamic poetry is a mere amalgam of the crafty hands of the forgers and the uncritical mind of critics who unquestionably accepted everything that was passed down to them as authentic and self-standing. Carried away by the Cartesian doubt to shake off and fact-check what passes for a truism, Taha Hussein was led to conclude that the bulk of what we know about the pre-Islamic period is a fabrication of later ages, and much of what we celebrate as works of eponyms of antiquity is insinuated contributions and phoneys of latecomers who had a real interest in attributing to their ancestors verses of their own making[72]. Whether all of what Hussein says holds water or simply places him at the other end of the extremity which treats of the past as the past itself with relentless scepticism, the fact remains that forgery was a commonplace practice, and as such formed an important aspect of Arabic author function in the classical period.

[72] For more on this see Taha Hussein's *Fi al-Shi'r al-Jahili*. Dar al-Ma'arif, Soussa. Pp, 59-130.

There is a third category of Arabic literary texts that were neither claimed by their real writers nor forged and falsely attributed to unreal authors and that found wide circulation in the Arabic literary arena. This category consists of a motley variety of popular narratives that widely differ in their length, generic forms, literary merits, narrative frame, stylistic devices, practical uses and manner of performance and transmission. They are mainly long prosaic narratives that centre on some real or legendary figures, semi-historical and fictional events, marvels and fantasies, romances and adventures. They fit within a wide range of popular fiction that includes apologues, fables, saga tales, Siras, heroic romances, etc. They are pseudo-historical in tone and setting in that their ties with the historical periods they engage with is dim and jelly-like. At times they base their characters on actual historical figures, at others they lend themselves to free-flowing phantasmagorias and feature outlandish or half-human creatures, talking animals, Jinns, metamorphosed spirits, etc. staged on extraordinary scenes and fanciful landscapes. Some cycles are weighted toward serving some moralizing or edifying aim; others are tailored for mere entertaining purposes. What Peter Heath finds characteristic of the Sira genre seems to apply to a varying degree to the whole gamut of this popular fiction:

> These narratives are pseudo-historical in tone and setting. They base many of their central and secondary characters on actual historical figures, and frame their events within the general context of the historical periods that they assume to represent. Nonetheless, details of history are regularly enhanced by the imaginative improvement of fiction, with the result that history is usually reflected only along general levels of character identity, setting, atmosphere, and tone. The importance of this pseudo-historical frame for both composers and audience remains a significant aspect of these works, since it

> plays an essential role in both their aesthetic and their didactic dimensions. However, at heart these are works of entertainment whose intent is to delight and morally instruct their audience by presenting larger-than-life deeds and emotions as played out through idealized codes of action[73].

With the exception of very few popular works such as *Kalila wa Dimna* which gained a relatively fixed identity since its early translation and commitment to writing by the renowned Ibn al-Muqaffa‘ in the third century AH, the vast majority of works of Arabic popular fiction were stable only in their essentials, substantial structure and general outline. Their content and details of the plot have been in the making and remained subject to third-parties interference during a long course of circulation and reception. The epic Siras such *as Dhat al-Himma*, *Bani Hilal*,‘*Antara*, *Saif Dhi Yazan*, etc. and popular romance and entertainment tales such as *Sindbad the Sailor*, *Alf Layla wa Layla*, etc. yoked together the contribution of their unknown authors and the improvements and meddling of their scribes, performers and story-tellers. The origin of most of these works are yet unknown and remain a matter of restless speculation. At best, they are known to us only in their sketchy and broad configuration. The particular details of their first-order form and information about their context of production have been lost in their dreary voyage from antiquity to their recognition and canonization in the eighteenth century; in the variations among the variegated manuscripts in which they survived; in the variances between their oral and written forms; under the scathing lashes of learned and orthodox criticism; and in the general trend of events and objective unfolding of history.

[73] Peter Heath. “Other Siras and Popular Narratives” in Arabic Literature in the Post-Classical Period. Ed. Roger Allen D.S. Richard. Cambridge UP, Cambridge, 2006. P,319.

The anonymity and pseudonymous character of the narratives studied in this thesis acquire special relevance for our present purposes. The fact that these texts were attached to no particular authors stripped them of any basis of fixed identity and principle of categorisation, and in effect left the room wide for third-parties intervention. In their place of origin, this intervention was basically effected by scribes and redactors who were their main reproducers; in their transfer and adoption within alien literary systems, this role become the specific domain of translators and publishers. As we shall see in the following chapters, it was characteristic of these Arabic pseudo-narratives that the originals were not treated by their translators, editors and publishers as already accomplished textual feats, as consummated enunciations that were to be taken at their wholesomeness but as incomplete texts that had to be constructed, fixed, stabilised, and given their final form before being translated.

2. *The Arabian Nights*: constructing the Orient in the Oriental tale

2.1 The unsettled genealogy of *The Nights*

The Arabian Nights, known to the Arabs as the *Kitab Alf Layla wa Layla*, is not a homogeneous text but a collection of pseudonymous stories that considerably differ in number, order, style and even in content from one MS to another. Their author, date and place of origin are still unknown to us despite the assiduous efforts by many researchers across a range of academic disciplines to demystify their secret. In the framing narrative, these stories are said to have been initially produced for a king who, upon discovering his wife's treachery with a filthy slave, decided to marry and sleep with a virgin every night and kill her the next morning. This practice blighted his people with sorrow and grief and continued till maidens could no longer be found within his dominions. Then, the visir's daughter- having realized her father's dilemma- jeopardized her life to save her kind and in effect remedy the bellicose king. This she sought to achieve by nothing more than the art of storytelling. Being witty, well versed in poetry and the annals of ancient times, and familiar with the books of medicine, history and the arts, she was intent to distract the king from perpetrating more ills by keeping him distracted under the spell of tale-telling. After one thousand nights a night of story-telling the king is said to have refrained from his vile acts and ordered, in some versions of the narrative, that the stories narrated to him be written in gold and kept in his treasury.

Though written in gold, for the Arabs these stories did not go gold. Before the nineteenth century, they had scarcely been recognized as having any literary value. Rather, they were regarded as typically belonging to an uncultivated lowbrow culture and more suited to fit the bawdy tastes of the masses. In medieval times little mention

had been made to the *Nights* and almost always with no appreciation. The earliest negative commentary on the *Nights* came first from al-Mas‘oudi (Died 345 AH/956 AD) whose book *Muruj ad-Dhahab* (*The Golden Meadows*) contains the first indication to this anthology. In this work, al-Mas‘oudi slightly hints to a book which was popular at his time and known as *Hazar Afsana* which he described as “embellished and fabricated”[74]. And not so long after him, Ibn al-Nadim provided a more detailed account of their origin. In his *Fehrist* which is the most valuable record of the pre-modern Arabic culture, Ibn al-Nadim states that interest aroused among masters of eloquence and literary style to translate story literature to Arabic and that the first book that was compiled was *Hazar Afsana* which meant “thousand stories”. Ibn al-Nadim also said the practice of evening stories was first ushered in by Alexander and that many kings followed suits after him and used the book *Hazar Afsana* for evening entertainment[75]. Elsewhere in his book, however, Ibn al-Nadim could hardly conceal his contempt for the fables, describing them as raw and insipid.

> The Arabs translated [story literature] into Arabic language and then, when masters of literary style and eloquence became interested, they refined and elaborated it, composing what was similar to it in content. The first book to be written with this content was the book Hazar Afsan, which means “a thousand stories. The basis for this [name] was that one of their kings used to marry a woman, spend a night with her, and kill her the next day. Then he married a concubine of royal blood who had intelligence and wit. She was called Shahrazad, and when she came to him she would begin a story, but leave off at the end of the night, which induced the king to

[74] E. K. Salis’s PhD thesis, *Identity in Diversity: The Thousand and one Nights in English*. University of Adelaide, South Australia. P,29.
[75] Ibid. P, 30.

> spare her, asking her to finish it the night following. This happened to her for a thousand nights, during which he [the king]had intercourse with her, until because of him she was granted a son, whom she showed to him, informing him of the trick played upon him. Then, appreciating her intelligence, he was well disposed towards him and kept her alive. The king had a head of the household named Dina Zad who was in league with her in this matter. It is said that this book was composed for Huma'i, the daughter of Bahram, there being also additional information about it… The truth is, if Allah so wills, that the first person to enjoy evening stories was Alexander, who had a group [companions]to make him laugh and tell him stories which he did not seek [only]for amusement but [also he sought] to safeguard and preserve them. Thus the kings who came after him made use of the book Hazar Afsan, which although it was spread over a thousand nights contained less than two hundred tales, because one story might be told during a number of nights. I have seen it in complete form a number of times and it is truly a coarse book without warmth in the telling[76].

This oft-quoted passage presents the first detailed account on the genesis and identity of what later came to be known as *Alf Layla wa Layla*. This first-hand testimony is of paramount significance in many ways. For one thing, it highlights the fact that by the ninth century a tendency among masters of eloquence and the learned class of writers to recast and rework popular tales was well underway; it suggests that the circulation of these tales was not restricted the lower orders of society but they were also a pastime attraction even to kings and emperors; and-not less importantly-it dubiously links the prototype of *The Nights* to the apocryphal Huma'i legend, a fifth century BC queen, which remains the subject of unremitting controversy among Arab

[76] Quoted in *Identity in Diversity: The Thousand and one Nights in English*. Ibid. P, 30.

chroniclers. Furthermore, Ibn al-Nadim also roughly estimates the length of the book as comprising less than two hundred tales told over the span of a thousand nights whence the book derives its name. This last remark is strikingly at odds both with later Arabic derivative compilations of the book and its various translations into European languages, a fact which led later commentators to stress on the hyperbolic size to which the work ultimately rolled off and the scope and effect of the interference of countless ghostwriters and redactors.

There are a few other chance clues that attest to the circulation of *the Nights* in earlier times. One of these clues was a small fragment of a worn-out text of this book that dates back to October 879. This fragment was admiringly unearthed and deciphered by Nabia Abbott and so far provides, though in tantalizing brevity, the earliest extant piece of information about this work. It is in the form of two joined folios, apparently used as a scrap paper by a certain Ahmad b. Mahfuz al-Jurhami. It contains, in addition to a rough private letter, a group of scribbles and scattered phrases such as *"Allah is great"*, a scraped outline of a figure of a man, one of the Dinazad's request to Shahrazad that serves throughout the book as a constant refrain upon which the latter starts her tale-telling[77]. Such other clues evidencing the wide spread of the work are found in a Cairene twelfth-century book-lending register which figures that the book of Alf *Layla wa Layla* was on loan, and in passing mention in al-Maqrizi's *Khitat* which quotes another man's quoting, stating that a book of popular stories known as *Alf Layla wa Layla* was in wide currency at his time[78]. The significance of these two clues lies not only in corroborating the existence and circulation of the book but also in its having undergone an important change in its

[77] See Nabia Abbott's "A Ninth-Century Fragment of the Thousand Nights: New light on the History of the Arabian Nights". Journal of Near Eastern Studies. Vol. VIII, July 1949. Pp,129-143.
[78] E. K. Salis. *Identity in Diversity: The Thousand and one Nights in English*. Op.cit. P,35.

title. In Ibn al-Nadim's *Fehrist*, this text of pulp popular fiction which was referred to as the book of "a thousand stories" is now assuming its permanent title that would remain with it to the present day. The addition of an odd number to the even thousand triggered the curiosity of many later commentators, whose conjecture liberally oscillated between the religious loads of oddness for Muslims to an irksome suspicion which they hold toward evenness.

Apart from these passing mentions of *the Nights*, one is encountered with a rampant silence that continues well to the fourteenth century, the time period to which the oldest extant manuscript of the work is dated. Interestingly, two key factors seem to explain this silence. The first has to do with the negative light in which this work was received. For it appears that *the Nights "was neither a highly regarded nor even a particularly popular work during these centuries"*[79]. The second finds explanation in the traumatic Mongol invasion of Baghdad in 1258 that wreaked havoc on the city and reduced it to ruins. The cruelties and the destruction which the Mongol conquerors brought about were indescribable. They looted and destroyed everything they could lay hands on; magnificent palaces, mosques, libraries, and hospitals were razed to the grounds. Precious books from Baghdad's thirty-six public libraries were set ablaze, and the looters used their leather covers as sandals. One can only imagine that in the silence that ensued the massacre also died down the many critical voices that spoke about *the Nights*, ill or favourably, in written or oral forms, in pious or impious terms.

In tandem with the popularity and appeal which *the Nights* generated, it also provoked reserved and unappreciative reactions. There were sermons deploring

[79] Dwight F. Reynolds. "A Thousand and One Nights: A History of the Text and its Reception". *Arabic Literature in the Post-Classical Period*. Op.cit. P,272.

wasteful pastime such as reading fictional tales and books of marvels; there were commentaries setting the divide between texts of nonsense and foolish diversions and those of worldly or afterlife usefulness; and there were judgments of taste that set and defined the standards of what was recognized as highbrow art and what was dismissed or looked down at as meritless or vulgar narratives. To the latter category belong Ibn al-Nadim's and al-Mas'oudi's outspoken criticism which describes the work as coarse, embellished and lacking warmth.

The disdain expressed by these scholars was not a judgment of esoteric scholars shut in on themselves, but an assured bias of high culture vis-à-vis some forms of popular culture. To this same effect, it is reported that when al-Radi, the twentieth Abbasid Caliph, was being brought up and prepared to reign, his grandmother was worried about his future and ordered that, among other things, his readings must be kept in check. It so happened once that an abrupt check was conducted upon his reading materials in the presence of his tutor, Abu Bakr al-Souli, to make sure that he is not reading staff unfit for him; and it turned that the inquisitors found only books relating to the sciences of language, history and poetry, but nothing of the sort of the wonders of the sea, tales of Sindbad, and the cat and the mouse[80]. An even more outspoken contempt was unequivocally pronounced by al-Mawardi who was of the opinion that the ruler's sons must be kept away from books of *Afsanas* and love stories stock. Royalties, he said, should only read tales of battles and biographies and accomplishments of past rulers, but not love-affairs tales and books of marvels as the latter would only spoil their senses and in no way endow them with a quality of

[80] Amir Learner. "Alf Layla wa Layla Muqabila al-Adab al-Raqi wa al-Adab al-Sha 'bi". Al-Karmal Abhath fi al-Lugha wa al-Adab. V. 37-38. 2016-2017. Pp, 135-6.

character that enables them to discharge their duties and to come to prominence in both scholarship and politics.

> Of accounts of the past he must memorize only those of battle days and epics of past rulers, not stories of lovers and books of Afsanas such as Sindbad and Hazar Afsana and their likes; for he would be more entertained and far enlightened by the former than by the latter. Thus he may attain the eminence of scholars and the status of Imams in his religion, and rise higher in the ranks of religion and politics; but he will find very little in these latter books that will help him. He may also mistake what is utterly fictional in them for true and actual, which will be sheer idiocy and ignorance that would keep him uniformed about the tenets and virtues of his religion. Nor will these books be of any good to him in the arts of governing, in his disputations on matters of his religions or in his flaunting in his court assemblies or in addressing the grievances of his subjects[81].

Not daunted by disdain and the lack of appreciation expressed by medieval Arab intellectuals towards *the Nights*, the latter remained in vogue among lower classes, mostly orally narrated by professional story-tellers in buzzy marketplaces, evening gatherings, and special cultural events[82]. As Dwight Reynolds notes, *"these popular narratives were compiled and copied not for personal silent reading, but to function as the basis for public story-telling performances"*[83]. Antoine Galland, who penned the first translation of the Arabic edition into a European language, made several

[81] Quoted in Amir Learner. "Alf Layla wa Layla Muqabila al-Adab al-Raqi wa al-Adab al-Sha 'bi". Ibid. P,138. (my translation)
[82] Susan Slyomovics. "Performing A Thousand and One Nights in Egypt". Oral Tradition. 9/2 (1994). P,390.
[83] Dwight F. Reynolds. "A Thousand and One Nights: A History of the Text and its Reception". Op.cit. P,

references to such performances and provided descriptions, in his travel journal, of Turkish bookstalls whose business was to lend manuscripts of these narratives for public story-tellers in return for trifle fees[84]. Although story tellers depended on written manuscripts, as has been noted by Edward Lane who watched some of them closely in Egypt, and it seems that this fact is attested to by the limited number of story tellers due to the high prices of the manuscripts[85], the narrative fabric had to be adjusted to the idiosyncrasies of the audience, the time and setting of reciting; a twist of narration here, a thicker colouring of scenes there, an interpolation of stories from other narrative corpora, a reshuffling of the stories order and the number of the nights in which they are told, etc. all in line with the purpose of narration and the effect sought to be made on their hearers. As a direct corollary of this, the Nights grew disproportionally in size and stories that had been circulating separately or those newly forged were conflated into their fabric. Nor were the manuscripts far better off or less mutilated. The belated introduction of print industry with the whole pack of intellectual property rights and regulations to the Arab world made scribes the sole agents of texts reproduction. And it was just a common practice that these scribes would find no harm in interfering with them, making "improvements", refining style, refurbishing, cutting, adding and stuffing at will, that even epitomes of transgress- both actual and textual- such as Francis Burton, found the practice abominable [86].

Although *The Nights* curiously survived the contempt of Arabic medieval high culture, the unremitting encroachments of scribes, raconteurs, public story-tellers and the vicissitudes of history, it was only at the expense of its own identity, integrity, and

[84] Ibid.
[85] - Ibid. P, 391.
[86] - Sir Richard Francis Burton. Preface to *The Arabian Nights*. The modern Library, New York, 2014. P, xxxvii

textual cohesiveness. In none of the manuscripts that stood the test of time was the text fully identifiable or entirely recoverable, and none of the extant texts could claim to represent the definitive form of the work. Like Baudrillard's simulacra, the various MSS and editions of *the Nights* do not refer to an origin but signify the fact that there is none. The real identity of *the Nights* is its long history of cumbersome transformations. Borrowing from Baudrillard, one may claim that the relationship of the derivative versions to their parent text is hyperreal in the sense that *"it is no longer a question of imitation, nor of reduplication, nor even of parody. It is rather a question of substituting signs of the real for the real itself"*[87]. Not only was the Persian progenitor of the work lost but also no wholesome prototype of its Arabic translations, which Ibn al-Nadim referred to as "a thousand stories", survived intact. Furthermore, *the Nights* did not live only in derivative forms, in a myriad of texts that had been altered and improved upon an original; it also subsisted in several fake manuscripts and recensions that feverishly proliferated when interest in it reached a zenith in the eighteenth century Europe, and when creating an image or an illusion of the original became a lucrative business for profit-seeking bibliophiles and numismatists. The fakery of many of these derivative texts was only exposed by later scholars and orientalists such as Zotenberg and Macdonald, but the dubious nature of many others remained unresolved. To their real, that is to say the original, the derivative versions, whether they be recasts, free-handed translation or outright fakes, were attached only with loose ties; ties that no longer express precedence of the original over the derivative, but that-strangely enough- enable the derivative to do without, live independently of and eclipse the original. Suffice it to remember that the

[87] Jean Baudrillard. "Simulacra and Simulations". *A Postmodern Reader*. Ed. Joseph Natoli and Linda Hutcheon. State University of New York Press, 1993. P, 343.

portions of *the Nights* that achieved widest popularity in Europe, stories such as '*Aladin', 'Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves'* and themes such as the flying carpet and the magic lamp never made part of any Arabic manuscript of *the Nights*.

Inquiry about the real identity of *the Nights* first started seriously only when there was a dire need for it, when Galland was grappling with his translation of the work and came to virtual deadlocks regarding what materials to include and what to leave out. Unlike many agents who came into play with the text before him, particularly Arabic scribes and public performers, whose contact with and use of the text was governed by the immediacy and contingency of circumstances; e.g. a scribe reproduced a work or a portion of it for an individual commissioner; a story-teller recited stories, impromptu or directly from a script, in front of an audience; but none of them was concerned about the integrity and cohesion of the text as an already accomplished enunciation or even as another's property Galland's considerations did not emanate from this folkloric situation. They were grounded in the dynamics of an impersonal readership removed from him by the underlying imperatives of large-scale production. For them the text was meant not to be performed, but to be read silently. In his journal Galland admits that he never heard mention of *the Nights* despite his fifteen-year tenure of service as a diplomatic assistant in Constantinople during which he had ample occasions to visit such cities as Damascus, Aleppo, Beirut, Jerusalem, and Cairo, driven by a keen interest as 'antiquary to the king' for whom he bought rarities such as coins, manuscripts, artefacts, etc. Only when he was putting the last touches on his translation of Sindbad did he acquire the first four volumes of *the Nights*. How the latter ended up in his hands remains a mystery, but the way he carried out their translation is worthy to pursue in some length:

Galland translation came to be included in the twelve-volume French 'translation'. The first two volumes of Galland's French text follow the Arabic manuscript closely. For volume three, however, Galland inserted the Sindbad tales he had translated from a separate source and which had never previously been part of *The Nights*. Volumes four to six return to the tales in the Arabic manuscript, although Galland for some reason skipped two tales and completed volume six with the tale 'Qamar al-Zaman' which was incomplete in the Arabic manuscript, but for which Galland supplied an ending either from his own imagination or from another manuscript. Finally, volume seven comprised the two tales which had been dropped earlier. All of these were published between 1704 and 1706, but with volume seven, Galland had exhausted all of the material in his Arabic manuscript. Though he tried for years through a number of different intermediaries to obtain additional Arabic manuscripts of *The Nights* that contained more tales, his efforts were in vain. When volume eight appeared three years later in 1709, it was a complete shock to Galland for he had not submitted any new tales to his publisher. *The Nights* was selling well and since Galland had refused to supply new tales, his publisher took matters into his own hands: volume eight included a tale entitled 'Ghanim' that Galland had previously translated or composed on his own (no Arabic manuscript or analogue text has ever been found), as well as two tales translated from Turkish by Galland's colleague, Petis de la Croix ´('Zayn al-Asnam' and 'Khudadad'), who had been working on a collection he entitled *Mille et un Jours* drawn from a Turkish manuscript. Although both Galland and Petis de la Croix denounced the volume, these tales have been ´retained in nearly all later versions of *The Nights* [88].

[88] Dwight F. Reynolds. "A Thousand and One Nights: A History of the Text and its Reception". Op.cit. Pp,277-8.

The other volumes in Galland's complication had no analogues in the Arabic origin. They were drawn not from written materials, but from tales told at Parisian dinner parties by a Maronite priest and gifted story-teller, Hanna Diab of Aleppo, from whose recitation Galland made notes and summaries of less than ten pages which he developed a year and a half later from a bare plotline into well polished stories that run for more than two hundred pages. The portion of stories Hanna Diab furnished Galland with, orally or in writing, amount to four volumes in Galland's text and represent one third of his compilation from which he also worked his happy-ending closure to the narrative.

Galland's translation achieved unparalleled success. He reworked Arabic tales in a French style and structure that capitalize on the Orient's picturesque and exotic Otherness. He brought palpably the Orient before the mind of his readers as an object of contemplation as no one did before. His literary recreations, one should say appropriations, were *"crafted to sell to a French readership. His efforts inspired the emergence of an entirely new genre of European literature, the Oriental tale, at which authors as diverse as Voltaire, Johnson, Scott, Beckford, Disraeli, Irving, Dickens, Dumas and Pushkin were later to try their hands"*[89].

As with all success, Galland's brought others into the business. His work engendered a number of continuations that varied from uncharted variations of the original text to well-contrived forgeries. One of such continuation was the result of collaboration between a Syrian monk, Dom Denis Chavis (Shawish) who was offered a job in in the Biblitèque du Roi, and a French author named Jacques Cazotte. Chavis claimed that he had a Baghdadi MS of *The Nights*; but the truth, as was demystified

[89] Ibid. P, 279.

by Muhssin Mahdi, was that he copied the first three volumes from Galland, making few changes here and there. When faced with the dilemma of handling those stories which Galland interpolated from external sources (including those Persian tales that were included by the publisher in the French compilation without Gland's knowledge), Chavis chose to render them into Arabic and thus creating the illusion that his text was the original from which Galland worked out his translation. Chavis, however, soon realised that there was little gain in his forgery and abandoned his design, focusing instead on producing *Des Suites des Milles et Une Nuits*. This latter work enjoyed some popularity for some time before it was roundly ascertained as a fake[90]. Another fake work produced more cleverly the symptoms of the real that even connoisseurs of entextualization such as Duncan Macdonald could not suspect its veracity. This manuscript was created by another Syrian, Mikhail Sabbagh who- like Chavis- travelled to Paris for professional reasons. Sabbagh's manuscript had a more durable impact and its fakery character remained open to question.

Where Galland was not drawing his stories from material orally narrated to him and where he was not giving full leeway to his creative impulses or inserting tales from independent sources, he was following an Arabic text which belongs to the Syrian family and is said to be the oldest, often traced back to the fourteenth century. Another text which was the source of many Arabic editions and English translations represents the Egyptian family of *The Nights*. It is important to note that the distinction between the two- which may seem otherwise arbitrary and for some even unjustified- acquires relevance only in accounting for the various written editions and, by extension, translations, recasts and appropriations that emanated from both

[90] Ibid. Pp, 281-2.

families. The first Arabic edition of *The Nights* to be born to light is known as Calcutta I, edited by Ahmad b. Mahmud al-Shirwani al-Yamani. It was published between 1814 and 1818, in two volumes which contain only two hundred nights with the story of 'Sindbad the Sailor' appended. This edition was meant to initiate European students into Arabic colloquial idiom. In much the greatest part, it evolved out of the Syrian MS but was not a faithful transcription of its sources, as Muhsin Mahdi remarks[91]. A more complete edition is known as Bulaq edition which was published in 1835, and contains two hundred and eighty nights. The Bolaq became the main source on which Edward Lane based his translation as we shall see in a little while. Other editions include Calcutta II, also known as Macnaghten's edition which served as fons et origo for Sir Francis Burton provocative translation. Other editions of *the Nights* are either fake such as that of Breslau, originally edited by the German Arabist Maximillan Habicht and now dismissed for its false claims on being grounded on a Tunisian MS that never actually existed; or corrupt as the Lebanese Salhani edition whose drastic expurgation of the original *"attained to the dignity of a vulgate"*[92]. Mohssin Mahdi's 1984 edition is the latest and so far last contribution into *The Nights'* long and restless history of transformations. Mahdi wanted to provide a pure and more consistent edition of the core stories of *The Nights*. Ironically, he marked a return to the Galland's starting point in the circumference of this circle. His text as it stands today coincides with three thirds in Galland's text, to which the fourth is still thought to be wanting.

This condition of identity in diversity, as E. K. Sallis has called it, made *the Nights* irredeemably branded with plurality and heterogeneity that it has become

[91] E. K. Salis. *Identity in Diversity: The Thousand and one Nights in English*. Op.cit. P,40.
[92] Duncan B. Macdonald. "The Earlier History of the Arabian Nights". *The Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society.* No. 3 (Jul., 1924), P,23.

impossible to reduce it to any single definitive text. In this plurality, elusiveness and unbridgeable difference added to the intrigue of the original and heightened the interest of its rewriters.

3. Edward Lane's domestication of *The Nights*: conversion

3.1 Lane's gaze and disguise: unfolding the Orient

No sooner had Galland's *Mille et Une Nuits* made it first appearance than other translators- known or pseudo- publishers, second-hand redactors, imitators, and pirates[93] were carried away by a heightened upsurge of enthusiasm in this new text, or 'repertory of marvels'. The book was soon translated to almost all main European languages. The first English translation was pseudonymous, based on Galland's version and known as Grub Street translation. Other translations also appeared at irregular intervals; one by Jonathon Scott in 1811, and another uncompleted by Henry Torren, but both failed to secure a lasting grip on the English readership and promptly fell into oblivion.

Little is known about Edward W. Lane. The brief shreds of biographical information that one can elicit from different sources provides no more than a composite image about this otherwise important figure. And this too sheds light only on his part of life after his first trip to Egypt in 1825. Before that time, we know very little about him. Apart from his date of birth (in 1801) to a family of modest means but of strong religious sentiments, his poor health condition, his occupation as an engraver, and his early interest in Semitic languages, not much can be culled from the various accounts about him. His father was a prebendary and set the example which the son was intended to follow hot on the heel. But Lane found both the potential of religious attainments and his insipid occupation with his brother Richard too sedentary for his health, too dull for his senses and altogether unfit for a man of

[93] See Duncan B. Macdonald. "A Bibliographical and Literary Study of the First Appearance of the Arabian Nights in Europe" for a thorough inventory of pirated editions and the changes that were inflicted on the original translation. Op.cit. Pp,400-05.

talents and unrestrained ambitions. Lane's rise to eminence started only when he boarded a badly captained ship, *Findlay*, and left off for Egypt in 1825. For him, the East- to use Disraeli's trope- was a career in the pursuance of which he was well disposed, having enough tricks up his sleeves. Listing his merits and attributes, his nephew states:

> "He was … of a cast of countenance resembling so closely that of a pure Arab family of Mekkeh than an Egyptian, though repeatedly assured of the mistake, persisted in his belief that the reputed Ingleezee was a member of that family". He had, we know, been for some time accustoming himself at home to their language, the spoken language; and he contrived too to turn his British phlegm into a serviceable oriental air of imperturbable self-possession. And so it was Lane was able, we read, "to mix among the people as one of themselves, and to acquire not only the refinement of their idiomatic speech and the minute details of their etiquette, but also a perfect insight into their habits of minds and ways of thought. The spirit of the East is a sealed book to ninety-nine out of every hundred Orientalists. To Lane it was transparent".[94]

Lane visited Egypt in three trips and stayed there in separate sojourns of varying lengths; each was singularly productive, academically as well as socially. The first lasted for three years during which he gathered the materials for his work *Description of Egypt* which lingered in pending publication for long but was never actually published. Resented by the failure to find a publisher for his work, Lane made a second visit to Egypt to engage this time in a more ambitious enterprise. Although his period of stay spanned only a couple of years, its outcomes were more

[94] The words between quotation marks are Stanley Lane Pooles', Lane's nephew, cited in the editor's introduction to Lane's famous work, *The Manners and Customs of Modern Egyptians*. J. M. Dent& Sons, London. 1908. P,viii.

fruitful and its effect more enduring. It was during this second visit that Lane finished his *The Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians,* his translation of the *Arabian Nights* and parts of the Koran. The last sojourn was the longest but the least documented. During a period of seven years Lane seemed to have lost all interest in mixing with the natives and lived more as a recluse, lending himself wholly to the completion of the first Arabic-English lexicon whose last two volumes were left unpublished after his death and were posthumously finalized by his nephew. Once in Egypt, Lane gave up his English habits, and took up those of a typical Egyptian. Disguising as a Turk, Lane rechristened himself as Mansur Effendi, dressed like an Egyptian, ate with fingers and dispensed with using forks, gave up wine and swine flesh and avoided socializing with the Franks except in cases of absolute necessity. Under his well- fitting disguise, he was able to wander in the congested alleys of Cairo, insinuate to the otherwise most inaccessible places to a European such as mosques and holy shrines, and more importantly, to gain the trust and acquire the means to soak himself deeply into the human world of the Orientals. When it came to matters of faith, Lane was more sensitive to the foreign. He never forgot to ascertain that by disguising as an Oriental, he compromised only that part of the self that was already adjustable to the Muslims system of beliefs. As he himself notes,

> while from my dress which I have found most convenient to wear, I am generally mistaken for a Turk, my acquaintances, of course know me to be an Englishman; but I constrained them to treat me like a Muslim, by my freely acknowledging the hand of Providence in the introduction and diffusion of the religion of El-Islam, and, when interrogated, avowing my belief in the Messiah, in accordance with the words of the Kur'an, as the Word of God infused into the womb of the Virgin Marry, and a Spirit emerging from Him. Thus, I believe I

> acquired their good opinion and much of their confidence; though not to such an extent as to prevent my having to contend with many difficulties[95].

How solid was this middle ground in which Lane comfortably seated himself; or how engaging with-and therefore neutralizing of- the irreconcilable core principles of Christianity and Islam, and who were his interlocutors and under what capacity they argued with him, Lane felt being under no obligation to elaborate. What matters for him is that his disguise worked, and so effectively it did. For after all, an oriental can stomach anything, and the ability to reason and make discrete judgment is something that have already been posited to be beyond his reach by such Orientalists as Sir Alfred Lyall. But this little concession was indispensable lest his countrymen might suspect him of having gone too oriental,[96] kicked astray and been infected with Oriental apostasy; some of the gravest charges that can be levelled against a Western pilgrim wandering the Orient. In his attempt *"to keep nothing hidden from his readers, to deliver the Egyptians without depth, in swollen detail*"[97], Lane wanted to assure them that he incurred only a partial loss of identity, only that part of the self whose sacrifice was required by the perfection of the disguise, and without which a colossal part of the Orient would be left out of the Western gaze. The Other part of the self was well in place, dominant and robust, retaining *"its European power, to comment on, acquire, possess everything around it"*[98].

[95] Edward W. Lane' s preface to *The Manners and Customs of Modern Egyptians.* Op.cit. P, xviii.
[96] This concept is used here synonymously with Bill Ashcroft's going-native which signifies " a fear of contamination by absorption into native life and customs" see Bill Ashcroft et al. Postcolonial Studies: The Key Concepts. 2nd Ed. Routledge,2000. P, 106.
[97] Edward Said. Orientalism. Op.cit. P,162.
[98] Ibid. P, 160.

Almost everything that Lane could set his eye on in Egypt was thoroughly captured, registered and indexed as representing the mode of thinking and behaving of the Egyptians. With a keen eye for details, Lane converted the personal testimony of his residence in Egypt to the enabling codes of Orientalism knowledge. He subdued the otherwise shapeless pulp of Egyptian life into neatly organized order in which one can read it in chapters spanning customs, festivals, birth ceremonies, funerary rites, marriage, etc. Lane's powers to capture the minute details about the social life of a society led later critics to claim that there was nothing in or about Egypt that is not found in his *Modern Egyptians*. Some went as far as to argue that if something escaped the notice of this book, then it did not exist in the nineteenth-century Egypt[99]. Lane, however, was hailed not only for bringing the mass of Egyptian life into order, but also for freezing it in time. As his editor states, *"Lane wrote his account of the "Modern Egyptians", when they could, for the last time be described"*[100]. And this is, indeed, fairly revealing. The indication here is not that the Egyptians have become at a certain point indescribable; but that, there was a moment in their history, namely a post-Lanian moment, when their description was no longer worthwhile. This is because, so goes the argument, after this moment, they became irredeemably contaminated by the European influence, and ever since were straying from their old paths into the new ways of European civilization. Straining further this line of thought, it is said that *"twenty-five of steam-communication with Egypt have more altered its inhabitants than had the preceding five centuries. They then retained the habits and manners of their remote ancestors"*[101]. Therefore, Lane's importance

[99] Jason Thompson. Edward William Lane in Egypt. *Journal of the American Research Center in Egypt* Vol. 34 (1997), p,256.
[100] See the editor's preface to *The Manners and Customs of Modern Egyptians.* Op.cit. P,xiv
[101] Ibid. Pp, xiv-xv.

emanates not only from his ability to provide a meticulous account of the Egyptians, but also from his success to preserve them in petrified forms as fossils.

3.2 Lane's domesticating tendencies: expurgation and paraphrase

When Lane set out to translate *The Nights* he was not quite alien to the field. In fact his previous works, published or unpublished, already involved some forms of translation. As an unbranded ethnographer and a mediator between Oriental life and European scholarship, Lane was, in a certain sense, a translator of Egyptian behaviour and thought[102]. Cultural translation was at the heart of his work and a demand of the field within whose confines he was working. Perhaps Godfrey Lienhardt was the first to suggest, in his *"Modes of Thought"*, that *"the problems of describing to others how members of a remote tribe think… appears largely as one of translation, of making the coherence primitive thought has in the languages it lives in, as clear as possible to our own"*[103]. Of course Lienhardt's use of the word translation does not signify a conversion of a linguist matter per se, but, as Talal Asad notes, refers to a transfer of the modes of thought that are embodied in such matter. Even if Egypt may be said to share nothing with the social organization of a primitive tribe, for Orientalists like Lane, it certainly shares with them its remoteness in time. Also Egypt was for every Orientalist little more than debris and relics of a vanished ancient civilization and its people were no more than civilized men who have fallen again into a savage state[104]. Therefore, the approach which an ethnographer adopts to study a primitive, say, totemic tribe is the same that Lane was using to *translate* the Egyptian culture, to

[102] Edward Said. Orientalism. Op.cit. P,160.
[103] Quoted in Talal Asad's "the Concept of Cultural Translation in British Social Anthropology" in *Writing Culture: the poetics and Politics of Ethnography*. Ed. James Clifford and George E. Marcus. University of California Press, Los Angles, 1986. P,142.
[104] Edward Said. Orientalism. Op.cit. P,171.

make the unknown known and the mysterious explained. It is indeed this same approach that provoked cynicism among many Arab intellectuals that the West applies specific methods of inquiry for self-study (e.g. sociology) and uses other methods- particularly ethnology and anthropology- to study other societies and cultures[105]. It is this ethnographic approach which Lane could not dispense with even when he was handling not a cultural matter; i.e. manners and customs of the Egyptians, but a purely linguistic matter, *The Nights*.

Lane is credited by many critics with having produced the first elegant readable English translation of *The Nights*. By his time, readers of *The Nights* looked askance at Galland's manipulative translation and started questioning its veracity. Lane himself expressed these scruples, declaring that:

> [Galland's] version is an improvement upon the original. That the Thousand and One Nights may be greatly improved I most readily admit; but as confidently do I assert that Galland has excessively perverted the work. His acquaintance with Arab manners and customs was insufficient to preserve him always from errors of the grossest description, and by the style of his version he has given the whole a false character[106].

This quote clearly outlines Lane's two main avenues of his approach to translation. Galland lacked adequate knowledge about the Orient and Lane had ample; Galland was not quite true to the original and changed its character and Lane is intent to stick to the letter. Thus, Lane entered the ground as a rectifier of the former's pitfalls,

[105] Abd Allah al-Aroui. Al-Idiolojiya al-Arabia al-Mu'assira. Al-Markaz al-Thaqafi al-'arabi, Casablanca, 1995. P, 142.

[106] Quoted in Jennifer Schacker-Mill's "Otherness and Otherworldliness: Edward W. Lane's Ethnograpic Treatment of the Arabian Nights". *The Journal of American Folklore*. Vol. 113. No. 448 (Spring, 2000). P, 169.

professing his knowledge of the Orient was his stock-in-trade. Lane never tired of reiterating whenever he had occasion that he spent several studious years and Egypt, roamed in its street in the full-blown breed of an Arab and mixed with inhabitants as an equal. Thus, he asserts himself not only as someone who is endowed with the linguistic competence to produce a more accurate version of the *Nights* which Galland failed to do, but also as possessed of extra-textual and circumstantial knowledge about the manners and customs of the people among whom the text first appeared and which, according to him, remains indispensable to the understanding and interpretation of *The Night*. Indeed, it's no secret that his view of and first interest in *The Nights* grew out of an understanding of this text as a repertory of ethnographical information about the Arabs. In his preface to the *Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians*, he states:

> There is a work…which presents most admirable pictures of the manners and customs of the Arabs… if the English reader had possessed a close translation of it with sufficient illustrative notes, I might almost have spared myself of the labour of the present undertaking[107].

It is well to remember that Lane's procedure that requires providing extraneous knowledge in the form of illustrative annotations was quite in tune with the established tenets of his age respecting both the ideals of the methods of translation and the requirements of understanding and construing literary works. The first stance, for example, was well expressed as early as the 1760's in this quote by Jonathon Gottfried Herder:

[107] Ibid. P,169.

> The finest translator must be the finest explicator, should the sentence also be true in the reverse order, and should both be joined, we would soon be able to hope to for a book entitled: "poetic translations of the poems of the Morn in which they are explicated on the basis of the land, the history, the attitudes, the religious life, the condition, the customs and the language of their nation and transplanted into the genius of our day, our mentality and our language[108]

Also, just around this time a literary- religiously leaned- proclivity started to make itself felt, firstly championed by Bishop Robert Lowth in a series of lectures in Oxford and later resonated by Samuel Burder, demanding that in construing literary works, the circumstantial reality and daily life details in which these works were embedded must be taken into account and reconstructed. For Lowth, the textual criticism and interpretation of the Old Testament was best served by a thorough appreciation of the time and place of its entextualization. In this, the mastery of language of its people alone is not enough. One *"must see all things with their eyes and estimate all things with their opinion"*[109]

Thus, explication in criticism and annotation in translation are poetical and procedural methods already well tested and commanded to whoever mediates the transfer of foreign texts to the English cultural system. Lane needed only to put them to good use. The purpose was to domesticate the foreignness and unfamiliarity abounding in the foreign text, strip it of any friction, render it familiar to the English readers and, to borrow from Lawrence Vinnuti, make it *"read fluent…transparent, and give it the appearance that it reflects the foreign writer's personality or intention*

[108] - Ibid. P,170.
[109] - Ibid. 171.

or the essential meaning of the foreign text- the appearance, in other words, that the translation is not in fact a translation, but the original".[110] The result was that he produced a heavily annotated translation, replete with ethnographical information, geographical and cultural specificities that give his readers a readymade point of view and, as he said, spare them the pain of checking other sources. The fact that this information is not always supported by his spatially limited experience in the East as he had been only to Egypt and not to other places like Persia, Syrian, Iraq or China, which provided the setting for many stories in *The Nights*, is no conundrum that either invalidates his claim or disrupt his approach. It is readily resolvable if one only keeps in mind that Orientals are everywhere the same and that *"it is in the Arabian countries and especially in Egypt that we see the people, the dresses, and the buildings which [the Nights] describes in almost every case, even when the scene is laid in Persia, in India or in China"*[111].

Nonetheless, poetics was not the pre-eminent ground in which Lane most expressly articulated his conformism and applied an unremitting domestication and appropriation of *The Nights*. Indeed, it is in ideology that he proved himself most prone as a conformist. His version of *The Nights* was not only heavily annotated but also extensively bowdlerized. Jorge L. Borges described him as the "virtuoso of subterfuge". But it is closer to truth to describe him as the virtuoso of bowdlerization. And it is for this, more than anything else, that he commended the praise of the *Foreign Quarterly Review* for creating an edition in which *"the grossness of Eastern manners is entirely avoided".* Lane engaged with a thorough witch-hunt of obscene or profane content and watered down any indelicacies that were at odds with the delicate

[110] - Lawrence Venuti. *The translator's Invisibility*. Routledge, London,1995. P,1.
[111] Jennifer Schacker-Mill. Op.cit. p,171.
[26] Ibid. P,169.

taste and doggedly conservative sexuality of Victorians. The result was, as Borges nicely put it, "an exceedingly erudite version…, a mere encyclopaedia of evasion"[112]. The supplementary notes which serve to inform his readers of these evasions; recurrent expressions like "I shall overlook an episode of the most reprehensible sort", "a line too coarse for translation, I must of necessity suppress the other anecdote", etc. are already indicative of the damage and appropriation which the original has incurred at Lane's hand, and which provided the excuse and foundation for subsequent translators to try their hand.

The degree and scope of Lane's free-hand expurgation and manipulation of *The Nights* is very evident, for example, in this passage from the narrative frame which serves as the springhead episode out of which other stories of *the Nights* spirally proliferate. The passage quoted below captures the moment when Shahriar accidently found out about his wife's perfidious unfaithfulness. As he was about to embark on his visit to his brother whom he has not seen for twenty years, he suddenly realized having left his purse at home. He went quickly to fetch it, but only to find his wife lying in the arms of a black slave. Lane trims off the original enunciation of its erotic load and reduced the offence of adultery, as it visually plays out to the eye of the beholder, to a bare minimum of a wife sleeping by the side of a soundly- asleep black slave.

> At midnight, however, he remembered that he had left in his palace an article which he should have brought with him; and having returned to the palace to fetch it, he there beheld his wife sleeping in

[112] Jorge Luis Borges. "The Translation of the Thousand and One Nights". *The Translation Studies Reader*. Ed. Larwnce Venuti. Tran. Esther Allen. Routledge, New York, 2000. P,36.

> his bed, and attended by a male negro slave, who had fallen asleep by her side[113].

In the ST (Bolaq edition which Lane uses), this episode is presented with ample details of the scene. Lane watered down the expression "when he returned home he found his wife lying in his bed, hugging one of the black slaves" to a light-sounding expression of "attended by a male negro slave". The next sentence in which the king, dumbstruck by the shock, engages in a sort of soliloquy in which he refers to his wife as a "whore" is completely skipped in Lane's version. Likewise, when the king slew his wife and the slave and decided to wreak vengeance on as many women within his dominion as he could afford, we are told in the original that he plotted a scheme "that he would every night pick a virgin girl, remove her virginity, and kill her", but the molestation and abuse committed by the belligerent kind is roundly understated by Lane only to eschew any mention of virginity.

Although *The Nights* is not professionally obscene as Jorge L. Borges has noted, there are some passages which exhibit a fair presence of erotica and unveiled sexuality as is, for example, the case in the story of *The Porter and the Ladies of Baghdad,* and the story of *Aziz and Aziza*. Both stories- which became of particular interest to other translators - like Payne but especially Burton- whose approach to translation or the particularities of the context in which they carried out their translations were different from those of Lane- feature detailed descriptions of licentious acts, portrayals of nude female bodies, lascivious gestures, and explicit references to and emphasis on sexual organs. Also, in the story of *Nourddin and his Son and Shemseddin and his Daughter* in which the denouement in the final twist of

[113] Edward W. Lane. The Thousand and One Nights. Little, Brown and Company, Boston, 1853. P,3.

the plot ends up with reuniting Badreddin Hassan with his *Houri-like* cousin on her wedding day, long passages are glossed over in Lane's rendering. One important passage portrays the moment when the Badreddin unveils the bride and the vivid details of the intercourse are couched in allegorical defamiliarizing language in which sexual organs and intimacy are figuratively represented in the terms of military armoury. Lane scissors out the whole passage as he also does with the carnivalesque scene in the stories of the barber of Baghdad and his six brothers. In one of the episodes, which forms a story on its own, the barber's second brother, Heddar (his name in Arabic is Baqbaq), was turned into a laughing stock by an old woman who lured him into her house with the promise that he would have his full gratification of wine and charming concubines if he only fulfils one condition: to hold his tongue. Unable to resist the temptation of the promised pleasures, he acquiesced in heavy slaps on his neck, in his beard, moustache and eyebrows being shaved, and in being undressed and his face being dyed in red. In all these details Lane's translation follows the original on the heels, but once he reaches the erotic elements which give the story its picturesque tone and tragic end, he shears them neatly to the detriment of the plot.

When faced with instances of overt sexuality, Lane's favourite method to handle them is no longer timidly assimilative, as is evident in the foregoing examples, but puritanically surgical; it is inscribed not by dodging euphemisms and mitigating understatements but by dismembering amputations and expurgations. Lane finds no harm in cutting off large portions of the narrative even when their omission alters or derails the smooth unfolding of the episodes and disrupts the wholesomeness of the plot. Lane's treatment of erotica and sexual allusions is consistently systematic

throughout the text and stringently oscillates between euphemism and expurgation; therefore there is perhaps little use in listing more examples as his translation is replete with both types. Given this, it is nevertheless important to add that expurgation for Lane was not only entailed by the necessity to avoid or to render acceptable "the grossness of Eastern manners" in regards of overt sexuality; but was fully in line with the requirements of the order of taboos of the Victorian era. Foucault has made it clear that in every society *"the production of discourse is at once controlled, selected, organized and redistributed by a certain number of procedures whose role is to ward off its powers and dangers, to gain mastery over its chance events, to evade its ponderous, formidable materiality"*[114]. He numbers among these procedures restrictions of prohibition and rejection such as taboos, the opposition between reason and madness, truth and falsehood, etc. which in effect function as infiltrators for the speaking subject. In Lane's case one of these procedures which is evidently operative in his rendition is the taboo on the object of speech. The grid of taboos, in the sense of what he was prohibited to speak about, was tightest in respects of sex and religion, and Lane was none meeker under the heel of the one than the other. Although *The Nights* is essentially a secular text that is at odds with the most basic principles of the Islamic system of belief, there are some narrative stretches in it which are given a religious twist. *For example, in a story which figures in the Bolaq edition under the title the Story of King 'Umar al-Nu'man and his Sons Sharkan and Daw' al-Makan*, the plot is of considerable length and spans over several nights of narration. What is peculiar about it is that it dwells in dreary details on the expedition of Sharkan into Christendom and his adventures with a Christian queen Abriza, her elopement with

[114][114] Michel Foucault. "The Order of Discourse" in *Untying the Text: a Post-Structuralist Reader*. Ed. Robert Young. Routledge, Boston, 1981. P, 52.

Sharkan to his father's dominions, several rounds of military confrontations, and ideological engagements, secretive plots, vengeances, etc. Along with this stream of events goes a set of binary oppositions, stereotypes, clichés and images whose organization and distribution is exclusively enacted from a privileged vantage point of a Muslim. The story takes numerous twists and splits off into several subplots. In the complex polyphony and multiplicity of its narrative voices, it is heavily haunted by the religious polemic that draws extensively on Muslim authorities to corroborate the consistency and harmony of Islamic teachings and ridicule the absurdity of the Christian faith. The polemical prejudice which inscribes this story is starkly incongruent with the prejudgements, expectations and predilections of Lane's nineteenth-century implied Victorian reader who was raised, as E. K. Sallis puts it, on *Wuthering Heights* and Victorian press[115]. To such a reader, the religious segments in the story must sound highly disruptive and unbearably offensive. As in a parody, the order of things in the story is radically restructured, inversed and ridiculed. Thus, against the tremendous odds of biblical literature which, in its political unconscious, propounds Islam as a categorical Christian heresy, here heresy is not attributed to Islam but to Christianity, the infidel is not a follower of Islam but of the Christian creed, crusades no longer signify retaking or annexing stretches of land to Christendom, but Christendom being conquered by devout Muslims. These considerations appear to have been conclusive in Lane's decision not to include this story his translation though his jump into the next story, the *Story of Taj Elmolouk and the Lady Dunia*, is completely out of tune with original unfolding of the plot; since the latter is irretrievably entangled in the texture fabric of the former and is born out of its linear development and fruition. In the original, the sequential relation of

[115] E. K. Salis. *Identity in Diversity: The Thousand and one Nights in English*. Op.cit. P,70.

this story with its predecessor is organic. It is a continuation of the same narrative line. It is occasioned by the king Daw' al-Makan's demanding his vizier Dandan to entertain him with a marvellous story to break the brooding silence in the dead of the night.

Neither Lane nor his readers were disposed to suffer the subversive elements and polemical content abounding in *the Story of King 'Umar al-Nu'man*. Therefore, the only way they could both possibly live up to the rest of the Nights is to bowdlerize and trim off what seems irreconcilable with the poetic and ideological prejudgments of their time. Lane's method, as one of domestication and familiarisation, shares with Norman Shapiro's understanding of a good translation as a pane of glass that *"you only notice that it's there when there are little imperfections- scratches, babbles. Ideally, there shouldn't be any. It should never call attention to itself"*[116]. Lane's job was to ferret out these 'imperfections' and fix them. It is absurd to wish that he acted otherwise. It is important to note that, unlike other prominent translators of *The Nights*, namely Payn and Burton, whose translations were addressed to private subscribers, Lane was addressing the general public of readers at large. Therefore, his translation was more susceptible to public surveillance, and more predisposed to put up with the demands of the recipient culture.

[116]Quoted in Lawrence Venuti's *The translator's Invisibility*. Op.cit. P,xi.

4 Sir Francis Burton's uses of *The Nights*: subversion

4.1 Burton attraction to the foreign

Linguist, consul, explorer, captain, diplomat, translator, anthropologist, and man of sorts, such are the titles meritoriously conferred on Sir Richard Francis Burton, and all attest both to his encyclopaedic learning and easy-going vacillation between a range of professions and disciplines and to his remarkable and eventful life. The exploits and achievements of this first water British Orientalist, the ups and downs in his professional career, his glorious ascent to high positions of honour and his plunge into woeful ignominy, and his daring adventures and rebellious spirits against the powers that be are too ample for the life span of an individual.

Unlike many other translators of Arabic pseudo-narratives whose early lives remain mystified behind a dearth of biographical information, and whose later reputation was largely attributable to their translation of these texts, Burton attracted attention since early childhood and gained wide fame in adulthood, both by his commanding merits and industrious talents and by his frequent mishaps. His life became later subject to many biographical accounts, including one by his wife, Isabel or Lady Burton, which is suspected of being written with the eye of a wife whose major concern was one of vindication; and another written by Thomas Wright, whose aim is said to recover a truthful image of the earthly Francis Burton that lies somewhere between the idealization of his wife and the vilification of his contemptuous detractors. Wright's claim to objectivity or at least to unbiased meticulousness is grounded, he says, on the fact that his account pieces together Burton's unpublished letters, the personal testimonies of his close friends and

colleagues and a multitude of diaries, correspondences and documents. His keen eye for details led him even to contend with Burton over many small details, including his birth place, and to correct him when he is occasionally found *"colouring history in order to suit his own ends… [when] he seems to have assumed that it did not matter about keeping strictly to the truth if nobody was likely to be injured"*[117]. Wright's account is prodigiously capacious and traces out the smallest details in Burton's life, except where the religious sensibilities of the writer cannot afford explicit reference to erotic content, which is by no means a marginal issue in Burton's order of priorities. In such cases, he makes sure to be as brief as possible, or writes in a way that *"only scholars could understand"*. In many instances, Wright found it necessary, out of considerations for Catholics, to ruthlessly suppress whole passages and strike out every sentence that might give offence[118]. And although what has been supressed and never played out must have been immense and of paramount importance, given Burton's maniac interest in sexuality, what survives in this biographical account leaves almost no aspect in Burton's life or character ill-lit or uncovered. From the smallest mischiefs of Burton the child to the most perilous adventures of Burton the explorer, imperial agent, pilgrim, wandering dervish, and anthropologist, etc. minute details are kept up in the record, owing in the first place to Burton's relentless tendency to note down his experience in foreign lands and to turn his personal testimony into the funds of imperial knowledge such as *the Royal Geographical Society* and later *the Anthropological Institute of Great Britain*. For, in fact, Burton never thought of himself as a mere individual who vowed his life to adventure and

[117] Thomas Wright. *The Life of Sir Francis Burton*. Vol. 1. New York: G.P. Putnam' Sons. P,xiv.
[118] Ibid. Pp,xvii-xvii

wandering in uncharted territories, but as a forerunner mapping out the prospects of the colonial enterprise of his country.

We know from Wright and others that Burton was born in Torquay (though he himself says in Elstree), in 1821, to a family that yoked together military honours and religious titles. His father, Joseph Netterville Burton, was a Lieutenant-Colonel in the British army; and his mother, Martha Beckwith, was a plain daughter of Richard Barker, an important personage in the parish and a man of eminent piety. Upon his birth, his grandfather promised to bequeath all his fortune to him, a promise which only his sudden death by cardiac arrest at the doorway of the notary and Burton's early omens of hard luck thwarted from being executed. Burton, however, took more pride in alleging descent from Louis XIV. A certain La Belle Montmorency, a beauty of the French court, had a son whom she believed the French king to be the father. In total secrecy, she called the baby Louis Le Jeune, put him in a basket of flowers and took him to Ireland, and through his offspring the royal blood is claimed to have tripped into Burton. But many people rarely digested his claim and pointed out in turn to his gipsy lineage; a fact, if true, would typically suit his cast of character.

Burton's childhood was divided between England, France and Italy. And while the family's continuous movement divested Burton of the sense of belonging to his motherland, something which he later seemed to lament, it prepared him for his future pursuits. Since early days, Burton showed a natural inclination to the acquisition of foreign languages. As was the wont at his time, he was schooled in Greek and Latin, and per force learned French and Italian during his sojourns in France and Italy, but curiosity in Asiatic languages, including Arabic was all his own. In Italy, he had ample occasion to explore the treasures of Italian arts, and his masterful command of

French enabled him to soak himself in the riches of the French literature. But his lack of discipline and his ungovernable temper reflected badly on his education. When he enrolled in Oxford, he became as notorious for his poor performance as for his impishness and reckless misconducts; and both provided sufficient ground for his prompt dismissal. But far from feeling regretful for the decision, he rejoiced boisterously and enlisted in the army.

In the army, Burton gave full vent to his adventurous spirit. At a time when the British Empire was at the acme of its expansion, he was able to move freely across its territories and cultural landscape. The motley of ethnicities, languages, religions, sects, social structures, rituals and patterns of behaviour of the subject races which came to make up the texture of this empire provided for Burton fecund subjects into which he threw wholly his soul. The more they appeared remote, alien and unexplored, the more they won his attention. Once an ensign in East India Company, he applied himself earnestly to the acquisition of more languages in which he showed great talents so that he boasted dreaming in seventeen languages and mastering thirty five.

When serving as an ensign in the East India Company, Burton put the least effort in the discharge of his duties, and reserved all his energy to study and obtain knowledge about the manners and customs of the foreign peoples. He mixed with the natives and *"buried himself in astrological and cabalistic books, studied the uncanny arts and became learned in dark spells and dervish energies"*[119]. The more involved he became in autochthonous cultures, the more distanced he grew from his own culture that many of his colleagues called him a 'white nigger'. He soon became well

[119] Ibid. P,68.

acquainted as a stranger can be with the practice of Hinduism. He carefully read up Ward, Moor, and the publication of Asiatic Society… and eventually his Hindu teacher officially allowed him to wear the Brahmical thread[120]. When unrest worsened in Sind and claimed the lives of many British men among whom was the renowned scholar and Orientalist William Hay Macnaghten, Burton's regiment was ordered to service. And although by his arrival the turmoil was already quashed, Burton seized his deployment to engage with new areas of learning and elicit intimate knowledge of the people and their secret customs. He opened several shops in Karachi not with the intent of making money, but of having direct contact with the natives, particularly women, from whose gullible chaffing, he said, he gleaned some of the most inaccessible information to an outsider. There he acquired the taste for erotic and esoteric knowledge. He gathered miscellaneous information about local customs such as circumcision, yoga, magic, sodomy, etc. which he later pieced together in his Terminal Essay to *The Arabian Nights* to what he intended to read as a "*theory*" on Oriental sexuality. When rumours reached him of a nearby hotspot of sodomy, he frequented the brothel and, at the behest of his superior, wrote a detailed account about the subject which, unintentionally dispatched to the Foreign Office in India, produced a detrimental effect on his career. Partly to facilitate his task as a cultural insider, and partly fascinated by the lures of the foreign customs, Burton gave up the manners of a Briton and put on the disguise of a typical Oriental.

> Then he put on long hair and a venerable beard, stained his limbs with henna, and called himself Abdullah of Bushire, a half-Arab. In this disguise, with spear in hand and pistols in holsters, he travelled the country with a little pack of nick-knacks. In order to display his stock he boldly entered

[120] Ibid. P,71.

> private houses, for he found that if the master wanted to eject him, the mistress would be sure to oppose such measure.
>
> All his life he loved to disguise himself. We shall see him later as a Greek doctor, a Pathan Hakim, a dervish, an Arab pilgrim, a Moslem merchant, and an Arab shaykh[121].

Meanwhile, Burton's distaste for the manners and customs of his own people grew proportionately with his curious ways of experimenting with the foreign cultures. His criticism for Christianity became vociferous. He made bitter attacks against the latter and pronounced most scathing views against the Roman Catholic priesthood and the cenobitical life of the monks. Of course, these views were not quite new to Burton; he expressed them most openly while still a student at the Trinity College. He heretically called *"the Isis a mere moat, the Cherwell a ditch"*, and till then he had never heard of the Apostles' Creed[122].

Thus, unobstructed by any religious feelings, he was well suited for the disguise. And then it occurred to him the tempting idea of visiting Mecca, the holiest place for Moslems and one of the most inaccessible places to a Westerner. He sedulously applied himself to the study of Islam, learned a sizable portion of the Koran by heart, and made himself a proficient prayer. But unlike other western pilgrims who made journeys to some parts of the Orient before him, such as Edward Lane and Burckhardt, and wormed their way out to some most guarded spaces under perfectly worn disguises, but for whom the disguise was a mere contrivance of identity that gives the intruder entrée to what is otherwise inaccessible; for Burton the disguise became an acquired identity which absorbed his old self. Once he applied

[121] Ibid. P,74.
[122] Ibid. P, 61.

himself to it, he cut loose with all western habits. Thus, in the fierce heat of June in Arabia, he fasted from dawn to dusk like any true believer, embarked on a life-threatening journey in its wild desert which A few Moslems could undertake, visited the holy shrines, chanted the supplications, and duly performed the rites required of any Moslems. Burton registered this experience in a detailed account of three volumes, *The Personal Narrative of a Pilgrim in Mecca and Medina* in which he logged the smallest details of social life of Arabia and the physiognomy of its landscape, the historical depth of the shrines, antique monuments and canonical figures and the ritualistic practices of the pilgrimage; and most importantly he did all this from the perspective of a cultural relativist who kept reminding his readers that the charge of absurdity which is levelled against Islamic faith and culture is essentially the egoistic judgment of one culture upon another; that, for example, the redemption of the pilgrims' souls after performing the pilgrimage has its equivalent in Christianity and *"may be equally observed in the Calvinist, after a Sunday of prayer, sinning through Monday with a zest, and the Romanist falling back with new fervour upon the causes of his confession and penance, as in the Moslem who washes his soul clean by running and circumambulation"*[123]; that the Forefathers of the Church did not even think that women have souls", and that *"practically, a visit after Arab Meccah to Anglo-Indian Aden, with its "political" chaplain and its "priests after the order of Melchisedeck, suggested to me that the Moslem may be more tolerant, more enlightened, more charitable, than many societies of the so-called Christians"*[124].

[123] Richard F. Burton. *The Personal Narrative of a Pilgrim in Mecca and Medina*. 3rd Ed. Vol III. Brigham: Victoria R.J, 1874. P,141.
[124] Richard F. Burton' preface to the 3rd edition of *The Personal Narrative of a Pilgrim in Mecca and Medina*. Ibid. P, xvii.

Obviously, one may wonder- rather rightly- if this excess of details about Burton's life has any relevance for our present purposes. In other words, why should Burton the man matter at all for us who are concerned with Burton the translator of *the Arabian Nights*. While this question strongly smacks of the wayward cynicism of the Structuralists, it has already been rendered meaningless by the cultural approach which we adopt in this study, and is, therefore, methodologically our point of departure not our terminal end. I made it clear since the outset that this thesis is deeply informed by the view that literary translation is not a disinterested flow of meaning from one system of signs to another, fulfilled by the bona fide mediation of transcendental translators whose invisibility and detachment set the conditions for this flow. Rather, it postulates that translation is a communicative act, a form of discursive transfer between cultural systems that- as Theo Hermans put it- *"takes place in a given social context, a context of complex social structures, including power structures, [and] it involves social agents who are both conditioned by these power structures or at least entangled in them"*[125]. Thus the worldly experiences of the translators, the social and poetic norms which hold sway in this world, the interests, expectations, preconceptions and prejudices which bring to bear on it are not without relevance for any study that seeks to account for the translator's behaviour; i.e. the choices and considerations of decision-making in his translation. In the case of Burton, this fact is all too evident. One can even make the bold claim that the broad configurqtion of Burton's translation approach in *the Arabian Nights* cannot be adequately understood without taking full account of the external elements latently unearthed in his peculiar relationship with the foreign cultural sensibilities and

[125] Theo Herman's "Norms and the Determination of Translation: a Theoretical Framework" in *Translation, Power, Subversion*. Ed. Roman Alvarez and M. Carman-Africa Vidal. Clvedon: Multilingual Matters LTD, 1996. P,27.

experience of- one may say overexposure to- *Otherness* which he relatively lived as a child during his frequent stays in Europe and later as an imperial agent and pilgrim in the Orient and an explorer and adventurer in the African and Amazon jungles. From his rich and often perilous experience as a cultural insider one may cull three key factors which appear to have influenced his translation approach. (1) His upbringing outside his motherland loosened his ties with it and made him relatively less amenable to the influence of what Louis Althusser calls "interpellation" or "hailing"; i.e. the coercive effect of its ideological state apparatuses which "hails" people and offers them with an identity which they accept as natural and obvious. In turn this partial detachment and relative independence from this power of interpellation made him more predisposed to see it from without and ascertain its coercive and unconscious nature. (2) His exposure to and immersion in other cultures and modes of life during his long journeys and sojourns in Asia, Africa, Arabia, and America made him more appreciative of the cultural situations of foreign lands and less prone to value judgments about the merits of other peoples and lands, and therefore to see his own culture in relativist terms as essentially historically conditioned and as only different, but neither truer nor more superior than any other culture that he came into contact with. (3) His contrarian thinking and scepticism toward Christian religion made him more prepared to accept importing foreign ideas and practices from other cultures that are objectionable or otherwise incompatible with his own culture. Together, these elements seem to have largely prefigured Burton's method of translation in *the Arabian Nights* and characteristically branded it by foreignizing tendencies and subversive uses. In the following pages, foreignisation and subversion as intrinsic features of Burton's translation will be explored in two main planes: sexuality and poetics.

4.2 The subversive uses of *The Nights*: Oriental sexuality

When Burton set out to translate *the Nights*, the field was already jostled with previous translators; few he held in esteem like Payne and Galland, the rest he viewed with relentless disdain. But to join the ring, to make room for oneself in a shark-infested arena more was needed than the mere saying that his translation was an escapist fancy or a relief from despondency. Something more obliging, a space-clearing gesture, finding-fault with these translations was a requisite for any newcomer. However, for someone who wormed his way out to the most inaccessible places to a Westerner (.i.e. to the holy cities of Makah and al-Medina where he disguised as a Persian pilgrim), practiced prestidigitation as a false physician in Cairo, discovered the lake of Tanganyika, and took interest in such a wide range of subjects as translating Cheikh Nefzaoui's *The Perfumed Garden*, portraying battlefields in Paraguay, exploring Indian erotica, indulging in writing an Arabic Kassidah after the fashion of al-Khayyam's Rubaiyat, etc., I say, for someone with ample talents and dupes, producing an excuse was hardly difficult. Burton reviewed the previous translations and found Galland's delightful but smacking more of an adaptation; Foster's diffuse and verbose; G. Moir Bussey's full of gallicism of style and idiom and- reduced to a fairy-tale- more suited to children; and Jonathon Scott's slightly touching on the original[126]. Knowing, however, that these English translators rarely made an enduring presence, he turned to administer his criticism to Edward Lane. His animosity toward the latter was too strong to hide. Indeed, as Borges phrased it, *"one of the secret aims of his work was the annihilation of another gentleman who was compiling a vast dictionary in England and who died long before he was annihilated*

[126] Sir Richard Francis Burton. Preface to *The Arabian Nights*. Op. cit. Pp, xxxviii-xxxix

by Burton…Lane translated against Galland, Burton against lane; to understand Burton we must understand this hostile dynasty"[127]

We can best understand this hostility in Schleiermacher's terms. It is attributed to the latter having drawn a line of distinction between the methods of translation, saying: *"there are only two: either the translator leaves the author in peace, as much as possible, and moves the reader towards him; or he leaves the reader in peace, as much as possible, and moves the author towards him"*[128]. Burton found Lane already placed on one pole of Schleiermacher's dichotomy, and firmly positioned himself on the other. Lane's version left the reader in peace and brought the original home; it came expurgated and purified from erotic indecencies; its metrical matter was rendered in prose, and it neglected other features of Arabic musicality. Burton further adds that its style was stilted, stiff, unreadable, and dotted with Anglicised Latin and many childish mistakes, and that Lane himself was *"at once too Oriental and not Oriental enough"*[129].

Some of Burton's objections are well grounded, others are essentially polemical; but both lay the foundation and sketch the approach for his new translation. Burton promised to *"produce a full, complete, unvarnished, uncastrated copy of the great original"*, which in plain terms meant producing a version radically and ostensibly different from Lane's. Burton's focus then was to foreground what Lane strove to hide, namely the erotic elements which dot the original and categorically constitute its Oriental ethos. And it seems that Burton was not simply moved by the considerations of giving the foreign text its due by reclaiming back to it

[127] Jorge Louis Borges. Op.cit P,34.
[128] Andre Lefevere. *Translating Literature: the German Tradition from Luther to Rosenzweig* Van Gorcum, Amersterdam,1977. P,74.
[129] Sir Richard Francis Burton. Op. cit. P, xxxi.

those elements and features that had been suppressed in other translations on account of being too coarse and barbaric for the drawing room taste and the moral Christian values. Indeed, it is not only the insufferable departure of previous translation from the original and the adulterating tampering of the translators that was begging for a new translation endeavour, but the uses and the deliberate purposes which such a translation could serve. Burton was in earnest to bring out those very elements with the intent of exploiting to the tilt their subversive potential at home.

To understand Burton's real motives it is important to draw briefly on the historical situation in which he carried out his translation. Arguably, Burton makes the claim that his translation had been in the making for more than thirty years, that plans were laid jointly with his colleague, Steinhauser, by virtue of which he was to translate the metrical part and Steinhauser the prosaic, and that nothing but the untimely death of the latter thwarted the enterprise. However, his version of *The Nights* appeared only in 1885, after all copies of Payn's translation (five hundred) were sold out through private subscription, and Payn- to whom Burtom alleged giving precedence of the ground- abstained from reprinting a second edition. While many view Burton's account with sore doubt, as no more than false excuses to issue a new translation, the moment in which his translation saw the light of the day historically coincided with a fraught period in British history that was dominated by tense debates over the regime of morality, then known as Victorianism. As Judith Walkowits described it, Britain was in the throes of a cultural crisis and "moral panic"[130]. Thus, for example, the publication of the *Arabian Nights* concurred with a series of events and public outcries instigated by the press coverage of Jack Ripper's infamous

[130] Dane Kennedy. "Captain Burton's Oriental Muck Heap: the book of the Thousand Nights and the Uses of Orientalism". *Journal of British Studies*. Vol. 39, No. 3 (Jul., 2000). P,319.

killings of many women in London's East End, a number of damning articles on Child prostitution by W. T. Stead, an unbending proponent of conservatism who would later become one of Burton's sworn enemies. In conjunction, these incidents led to the passage of several legislations such as the Criminal Amendment Act which raised the age of sexual consent for women and the Labouchere Act which set out stiff punishments for homosexuality, and the establishment of the of the *National Vigilance Association* whose purpose was to enforce public morality and carry out a witch-hunt campaign against erotic literature. Against this backdrop Burton happened to publish his translation, and *"made a daring bid to provoke a confrontation with those forces in British society that he identified with moral intolerance and intellectual pedantry"*[131], using as his instrument a work of popular fiction which previous translation worked out into a well-polished text of children literature. He often referred to these forces indeterminately and collectively as the forces of Mrs Grundy, an imaginary figure whom he drawn from Thomas Morton's five-act comedy *Speed the Plough*, and whom he described as the whited sepulchre of propriety and respectability[132], and pictured as an exceedingly stout lady with a square-looking body, capacious skirts and a look of austere piety[133]. Burton wanted to exploit the erotic charge of *The Nights* to influence the on-going debate, and was intent to achieve this in two ways: (1) in producing a complete uncastrated translation of *The Nights*, i.e. including the materials and elements that had been suppressed or jettisoned in previous translations for being characteristic of Oriental crassness but insufferable by the British religious sensibilities and refined taste of the drawing room table; and (2) by writing a voluminous ethnographic commentary containing a wealth

[131] Ibid. P,319.
[132] [132] Sir Richard Francis Burton. Preface to *The Arabian Nights*. Op. cit. P, xviii.
[133] Thomas Wright. *The Life of Sir Francis Burton*. Op.cit. P,63.

of information on Oriental sexual practices and erotica. It is worth noting in this regard that before starting his translation of *The Nights*, Burton made some attempts, pseudonymously or in fictive imprints, at translating some Oriental sex manuals Like the *Kama Sutra of Vatsayayana* (1883), Sheikh Nefzaioui's *the Perfumed Garden* (1884), *the Indian Art of Love* (1985). But while then he carefully hid his identity as a translator and feigned bogus publication information, now he proudly attached his name to the cover page. However, to steer clear of the consequences of Obscenity Publication Act, he restricted access to his translation to private subscribers, most of whom were members in the Athenaeum Club, and placed a high price on it.

As C. Colligan notes, previously, *"translations, especially from Latin and French, were the mainstay of the nineteenth-century trade in obscenity"*[134]; now Burton discerned a vast and interestingly more lurid fund of sexual materials in Indian and Arabic texts. Yet, aware of the ire that such a translation was bound to provoke, he carefully drafted a well-framed preface to his first ten volumes in which he prognosticated and warily sullied the arguments of his opponents, and defiantly appended a terminal essay to his six-volume supplementary edition in which he laid bare what his detractors viewed as a filthy mine of Oriental vices, such as sodomy and pederasty.

> And now to consider one matter of special importance in the book-its *turpiloquium*. This stumbling-block is of two kinds, completely distinct. One is simple, naïve, and child-like indecency which, from Tangiers to Japan, occurs throughout general conversation of high and low in the present day. It uses, like the holy book of the Hebrews, expressions "plainly descriptive of natural situations"; and it treats in unconventionally free and naked manner

[134] Collete Colligan. "Esoteric Pornography: Sir Richard Burton's *Arabian Nights* and the Origins of Pornography". *Victorian Review*. 2002.

> of subjects and matters which are usually, by common consent, left undescribed. As sir William Jones observed long ago, "that anything natural can be offensively obscene never seems to have occurred to the Indians or to their legislators; a singularity pervading their writings and conversation, but no proof of moral depravity". Another justly observes*, les peuple primitifs n'y entendent pas malice: ils appellent les choses par leur noms et ne trouvent pas condamnable ce qui naturel*. And they are prying like children. For instance, the European novelist marries off his hero and heroine and leaves them to consummate their marriage in privacy; even Tom Jones has the decency to bolt the door. But the eastern storyteller, especially this unknown "prose Shakespeare", must usher you, with a flourish, into the bridal chamber, and narrate to you, with infinite gusto, everything he sees and hears. Again we must remember that grossness and indecency, in fact *les turpitude*, are matters of time and place; what is offensive in England is not so in Egypt; what scandalizes us now would have been a tame joke *Tempore Elisae*. Withal the Nights will not be found in this matter coarser than many passages of Shakespeare, Sterne and Swift, and their uncleanness rarely attains the perfection of Alcofribas Nasier[135].

Obviously, in this passage Burton painstakingly justifies his audacious choice to *"say the thing and nothing but the thing"*, as he elsewhere put it, on rational grounds. He relates the general tendency to refer explicitly to sexual practices not to a moral baseness in the people among whom it pervades, but to a different cultural situation in which they live. It is neither immoral nor wickedly deprave to speak about sexual matters in a naked manner and to use expressions *"plainly descriptive of natural situations"*. Just as propriety and circumlocution are characteristic of the British people, so frankness and outspokenness are qualities of Oriental cultures; but neither propriety nor frankness can be justified outside the cultures that cherish them. Burton further argues that if frankness implies guilt, then guilt is already demonstrably

[135] Sir Richard Francis Burton. Preface to *The Arabian Nights*. Op. cit. P,xvi.

proven in the Jewish books. Also, even more importantly, the concept of moral propriety and righteousness are not fixed and static but relative and historically bound. What offends the ear in England can be quite normal in Egypt, and what passes now for grave and solemn might have been slight and facetious in times past. Finally, indecency and obscenity are by no means an emergent input of *The Nights*; rather English and European literature by large teems with vulgarities and erotic materials. Indeed, compared to the masterpieces of such eponyms of high literature who are widely read and cherished in Europe as Shakespeare, Sterne and Swift, *The Nights* may not wax any coarser. And while none seems to have been irritated by their indecency and unseemliness or doubted their literary merit on that account, the reception of *The Nights* must lean on the same measures. For it is a insignia of hypocrisy, prejudice and flawed judgment to assess works of art displaying similar qualities and reach different opinions about their worth. Only considerations of this type, according to Burton, may raise the alarm about the publication of an unadulterated Translation of *The Nights*. Contrary to claims otherwise:

> Subtle corruption and covert licentiousness are utterly absent: we find more real "vice" in many a short French roman, say La Dame au Camelia, and in not a few English novels of our day than in the thousands pages of the Arab. Here we have nothing of that immodest modern modesty which sees covert implication where nothing is implied, and "improper" allusion when propriety is not outraged; nor do we meet the Nineteenth Century refinement; innocence of the word not of the thought; morality of the tongue not of the heart, and the sincere homage paid to virtue in guise of perfect hypocrisy[136].

[136] Ibid. P,xvii.

Here Burton gives his argument a dramatic twist. He does not only point out to the fact that erotica already abound in various and explicit forms in western literature, but also challenges the English sexual prudery and decorum as being less moved by sincerity and innocence as by hypocrisy and pretence. He identifies the heart of the problem not with having exposure to sexual materials but with the Janus-faced and duplicitous culture that seeks innocence in the word not in the thought, and attach virtue to the tongue not to the heart.

Although *The Nights* already possessed, as C. Colligan remarks, exotic and sexual appeal in England before Burton, his translation emphasised its Arabic origin and sexual content. With its focus on the sordid sexuality of the Arabs, Burton's translation was estranging to the English reader who was used to chastened tales of tender English orientalism[137]. It is owed to Burton having turned a collection of tales of romance and adventures that already, since they were first introduced to Europe by Galland, charmed such men of letters as Samuel Johnson, S.T. Coleridge and the Brontës, and *"inspired the emergence of a new genre of European literature, the Oriental Tale, at which authors as diverse as Voltair, Johnson, Scott, Disraeli, Irving, Dickens, Dumas and Pushkin were later to try their hands"*[138], I say it is owed to Burton having changed the centre of interest in this work from tale-telling and narrative techniques into a source of controversy and sexual debate. Like Lane, Burton saw in *The Nights* something more than a literary value. He identified the text with the real world of the people among whom it appeared and used its stories as a pretext to talk to his audience about the nations who made them. As Kennedy notes, Burton *"saw himself as a missionary of sorts, preaching his gospel of sexual*

[137] C. Colligan. "Esoteric Pornography". Op.cit. P,33.
[138] Dwight F. Reynolds. "A Thousand and One Nights". Op.cit. P.279.

knowledge to the unenlightened, opening their eyes to the sacred truths of the Orient"[139]. And *The Nights* provided him with exactly the means he needed to preach; i.e. the irrational, instinctive mythic forces for which the Orient, in the western imagination, has always stood.

To this ends, Burton painstakingly tried to set his translation apart from other translations in two important respects: he followed the original on the heels and carefully sought out "*the English equivalent for every Arabic word, however low it may be or shocking to ears polite*"; and he carves out a space for his authorial voice in the text that mediates between the alien text and its readers to temper its reception and use the paratextual space, e.g. footnotes, index, terminal essay, etc. to reframe the text's referential reality, particularly in matters of sexuality, and make it intelligible to its receivers. Thus, where other translators silenced, polished or tiptoed around instances of erotic allusions and indecencies that intermittently dot the original, Burton was blunt and unsubtle; and where they favoured decorum and propriety over adherence to the original's locution, he opted for forthright expression. If we take for example a dramatic passage which lays out king Shah Zaman's realization and acceptance of women's treachery as universal truth after espying his brother's wife indulging, along with her slave girls, in lustful conduct with low slaves, Burton describes the scene as follows:

> A postern of the palace, which was carefully kept private, swung open and out of it came twenty slave girls 'surrounding his brother's wife who was wondrous fair, a model of beauty and comeliness and symmetry and perfect

[139] Dane Kennedy. "Captain Burton's Oriental Muck Heap: the book of the Thousand Nights and the Uses of Orientalism". P,330.

> loveliness and who paced with the grace of a gazelle which panteth for the cooling stream. Thereupon Shah Zaman drew back from the window, but he kept the bevy in sight espying them from a place whence he could not be espied. They walked under the very lattice and advanced a little way into the garden till they came to a jetting fountain amiddlemost a great basin of water; then they stripped off their clothes and behold, ten of them were women, concubines of the King, and the other ten were white slaves. Then they all paired off, each with each: but the Queen, who was left alone, presently cried out in a loud voice, " Here to me, O my lord Saeed ! " 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. He walked boldly up to her and threw his arms round her neck while she embraced him as warmly; then he bussed her and winding his legs round hers, as a button-loop clasps a button, he threw her and enjoyed her. On like wise did the other slaves with the girls till all had satisfied their passions, and they ceased not from kissing and clipping, coupling and carousing till day began to vane; when the Mamelukes rose from the damsels' bosoms and the blackamoor slave dismounted from the Queen's breast; the men resumed their disguises and all, except the negro who swarmed up the tree, entered the palace and closed the postern-door as before[140].

It is worth noting that Burton did not translate from a single Arabic text; he pieced together many texts: the Bulaq edition, Bresleau, Calcutta I, and Calcutta II that differ from one other in style, details of the plot, and in the number and order of the stories. And although he singles out the Calcutta II of Sir William Macnaghten as *"the least corrupt and the most complete"*, and finds the Bulaq Edition- in both the original and refined form *"incomplete, many of the stories being given in epitome and*

[140] Sir Richard Francis Burton. Preface to *The Arabian Nights*. Pp, 5-6.

not a few ruthlessly mutilated with head or feet wanting"[141], he not infrequently takes recourse to the latter to suit his own purposes. In the above-quoted passage, the original; i.e. Macgnaghten's version, provides ample details capturing the lewd gestures and lascivious conduct of the queen and concubines, but Burton adds more colour to it. While the original is more austere in describing the beauty of the queen and simply says something like: "*Out came the queen, accompanied by twenty concubines who were as beautiful as moons, and marched like a thirsty gazelle*" (Macnaghten, Pp,5-6), the translation liberally lingers over the charm and glamour of the queen. In Arabic usage the words 'gazelle' and 'moon' are well-worn tropes that copiously signify the riveting beauty of the referent, but Burton lends more weight to it by describing the queen as "*wondrous fair, a model of beauty and comeliness and symmetry and perfect loveliness*". For one, an Oriental queen- one cannot help thinking of Sheba or Cleopatra- must be outstandingly gorgeous; and if the Arabs' mind or language fails to grasp her beauty, the translation remedies the deficiency. Also, because, the scene capture a most hideous act, the queen's betrayal of her husband, the bitterness and acrimony which it instigates are all the more intensified by the beauty of the perpetrator, and the graveness and egregiousness of the act are measurable by what has been lost or defiled. Burton, being aware of these general facts, brings a primitive edge to the scene.

Furthermore, the heavy erotic charge of this passage is made more vociferous in the translation. In the original we only read:

> They stripped themselves naked… and the queen called out: "here to me oh, my master Said!" And there came to her an unsightly,

[141] Ibid. P, xix.

> gruesome slave with a most hideous look, who, having leaped from the top of a tree, began to hug her and kiss her, coiling his body tightly around her legs. And they remained so engaged till the day was half-spent and they all gratified their desires. Then, the white slaves let go the concubines and the black slave unloosed himself from the queen's bosom[142].

Although the erotic load in this passage is already well-delineated in the original, Burton drills deeper for details. He adds colour and maximize the voyeuristic interest of the scene by bogging down in the vivid minutia of intercourse. The original text makes no mention of such details as throwing his arms around her neck, throwing her and enjoying her. Also the statement "*they ceased not from kissing and clipping, coupling and carousing*" is forcibly interpolated into the target text. It is not only lacking in the original, but- more surprisingly- it is taken verbatim from John Payne's translation which is based on a different edition, an uncharacteristic blemish which corroborates the accusations of Burton's involvement in plagiaristic practices.

Burton's pattern of handling erotica in *The Nights* is regular and symmetrical throughout the work. He does not only provide the English equivalent for every Arabic word no matter how low or shocking it may sound to sensible ears, but he adds vivid details and minute descriptions that have no antecedent in the original. He renders what is only tacit in the foreign text overtly explicit in the translation, makes the implicit intelligible and the epitomic scrupulously detailed. Another instance which typically epitomises Burton's approach is demonstrated in his rendering of the story of *the Porter and the Three Ladies of Baghdad*. Unmistakeably, this story

[142] Ahmad alSherwani al-Yamani, Ed. *Alf Layla wa Layla*. Calcutta: the Asiatic Lithographic Company's Press. P,6. (my translation)

features some of the crassest examples of lewdness and overt sexuality in the whole work. In this story a porter is hired by a lady to carry a load of provisions. After roaming a Baghdad bazaar and buying all she needs of food, drinks, meat and groceries, and placing them in a large basket, the lady led him through narrow alleys to a splendid palace. When they reached the house, the porter unloaded his basket and received his wage, but enthralled by splendidness of the palace and the beauty of the ladies who occupy it, and tempted by their being attended by no man, he was unwilling to leave the place and expressed his wish to be allowed to spend the night with them. The porter was hesitatingly granted his wish on one condition: that he must not inquire about anything that he sees or hears. His stay suits the convenience of both parties: the porter would relish the splendour of the place and the pleasure of snuggling down among beautiful ladies; and the ladies would amuse themselves and make a laughing stock of him. Thus, as is the wont in private sittings, food was served wine strained, music played and all were lavishly wined and dined. And when spirits got high and wine sported with their minds, the hosts stripped off one after another, dipped themselves in a nearby basin and seated nude upon the porter's lap. As each one of them was acting her part, she would point to her genitals and ask the porter about their names. The porter was ridiculed and given harsh slaps on the neck and across the cheeks at every attempt to answer, till he almost swooned. The furore of amusement and delight continued well into the night, and attracted more guests; among them were three outlawed, oddly shaven vagabonds, the Caliph Huron al-Rashid and his vizier and executioner in the disguise of foreign merchants.

This is briefly the story of the *Porter and the Three Ladies of Baghdad*. It contains frank description of lascivious acts and exotic representations of sexual

conduct. Faced with their titillating salaciousness and verbal explicitness, translators before Burton interfered in various ways to allay them and make them live up to the taste and expectations the recipient environment. Lane disfigured the original by amputating long stretches of the account and cramming the whole into a neatly polished synopsis; Payne stuck to details but hollowed them out of their provocative titillation by excessive use of euphemism and light-sounding expressions. Burton, the proponent of the letter, sought them out with eagerness and doubled down their suggestiveness. It is important to note that Burton who lauded the Calcutta edition as the most complete suddenly shifted to the Bulaq ediдtion, and made it the basis of his translation. While both editions are in much the greatest part symmetrical, not to say identical, in content and even in verbal composition in this matter, his choice of the one over the other is genuinely motivated and much in tune with his considerations and ultimate purposes. For a close comparison between the two versions soon reveals that the Bulaq edition is, at certain junctures, more elaborate, more detailed in description of sexual grotesqueness and richer in erotic subtleties, a factor which, given Burton's expedients and meditated agendas, seems compelling enough to justify his choice. As is typical of his translation method, here too Burton honours the letter not the spirit of the original. He tends to reproduce verbatim every element in the Arabic. The general ethos of the original is one of humour. Bakhtin already noted that laughter is a primal factor of folkoric and popular literature, and that *"the most ancient forms for representing language were organised by laughter"*[143]. Here this effect is achieved through yoking together, in a contrived symbiosis, erotic riddle and waggish wordplay. The naked sisters point to their genitals and ask the porter to

[143] Mikhail Bakhtin. "From the Prehistory of Novelistic Discourse" in *Modern Criticism and Theory*. Ed. David Lodge. London: Longman, 1998. P, 132.

designate their proper names. In grappling with the answer, the porter provides a series of names, essentially synonyms for the same object, but falls short of the proper answer. Although he provides many names, all of them are equally denoting the referent, his answers are tantalisingly refused in an attempt to maximise the range of options and lay more stress on sexuality, which makes the technique which Victor Shklovsky calls *defamiliarisation* effectively in play. The objective here is to see things out of their normal context, to make the familiar seem strange by not naming the familiar object. This technique of non-recognition is very evident in the Arabic text, especially in describing sexual acts and organs. It is characteristic of erotic imagery, as Shklovsky tells us, that the erotic object is usually presented as if seen for the first time.[144] Sometimes erotic objects are presented figuratively with the obvious purpose of leading as away from their recognition. Therefore, it is not unusual that sexual organs are referred to in terms of lock and key, bow and arrow, ring and marlinspikes, etc.[145]

The techniques of defamiliarisation and non-recognition have their direct impact on the translation. For one, by referring to the same erotic object by many names, the semantic field of this object is maximised and pushed to its limits, which makes it incumbent on the translator to find as many equivalents in the target language that match in diversity and precision the range of the hyponyms in the original. Such a challenge may not prove easy to overcome, since alignment between languages may be procurable only partially, at a certain level of a given semantic field, and not in all the elements of this field. However, with the use of erotic imagery and figurative expressions to refer to defamiliarised erotic objects the challenge of

[144] Victor Shklovsky. "Art as Technique". Ibid. P, 25.
[145] Ibid.

finding equivalents adequately conveying the semantic features of the original is doubled. Here equivalence is resolved not only by finding a name for the same object but by making sense of language uses that depart from the conventional order of words and involve higher degrees of arbitrariness. Not daunted by these constraints, Burton decides to produce a literal translation of the erotic objects in both their literal and figurative uses.

> When the drink got the better of them, the portress stood up and doffed her clothes till she was mother-naked. However, she let down her hair about her body by way of shift, and throwing herself into the basin disported herself and dived like a duck and swam up and down, and took water in her mouth, and spurted it all over the Porter, and washed her limbs, and between her breasts, and inside her thighs and all around her navel. Then she came up out of the cistern and throwing herself on the Porter's lap said, " O my lord, O my love, what callest thou this article?" pointing to her slit, her solution of continuity. "I call that thy cleft," quoth the Porter, and she rejoined, "Wah ! wah ! art thou not ashamed to use such a word?" and she caught him by the collar and soundly cuffed him. Said he again, "Thy womb, thy vulva;" and she struck him a second slap crying, "O fie, O fie, this is another ugly word; is there no shame in thee?" Quoth he, "Thy coynte;"and she cried, "O thou art wholly destitute of modesty?" and thumped him and bashed him. Then cried the Porter, "Thy clitoris,"whereat the eldest lady came down upon him with a yet sorer beating, and said, "No;" and he said, "'Tis so," and the Porter went on calling the same commodity by sundry other names, but whatever he said they beat him more and more till his neck ached and swelled with the blows he had gotten; and on this wise they made him a butt and a laughing-stock. At last he turned upon them asking, "And what do you women call this article?" Whereto the damsel made answer, "The

> basil of the bridges." Cried the Porter," Thank Allah for my safety: aid me and be thou propitious, O basil of the bridges!" [146]

Although Burton's debt to Payne is tremendous in this passage, that he sometimes keeps whole sentences intact, his presentation of the whole is different from both Payne's translation and from the original. Burton stretches out the foreign text beyond its power and scale of explicitness. His account is more colourful in diction, more morbid in tone and hilariously ornamented with tongue-in-cheek and picturesque details. Where the original is shallow, the translation is dramatized; and where the one is plain and unadorned, the other is pithy, terse, and rigorously expressive. Less presumptuous than Burton's rendering, the original reads:

> When wine sported with their wits, the portress undressed and threw herself into the basin. She dashed in water and filled her mouth and spurted the porter. She washed her genitals and between the thighs; then she came up out of the water and tossed herself into the porter's lap, and pointing to her vulva, she asked. "O my dear, what do you call this?" "Your womb", replied the porter. "Yoh! have you got no shame", cuffing him on the neck. "Your vulva" he added. "Make a better guess", she said, thumping him more stringently till his neck was almost torn up; "and what do you call it?" Cried he. "The basil of the bridges", she answered. "O, yes. Yes, the basil of the bridges; thanks to God for my deliverance"[147].

Clearly, Burton owes more to Payne in this sample than to the original text. His rapport with the latter is mediated, which is to say is inhibited, by the presence of on another text, i.e. Payne's translation. Not only does he retain phases and expressions

[146] Sir Richard Francis Burton. *The Arabian Nights*. Op.cit. P, 90.
[147] *Alf Layla wa Layla*. Bulaq Ed. Vol. I. Op.cit. P,33. *(my translation)*

from Payne's text whole and sound, he also keeps those elements which have no antecedents in the original and are, therefore, contributions of Payne's creative mind. To this latter category belong details and occurrences such as "she left down her hair about her body", "she dived like a duck", etc. And where Burton does not incorporate Payne literally or with some modulation, he peppers the translation with details of his own. Thus, for example, washing "between her breasts" and "around the navel" are Burton's personal contribution and are totally absent of the original. His aim is to add spice to the scene and augment it sexual interest.

But it is far from the truth to believe that Burton's motives were compelled by a need to improve the original, refine its bawdy style and lend it artistic touches. His manipulation of the foreign text, his capitalisation on its erotic elements, and inflation of sexual interest were carefully carried out with an eye on the effect his translation would produce at home. As C. Colligan notes, by magnifying the sexual and exotic appeal of *The Nights*, he *"in effect, defamiliarised the Arab text that had been virtually adopted by English culture as its own. His translation violently disrupted the English cultural presentation of The Arabian Nights- to such an extent that it was branded pornographic"*[148].

Nevertheless, Burton's interference with the foreign text is not limited to expanding on the plot, adding details, magnifying the erotic appeal, etc. This is to say that the forms of appropriation and manipulation that operate the translation are not always interior to the text, and functioning within its main body. Equally effective are other forms of appropriation that are exterior to the text and that, though functioning differently, produce a similar effect. Indeed, what Burton could not say by warping

[148] C, Colligan. Op.cit. P,33.

the original is allowed to say in the paratextual spaces that he carves out for himself. Although he, as we have seen on ample occasions, appropriated and rewrote the original to the effect of making it say more than its system of signs was intended- by its original encoders- to say, the scale and scope of his interference was still predetermined, in the last resort, by what this system was capable of saying, and only abstained from saying. In other words, these forms of appropriation technically fall within and are effected by such stylistic categories as hyperbole, overstatement, tautology, verboseness, etc. which no matter how far removed from the original or how modifying they are to its locutionary values, they remain attached to it by the strongest bonds (e.g. an hyperbole in translation would only overstate what was understated in the original, verboseness would redundantly convey what was only sketchily expressed in the original, etc.). Also, whatever changes, modifications, and refinements are inflicted upon the original are passed on not as representing the translator's voice but as signifying the text's own words. Therefore, the leeway which these forms give to the translator over the original remains partial, restricted and conditioned by the exhaustible limits of actualising, activating and recoding what is otherwise already stated in the original.

4.3 Annotation and anthropological translation

There is, however, another type of leeway which Burton exercises in his translation and which, in the strict sense, is less fettered by the original. While it is occasioned by it, and as such owes its life to it as a parasite owes life to a host, it enjoys a relative autonomy from it. This second type constitute mainly of a large body

of commentary which Burton attaches to his translation and through which he mediates between the foreign text and its implied reader. According to Michel Foucault, *"the commentary's only role, whatever the techniques used, is to say at last what was silently articulated 'beyond' in the text. By a paradox which it always displaces, but never escapes, the commentary must say for the first time what had, nonetheless, already been said, and must tirelessly repeat what had, however, never been said"*[149]. Of course, as Foucault himself notes, commentary may differ widely depending on such variables as the type and the purpose of the primary text from which it derives. Thus, literary criticism, religious exegesis, statutes explications, etc. are all forms of commentary; and though they all share the qualities of derivativeness and secondariness in relation to a primary text, they differ in the way they represent this text. In the case of Burton, commentary served mainly as a vehicle that makes intelligible the cultural matter suffused in the original to the western reader whose taste, curiosities, predilections and prejudices he was well au fait with. It follows then that two levels can be differentiated at which Burton engages with handling the original: the first is that of of interlingual translation or rewording which, as Roman Jakobson defines it, *"is an interpretation of verbal signs by means of other signs of the same language"*[150]; the second is that of (inter)cultural translation which is an interpretation of the systems of meanings and classifications characteristic of one culture in the terms of another culture. It goes without saying, however, that both levels are intricately interwoven. On the one hand, interlingual translation necessarily involves a translation of the elements and aspects of the source text's culture; and cultural translation necessarily takes place, in fact can only be conceivable through

[149] Michel Foucault. "The Order of Discourse". Op.cit. Pp, 57-58.
[150] Roman Jakobson. "On the Linguistic Aspects of Translation" in *The Translation Studies Reader*. Op.cit. P, 114.

the use of verbal signs. To this extent, one can hardly think of a translation in which these two levels are not simultaneously brought into play, which indeed makes it an indispensable requisite of translation per se. But here cultural translation is an integral part of the body of the foreign text; it permeates its texture and evinces the fact that culture is inseparable from and intrinsically embedded in the language that expresses it. And while it does all this, it does not subsume the original- it does not eclipse it, displace it, or serve as a parallel text, as the original's own surrogate. We have already seen how Edward Lane's prodigious commentary on *The Nights* was pieced together by his nephew, Stanley Edward Lane-Poole, and published as an independent text whose practical benefit and anthropological insights into the manners and customs of the Arab society was hailed by many. Burton's annotations, though never fared into this finished form, compares well to Lane's in length and details. Burton himself, who recognised Lane's authority as an Orientalist and anthropologist and downplayed his merits as a translator, was aware of how much he was in tune with him in many respects. In the preface to his translation he highlighted the valuable interest which the western reader would find by joining Lane's annotations to his; *"with the aid of my annotations supplementing Lane's the student will readily and pleasantly learn more of the Moslems' manners and customs, Laws and religion than known to the average Orientalist"*[151]. In these annotations, Burton acts as an anthropologist in the sense of observing, describing, analysing and drawing conclusions about the forms, facts and practices of an alien culture; of reading the implicit in this culture, of making the exotic familiar and the unintelligible lucid, etc. to an audience living and enmeshed in the norms and conventions of a different cultural situation; and in being an anthropologist, he, like all anthropologists, acts as a cultural translator in the sense of

[151] Sir Richard Francis Burton. Preface to *The Arabian Nights*. Op. cit. P, xxiii.

not merely matching sentences or other units of speech, but representing the life experiences, habits of thought and world views of a people, and turning all this to an object of contemplation and speculation in such a way that the culture of which they make part is taken as unaware of them, and unconscious of their conditions. The object of this type of translation is not, as Talal Asad puts it, *"the historically situated speech (that is the task of the folklorist or the linguist), but "culture, and to translate culture the anthropologist must first read and then reinscribe the implicit meanings that lie beneath/within/beyond situated speech"*[152]. This latter qualification brings out a key distinguishing factor between the task of the interlingual and ethnographic translator which Asad nicely captures in this quote:

> One difference between the anthropologist and the linguist in the matter of translation is perhaps this: that whereas the latter is immediately faced with a specific piece of discourse produced within the society studied, a discourse that is then textualized, the former must construct a discourse as a cultural text in terms of meanings implicit in a range of practices[153].

The idea that Burton was aware of himself as an ethnographic translator hardly needs proof. That the original was just anthropology was for him a point of departure. Lane's remark that a close translation of this work coupled with illustrative notes would spare one the pains of undertaking a thorough anthropological investigation such as he did himself in *The Manners and Customs of Modern Egyptians* resonates in Burton's treatment of *The Nights*. To this same effect he states:

[152] Talal Asad. "The Concept of Cultural Translation in the British Social Anthropology" in Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography. Op.cit. P,160
[153] Ibid.

> Explanatory notes did not enter into Mr Payne's plan. They did with mine: I can hardly imagine *The Nights* being read by men of the west without commentary. My annotations avoid only one subject, parallels of European folklore and fabliaux which, however interesting, would overswell the bulk of the book whose *speciality is anthropology*[154].

Burton makes clear not only the anthropological character of the original, but also that, in its translation, the interlingual part is incomplete and inadequate in itself and remains dependent on the anthropological part. The full signification of the former requires the full incorporation of the latter. In other words, translating an already textualized discourse (i.e. the original text) and producing a constructed cultural discourse about it (i.e. his own commentary) goes hand in hand in his translation. This requisite, however, is not intrinsic to the original, but is imposed from without. It is not essentially the result of an inadequacy of alignment between the original and the translation, nor of a quest for coherence, that is, the attempt to make sense in the target language of those specificities and cultural-bound elements which have no equivalents in this language and which, if left unhandled, will run the risk of sounding absurd and obscure and ultimately overshadow the intelligibility of the translation; nor even the consequence of what Earnest Gellner calls the absence of a third language in which *"equivalences could be stated and which would avoid the pitfalls arising from the fact that the translator's language has its own ways of handling the world, which may not be those of the native language studied, and which*

[154] Sir Richard Francis Burton. Preface to *The Arabian Nights*. Op. cit. P, xviii. (emphasis is mine)

consequently are liable to distort that which being translated"[155]. This fact can be true only partially, and to the extent that these elements are found to be obstinately resisting transfer to or recodification in the target language. In other words, such a need arises when some linguistically represented references in the original pose a translation problem when transferred to a target language due to the nonexistence or to a different value conferred on these references in the target language. This is usually the case with culture-specific items which Javier F. Aixela defines as:

> Those textually actualized items whose function and connotations in a source text involve a translation problem in their transference to a target text, whenever this problem is a product of the nonexistence of the referred item or of its different intertextual status in the cultural system of the readers of the target text[156].

What we make out from this quote is that culture-specific items and culturally loaded elements do not exist in isolation, but unfold as such only in relation to another cultural system which knows no such elements or expresses them in different ways. In the source text they are merely forms and manifestation of the cultural system from which they emanate, and their specificity is a quality which they acquire only by their being unique and unparalleled when compared to another system. Consequently, in recoding a source text in a target language they usually constitute the most vital but also the most challenging aspect which calls for the translators' interference, particularly when their translations are inscribed by familiarising tendencies that seek to maximise intelligibility and fluency and water down the idiosyncratic features of

[155] Quoted in Talal Asad's "The Concept of Cultural Translation in the British Social Anthropology". Op.cit. P, 146.
[156] Javier Franco Aixela. "Culture-Specific Items in Translation" in *Translation, Power, Subversion*. Op.cit. P,58.

the foreign text. And of course, it follows logically that the more the cultures involved are apart or remote from one another the wider the range of culture-specific items will be, and the more frequently will the translators feel themselves called on to intervene, interpret and reinscribe these elements and give them sense in the target language. And conversely, the more these cultures have in common, the smoother the transfer and the lesser the need will be for translators' interference.

Now the question which proposes itself to us is whether Burton, in carrying out ethnographic translation, he was only moved by the compelling necessity of handling culture-specific items, that is, those items specially linked to the most arbitrary area of the Arabic linguistic system such as local institutions, modes of behaviour, historical figures, particular incidents, symbolic representations, etc. Or, to put it differently, was he only acting within the boundaries of finding solutions for translation problems that are posed by these items due either to the non-existence of these elements in the his native culture or to a non-conjunction in their value? At the most superficial level, one must admit that a bulky text as *The Nights* which runs for thousands of pages, and which is written in a Semitic language, a language from outside the Indo-European family, and which is loaded with and articulates the world historical experiences and habits of thought of a people- the Arabic society- at a particular moment in its history that widely differ in manner and kind from those of the English people, I say, one must admit that such a text must necessarily contain a rich repertoire of culture-bound elements whose transfer into the English language would normally cause some tension, friction, and sometimes outright nonsense without direct interference from the translator. To this extent, Burton's cultural translation through glosses and annotations may be seen not only as illuminating some aspects and meanings in the

original text that would otherwise remain opaque and indeterminate but as fulfilling a primal condition for the proper signification of the original outside its context of production. Therefore, this type of interference appears as both plausible and required for an optimum receptivity of the alien text, insofar as the translator grapples with a double tension in translation; i.e. between being a representation of the source text and being a valid text in itself[157]. Nevertheless, such a motivated interference, which in the last analysis is entailed by the irresolvable asymmetry and disjunction between the Arabic and English cultural systems, accounts only for a small portion of this translation. For Burton had higher hopes than merely subscribing to the narrow technicality of problem-solving tasks; he wanted the original to serve more complex purposes than its "good-hearted naivety" could afford, and- to this end- he wanted it to say more than the ensemble of its interior signs was capable of. Borges whose admiration for Burton is unconcealed describes the original as:

> It is an adaptation of ancient stories to the lowbrow or ribald tastes of the Cairo middle classes. They are speculations on the part of the editor: their aim is a round of guffaws, their heroes are never more than porters, beggars or eunuchs. The ancient love stories of the repertory, those which relate cases from the Desert or cities of Arabia… are impassioned and sad, one of their themes is death for love[158].

Such indeed are the themes and motifs that animate this text of pulp popular fiction, but Burton who saw more to it. For him, *The Nights* was a rich fund of anthropological material ("a book whose speciality is anthropology") and he promised

[157] Ibid. P, 60.
[158] George Louis Borges. "The Translators of the Thousand and One Nights". Op.cit. P,37.

manifold benefit to be accrued from its transfer. From being a popular narrative centred on laughter and entertainment and driven by such motifs as mulling over the sublimity of love, the ill-fate of the lovers, the vicissitudes of life and fortune, the marvels of adventure and the eternal conflict between the forces of good and evil as it was typically used among its original producers and consumers, he discerned in the text more serious uses and purposes. As befitted and was expected, at his time, of men of vast learning and expertise in foreign lands, their knowledge of these lands and their people was gleaned, gathered and processed usually with an eye of promoting the imperial interest of their nation. Burton too toed the line with vigour, enlivening and enriching the legacy of his predecessors such as Jones, Burckhardt, Macnaghten, Lane, Chateaubriand, Lamartine's etc. whom Edward Said called *"a series of textual children"* who were bound together not only by their background in Oriental legend and experience but also by their learned reliance on the Orient as a kind of womb out of which they were brought forth[159]. It is with a deep realisation of the value of what he was contributing in this regard that he addressed his people in the preface to *The Nights* with the solemn formulae *"I bequeath to my fellow countrymen"*. Burton viewed the translation of this text as far exceeding any academic purposes; in fact he intended it, among other things, to be used as a manual for training colonial administrators and prepare them to take up their jobs. First, by reading this text, the reader, he says, *"will become a master of much more Arabic than the ordinary Arab owns"*[160]. And although, on the face of it, one cannot imagine how reading an English translation of an Arabic text can make one proficient in Arabic, it seems that reference here should be understood within the requirements of a method of foreign language

[159] Edward Said. Orientalism. Op.cit. P, 88.
[160] Sir Richard Francis Burton. Preface to *The Arabian Nights*. Op. cit. P,

teaching, widely used at his time and later known as the grammar translation method, which depends extensively on the translation of alien texts to native languages, commenting on the translation and learning by heart the grammatical rules that can be gleaned from it. For Burton, learning Arabic is, for the British colonial auxiliaries whose dominions extended across the stretch of Moslem lands from Afghanistan to Egypt, was not a mere matter of cultural curiosity, academic specialisation or of a prestige of intellectualism. It is an indispensable means of sustaining the Empire. To best run, manage and sustain this empire a solid knowledge of the language of the subject people over whom they assume the rein of governance is required; and providing this knowledge is the job of such well-bred, colonially devoted men as Burton. On this very basis, Burton criticises the British misplaced interest in Hindu culture and languages and neglect of the more profitable and lubricate involvement in Arabic culture and society. Over-devotion to Hindi, particularly to Sanskrit literature, he says, has led the British astray from Semitic studies, "*which are the more requisite for them to deal successfully with a race more powerful than any pagans- the Moslems"*[161]. This miscalculated policy, he maintains, brought only shame to Britain; a fact which he regretfully laments when he thinks, for example, of how the mutinies and insurgencies that broke out in Sudan between 1883 and 1884 exposed the little knowledge the colonial governors and military personnel had of Arabic and of the people they were ruling or trying to rule. And what this expressed sense of regret and wish for prompt action reveal is how intertwined power and knowledge are in Burton's enterprise. Not knowledge per se, but utilitarian knowledge that Burton commits himself to acquire and make accessible; knowledge, both academic and practical, of the subject people's character, culture, history, ethnicities, superstition,

[161] Ibid.

etc. that makes them easy to rule, and their rulers in a position of strength and empowerment. One indeed rules more effectively and cost-efficiently what one knows. And such knowledge was of import only insofar as it was serviceable to this end. As Edward Said elegantly put it, *"knowledge of subject races, or Orientals, is what makes their management easy and profitable; knowledge gives power, more power requires more knowledge, and so on in an increasingly profitable dialectic of information and control"*[162].

How serviceable was knowledge to the success of colonial projects had already been put to the test since Bonaparte's campaign on Egypt. It is well known that before embarking on his expedition, Napoleon surrounded himself with dozens of scholars and sages whose job was to record and archive everything they will meet with in Egypt. But more importantly, he was eager to put the Orientalists' special expertise in the East to functional colonial use. One such Orientalists who appeared of special interest to him was Comte de Volney, a French scholar who roamed across Egypt and the Levant and documented his journey in a travelogue entitled *Voyage en Egypt et Syrie*. Napoleon drew on this and other works by Volney for insight to establish his hegemony over Egypt. From the list of enemies that any one was to wrestle with, to the manners and cast of minds of the natives; their character, religious sensibilities, rituals, enmities, and possibilities, etc. Volney hardly left anything uncovered and Napoleon used his texts effectively. Relying on Volney's ethnographic survey, Napoleon was cautious, for example, not to raise the animosity of the natives and, being aware of the centrality of religion for any ruler who wants to assume the reins of power over an Oriental people, he presented himself to them not as a colonial

[162] Edward Said Orientalism. Op.cit. P, 38.

conqueror but as a real defender of Islam; hence his famous saying *"nous sommes les vrais musulmans"*. He then made sure that everything he said be translated into Arabic, he invited the Egyptian judges, muftis and scholars to his headquarters, lavished them with military honours, expressed his admiration of the prophet and even tried to make them interpret the Koran to his favour[163]. And it seemed that finally Calderòn de la Barca's hilarious statement about colonial hegemony (*"courageous are you, Spaniard, and courteous as well as courageous; you conquer also with the tongue as well as with the sword you conquer"*) acquired reality in Napoleon's policy. Napoleon's expedition came to demise but the usefulness and effectiveness of prior knowledge for the concretisation of any imperial enterprise was theatrically showcased.

Burton, who like many other Orientalists eyed the Arab world with a colonial interest, produced his portion of knowledge for functional use. Although he lived all his life as a rebel at the outskirts of the political and moral regime of his country and never fully aligned with or was incorporated into its mainstream politics, and although he viewed other cultures, particularly the Arab, with appreciation and admiration, his loyalties and sympathies always laid with bringing them under British control. His self-association with the natives was real and unpresumptuous but never prevented him from merging with the voice of the empire. Indeed, the more he was able to share the life of the people in whose lands he lived, the more the knowledge he produced about them was appreciated as genuine and first-hand, and the more he was himself serviceable to the British colonial ambitions. Perhaps, the complexities of the social life of the East were open to no one more than Burton owing to his talents, powers of

[163] Ibid. P, 82.

endurance, preparedness to take risks and sacrifice his individuality. He turned his long and perilous residence in the East into scientific observation and ethnographic gaze through which the riches, mysteries and subtleties of Oriental culture and institutions were deciphered, run down to their roots and recoded in an orderly way to a select audience of his countrymen. It is within the wider context of the mutual embeddedness of knowledge and power, of penetrating deep into the Arab culture, absorbing its system of information and behaviour and putting all this at the disposal of colonial administrators and enterprisers, and not in the narrow sense of providing solutions for translation problems that are raised by culture-specific items that we can fully understand Burton's annotations and glosses. This fact becomes all to obvious when we realize that a good deal of these annotations are not, strictly speaking, explications of culturally loaded elements in concrete textual situations that involve a certain degree of cultural or ideological opacity in the target language, and that, as a result, propel an interpretive exigency. By this I mean they lack the basic requisites that qualify them as culture-bound elements (i.e. non-existence or non-junction in value) once they are transferred into the target language system. As a result of this, many such instances do not seem to be required by a cultural gap, but are forcibly imposed by extraneous measures. If we take, for example, the first note that figures in Burton's translation, we find that it explains the expression *"Allaho a'lam"*. The explication goes as follows: *"a deprecatory formula, used because the writer is going to indulge in a series of what may possibly be untruths"*[164]. Now, as everybody knows, this expression can match easily with the English equivalent "Lord only knows", and equivalence be perfectly attained, with no perceptible semantic losses or gains in the translation. In its Arabic use the implication is plain and direct; it is one of

[164] Sir Richard Francis Burton. *The Arabian Nights*. Vol. I. Op. cit. P, 2.

modest view and relativistic perception that no matter how wide one's knowledge may be vis-a-vis one's object of knowledge, such knowledge remains relative and temporal and can never exhaust it, and that the quality of eternal and all-knowing, of things past and those yet to come, belongs solely and exclusively to God. Both the Arabic and English cultures share the principle- originating in the monotheistic system of belief in both- of divine omniscience, and therefore the transfer of this concept can be obtained with no encumbrances. Instead of this Burton chooses to muse over the essentialisms of Oriental mind, to work specific cases into validated generalisations, to glean general rules and codes of conduct from particularised situations, and reiterate the well-worn clichés and stereotypes of Orientalist knowledge such as the Arabs are "inveterate liars" even when lying counts for the nature of the work; for how can one imagine a work of popular fiction such as *The Nights* that does not indulge in series of untruths and at the same time retain its character and appeal as a literary text.

If one goes on picking randomly Burton's notes, one finds that he listed such items as *sayd wa qans*, *genie*, *efrite*, *inshad*, *Joseph*, *Iblis*, *tibn*, *aftah*, *thaur*, *etc*.) as inviting or requiring explication. Indeed, if we limit our focus to this range of glosses that dot the first pages of his translation and take them as both adequately sampling and exhaustively explaining his approach, it becomes clear to us that almost all these items are, in Javier F. Aixela's words, conventional or unloaded words. This means that they do not communicate or refer to any culture-bound signifieds whose transfer into the target language culture involves or results in some opaqueness or indeterminacies, and hence their transfer is above all a matter of the dictionary, not of a hermeneutic motion. They generally range between ordinary words; e.g. *thaur* (ox,

bull), *aftah* (flat-nosed), *tibn* (hay) already calqued words; e.g. *efrite*, *genie*, or proper names; e.g. *Joseph* which, though loaded is well known to the English reader who has been raised on the Bible and the Old Testaments. And none of these three categories pose any translation problems or resist transfer.

What makes Burton's method more starkly inconsistent with its very foundations; i.e. the existence in the target language system of a cultural gap which prompts an interpretative exigency, is that many of the entries in his notes are explicated not through paraphrasing as is normally the case, given the fact that they lack their matches in the target language and thus their explication can only be possible intralingually through paraphrasing, but through other equivalent words, which makes the need for explication utterly superfluous. For what is the use of informing the English reader in a note that the English equivalent for the Arabic *Thaur* is bull or ox or that the word *tibn* matches with hay or straw instead of providing a definition for what *Thaur* or *tibn* mean if these signifiers have no matches in the English language and are not known to the English people by any other words? Why should one explain that which is already explained? In fact, the answer to this banal question begs a more intriguing question: why explaining the explained is seen as a worthwhile endeavour in Burton's translation approach? Under the deceptive banality of these questions lie more complex mental and textual operations. For a text like *The Nights* whose stock-in-trade for the Western reader was the image of the Orient which it communicates, and whose appeal crucially resided on the its identification with the world of the people whom it presumably represents, there were always people who, owing to their knowledge, experiences, residence, expertise, adventure, and familiarity with the Orient, thought that the dynamics of this

referential relationship could not be unravelled without their mediation. Borges notes that:

> Orientalism, which seems frugal to us now, was bedazzling to men who took snuff and composed tragedies in five acts…. We, their anachronistic readers of the twentieth century, perceive only the cloying flavour of the eighteenth century in them, and not the evaporated aroma of the Orient which two hundred years ago was their novelty and glory[165].

But for such aroma to be produced and indulged, learned European agents like Burton must mediate the process of the text's signification, and mediate it in the most rigorous way that leaves nothing unaccounted for or unexplained. Burton's role as a mediator and exegetist is conceived of as one of an exorcist. The text must be forced to say more than it was predisposed to say, and in some cases more than it was capable of saying; and the spirit- the Orient- that inhabits it must be drawn out, laid bare and displayed, through thorough and excessive explication, to an awe-stricken audience who are as much astonished by the spirit being drawn out as by the masterful arts of the person who draws it out. The words which he used to denigratingly describe Lane- that he was too Oriental and not Oriental enough- apply well to his conception and treatment of the text. Although *The Nights* is seen as saturated with the living reality of the Orient, it is only with the help of such textual exorcists as Burton that this reality can be unearthed and made manifest. The reasons for this are multiple and intricate, some of them are best described in the following quote by Edward Said:

[165] George Louis Borges. "The Translator of the Thousand and One Nights". Op.cit. P, 35.

> To restore a region from its present barbarism to its former classical greatness; to instruct (for its own benefit) the Orient in the ways of the modern West; to subordinate or underplay military power in order to aggrandize the project of glorious knowledge acquired in the process of political domination of the Orient; to formulate the Orient, to give it shape, identity, definition with full recognition of its place in memory, its importance to imperial strategy, and its "natural" role as an appendage to Europe; to dignify all the knowledge collected during the colonial occupation with the title "contribution to modern learning" when the natives have neither been consulted nor treated as anything except as pretexts for a text whose usefulness was not to the natives; to feel oneself as a European in command, almost at will, of Oriental history, time and geography; to institute new areas of specialization; to establish new disciplines; to divide, deploy, schematize, tabulate, index and record everything in sight (and outsight), to make out of every observable detail a generalization, and out of every generalization an immutable law about the Oriental nature, temperament, mentality, custom or type; and, above all, to transmute living reality into the stuff of texts, to possess (or think one possesses) actuality mainly because nothing in the Orient seems to resist one's powers.[166]

There is also another side to Burton's annotations. If a good part of his notes was intended, as we have seen above, to instruct the agents of power and promote the British imperial interests abroad through making the colonial administrators and military personnel more au fait with the actuality, history, languages, culture, religions, mind-set and habits of thoughts of their subject races, and in effect make the

[166] Edward Said. Orientalism. Op.cit. P, 86.

latter more manageable and less disinclined to colonial rule, etc. another good part was written with the intent of producing an effect at home. For Burton who applied himself unfailingly to the service of his country's imperial ambitions was not quite insensitive or oblivious to what was taking place at home. We have already seen what a keen interest Burton took in domestic moral issues and how his choice of translating Arabic and Indian sexual manuals and making them accessible to the British public, through licit and illicit means, was dominated by a subversive spirit and motivated by a tenacious desire to take part in and influence the public debate about the moral system of Victorianism. In this regard, the translation of *The Nights* was suited to the same ends. In the interlingual part of the translation Burton capitalised on the exotic sexuality of the original, emphasised it erotic charge and magnified its import; and to achieve this purpose he found no harm in stretching and warping it beyond its denotative and connotative power. Yet, no matter how far he was able to push it beyond its limits, he was still bound by the requisites of remaining within the confines of translation proper. He did not break too loose from the original as to lose claim to its representation. In the notes, however, he allowed himself the leeway he could not take in the interlingual part, and not infrequently he reduced the original to a mere pretext to display his deep uncontested knowledge about the Oriental sexual lore and practices and to impart this knowledge to his fellow countrymen. Here, as in most other instances of cultural (ethnographic) translation the note is not linked to the body of the text by some natural or organic bonds; it is not the result of an interpretative exigency without which some speech acts in the translation would remain unintelligible or incomprehensible. Therefore; it remains exterior to the main text. It surrounds it from without without penetrating it; and as such it can easily be

dispensed with without impeding its proper signification. If we take for example the following note,

> Debauched women prefer negroes on account of the size of their parts. I measure one man in Somali-land who when quiescent, number nearly six inches. This is a characteristic of the negro race and of African animals: i.e. the horse: whereas the pure Arab, man and beast, is below the average of Europe; one of the best proofs by the by, that the Egyptian is not an Asiatic, but a negro partially whitewashed…. In my time no honest Hindi Moslem would take his women-folk to Zanzibar on account of the huge attractions and enormous temptation there and thereby offered to them[167].

This note is appended as an elaboration to the episode in which Shah Zaman finds out about his brother's wife betrayal and indulgence in lewd sexual acts with a filthy slave. In the original, the licentiousness of scene is described in vivid details to such an extent that other translators like Lane could not render it unbowdlerised. Also, in translation, Burton, who promised a complete and uncastrated translation of the original, rendered it interlingually with maximum ease and intelligibility, and there was nothing in the original that seemed untranslatable or that required further explication. However, although he was faced with no difficulty in rendering this episode, say for example loaded or unconventional speech acts, still he showered his readers with details on Oriental sexual mores and customs. He not only included the erotica that was missing in previous translations, he also placed his translation in the wider context of his anthropological investigations. And *"one of the purposes of his annotations of the monumental collection of stories was to educate the Victorians*

[167] Sir Richard Francis Burton. *The Arabian Nights*. Vol. I. Op. cit. P, 6.

(including women) not only about the customs of the East but about their sexuality"[168].

Burton belonged to a class of European colonial officials and sexual tourists whose travel in the Orient and comparative research on sexuality opened their eyes to the repressive European morality and animated their belief that the East was less corrupted by the artificiality and phoniness of human civilization, and that it possessed a depository of wisdom and sexual knowledge that can be used as a corrective to the English sexual insipidness. Thus, his annotations reveal the rhetoric of an empiricist sexologist who seeks to give access to truths which his society declines to acknowledge; it is the rhetoric of someone who, as Kennedy notes, saw himself as an agent of enlightenment, *"as a missionary of sorts, preaching his gospel of sexual knowledge to the unenlightened, opening their eyes to the sacred truths of the Orient"*[169]. Thus, where the body of the text fell short to further such ends or convey such knowledge the paratextual space of the note proved more tenacious to accommodate his anthropological and Orientalist apparatus; and the note, to such extent, remains attached to the body only loosely by a mere contextual bond rather than by any explanatory imperative. Though it is occasioned by it and, like all forms of commentary, owes its existence to it, this relation of dependence is mitigated by the forcible intrusion of the translator's own voice not as an explication of the original's potential areas of opaqueness and indeterminacies (for the English reader) but as a reframing of its realities. As a result, the original, in Burton's annotations, is reduced to a mere pretext. It is true that it germinates in and grows out of its womb, but it

[168] Ariel de la Fuente. "Sir Richard Burton's Orientalist Erotica" in Borges, Desire, and Sex. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2018. P, 88.
[169] Danne Kennedy. Captain Burton's Oriental Muck Heap: the Book of *the Thousand Nights* and the Uses of Orientalism". Op.cit. P, 330

severs its links with it, and cuts the umbilical cord that feeds it. To the note, the original does no more than set the horizon and provide the context of enunciation. The uses and abuses of the latter are all Burton's, and what indeed his gendered language shows, as Mark Turner has argued, is a general tendency among male writers like Anthony Trollope and George Moore to masculinise literature and invest it with male libido in the face of a feminised morality[170].

Much as anticipated, Burton's subversive method produced its effect. It defamiliarised the Arabic text and disrupted its cultural representation in England which adopted as a piece of children literature. It instigated a heated debate over issues of morality and sexuality much as Burton himself expected and wished. Knipp described Burton's edition as certainly fascinating as a personal document; but a translation that is to this extent a personal document is at cross-purpose with itself… is an interesting piece of Victorian pornography[171]. It is basically in this sense that it acquired for itself its special status in Stanley Lane Poole's famous classification of the translations of *The Nights*- that *"Galland is for the nursery, Lane for the library, Payne for the study, and Burton for the sewers"*[172].

4.4 Archaism and literalism

Style is another aspect in which Burton's translation sets itself apart from other translations. While Burton boasted producing the lengthiest, most complete and uncastrated translation of the Arabic text, his translation was viewed by many as also

[170] Colette Colligan. "Esoteric Pornography: Sir Richard Burton's *Arabian Nights* and the Origin of Pornography". Op.cit. P, 49.
[171] C. Knipp. "The Arabian Nights in England: Galland's translation and its Successors". *Journal of Arabic Literature*. Vol. 5. 1974. P, 46.
[172] Quoted in Colette Colligan's "Esoteric Pornography: Sir Richard Burton's *Arabian Nights* and the Origin of Pornography". Op.cit. P, 43.

the most unreadable. This is basically due to its idiosyncratic idiom. Burton's method which is inscribed by a foreignizing tendency that capitalizes on the irreducible difference of the original and aggrandizes its Otherness is most manifest in its stylistic composition. As a work of lowbrow literature, the original was cast in a colloquial or semi-colloquial diction. If we address style from a Bakhtinian perspective, then every novelistic form is immanently characterized by a multiplicity of voices and images of languages that interanimate one another and reflect the world views of *"their beings who are their agents- people who think, talk and act in a setting that is social and historically concrete"*[173]. Unlike other direct expressive discourses- the epic poem, the lyric and drama- the novel is branded by a multiplicity of voices or polyglossia. As a genre, it knows no unitary language. There is hardly a word in the novel that can be taken as the author's own word. The author as the creator of the novelistic whole identifies with no particular language in the novel; he cannot be found at any of its language levels. He is their mere orchestrator; and, located at different distances from all of them, he can be found at the centre of organization where all these levels intersect, as their unifying artistic and ideological centre. These language systems in the novel represent the period-bound, generic and common everyday varieties of an epoch's literary language. Bakhtin finds this linguistic diversity to be characteristic of and is inherent in the genre of the novel which is comparatively more recent, but it is also present in other earlier folkloric and popular genres. Since times immemorial, he states:

> Indirect discourse, however, the representation of another's word, another's language in intonational quotation marks, was known in the most ancient times; we encounter them in the earliest stages of

[173] Michael Bakhtin. "From the Prehistory of the Novelistic Discourse". Op.cit. P, 131.

> verbal culture. What is more, long before the appearance of the novel we find a rich world of diverse forms that transmit, mimic, and represent from various vantage points another's word, another's speech and language. These diverse forms prepared the ground for the novel long before its actual appearance. Novelistic discourse…was formed and matured in the genre of familiar speech found in conversational folk language and also in certain folkloric and low literary genres. During its germination and development, the novelistic word reflected a primordial struggle between tribes, peoples, cultures and languages- it is still full of echoes of this ancient struggle[174].

The Nights as a form of pre-novelistic discourse displays a wealth and a unique richness of polyphonic diversity, and therefore readily lends itself to Bakhtin's stylistic analysis. The narrative structure of the text crucially depends on and develops out of this diversity. The overall scheme of the plot is laid out in the narrative frame out of which a myriad of subplots evolve in a spiral pattern. we are told in the opening lines that the collection of tales was originally intended to save the life of the narrator-Shahrazad- spare the lives of other virgin maids upon whom the bellicose king was determined to wreak vengeance in retribution for his wife's betrayal, and finally to remedy the king himself from his pugnacious tendencies by the magical powers of narration. As Kilito notes, Shahrazad's matchless charm, wits and talents of story-telling make narration more effective. Her stories are not of the ordinary stock, they belong to the realm of the uncanny. She picks them carefully and makes sure that they engage the listener in marvellous and fantastic worlds; otherwise they would be devoid of any merit. The listener is made to experience mentally what the fictive

[174] Ibid. P, 132.

characters experience in their journey from the real to the fantastic world. And so, she creates in him a sense of suspension and anxiety that is all the more heightened by a well-devised scheme that interrupts the narrative line in in medias res to ensure that the closure of each tale never coincides with the end of the night. And so, at the dawn of each night the king awaits the next sunset to hear the remaining part of the story. And once a story is concluded another is started immediately as being presumably more charming and fantastic than the previous one, in a chain of narration that lasts for a thousand and one nights. In this way, Shahrazad gains more time and procrastinates her impending doom; she promises pleasure but keeps it continuously suspended, and every time she satisfies a desire, she stimulates another[175]. However, for this purgatory effect, for catharsis to occur, and indeed for narration to take place there must be narrative voices through whose mouths stories are told. In *The Nights* these voices are too numerous that one may find it extremely difficult to follow up the narrative line. It is typical of this work that the unfolding of the plot develops in a spiral pattern in which stories seamlessly proliferate- each story follows from a previous story which itself leads, in unbroken chain, to a new one. And the proliferation of the stories told goes on a par with a proliferation in the voices that tell them. While these stories are narrated by Shahrazad to the king, they are not of her own making. They are attributed to characters that were either participant in them or witnesses to their unfolding. These are usually merchants, concubines, princes, eunuchs, animals, transformed creatures, unfortunate lovers, toppled rulers, ill-fated adventurers etc. in effect, this huge multiplicity in narrative voices with a concomitant variation and diversity in their life experiences, historical consciousness, language

[175] Abd al-Fattah Kilito. *Al-'Ayn wa al-'Ibra: Dirassa fi Alf Layla wa Layla*. Trans. Mustafa al-Nahhal. Casablanca: al-Fink, 1996. P, 17.

varieties, and world views count for and make the text singularly marked by immanent polyglossia.

Polyglossia in the novel demarcates the zones of characters, give them their physiognomy and individual features and make the language varieties they speak in the novel images of the time-bound language systems of their age. A failure to keep these zones well demarcated seriously mars the novel's style and reduces it a conglomeration of voices lacking any real sense of style and characterization. Abd Allah al-Aroui, for example once blamed on the earlier generation of Arabic novelists such as Hussein Haykal and Taha Hussein having made the farmer speak as if he were a philosopher who turned to farming by mere accident, or low-order clerks who are drowned in the preoccupations of everyday life theorise about deep intellectual issues[176]. And long before him, Diderot has also pointed out to something similar when he said through the voice of one of his novelistic characters: *"my dear gentlemen, instead of forcing your characters, on every occasion to entertain deep enlightened thoughts, place them in a position that inspires them with such thoughts"*[177]. What indeed both al-Aroui and Diderot seem to criticize is the uncontrived use of polyglossia which renders the novel into a monodimensional straightforward expressive form, speaking in a monoglossic voice, and unendowed with any diversity of characters.

The Nights- a work which obviously does not fit into the generic form of the novel but belongs to its prehistory- does not lack elements of polyglossia but its stylized and stylistic representation. The work is a folk narrative, a collection of

[176] Abd Allah al-Aroui. *Al-'Idyologia al-'Arabiya al-Mo'assira*. Op.cit. P, 225.
[177] Cited in George Luckacs's *Dirasat fi al-Waqi'iya*. Trans. Naif Ballouz. 3rd Ed. Beirut: Al-Mu'assassa al-Jami'iya li-'Addirassat, 1996. P, 49.

stories presumably meant to be orally narrated to a king; and when they were sometime later collected and committed to writing, they were mainly intended for similar purposes. For centuries, this text was not in the main read silently but recited or lively acted to an immediate audience. And as is characteristic of verbal arts, style is subordinated to the plot, and polyglossia compromised in favour of the monoglossic voice of the narrator. The interlocutors for whom the work is performed are delighted by the content of the narrative, not by its narrative scheme; they are enthralled by the unfolding of episodes, the development of the denouement, the effective closure and the moral or ethical lessons which it imparts to them. The manner of saying it (by its author not its performer) is of secondary or no importance. This fact indeed largely explains the unfussy conversational language of the work and also the little interest which it arose in Arabic circles of high culture. The work was composed and intended for oral uses, and to this end all linguistic and stylistic features were abandoned- all intonational quotation marks, all divisions into voices and styles, all idiolectal representations of "another's words" and all differentiations and gaps between the represented languages and direct authorial discourse are abolished in the fervour of the proliferating stories. The only real stylistic difference that one can make is that between verse and prose (or other directly cited texts e.g. verses from Koran, hadiths, proverbs, etc.); between the direct word of the narrative and the interpolated or incorporated elements. This lack of artistic contrivance and gracefulness of style led such critics as Knipp to see the translations as far more superior than the original:

> I am compelled to say that I prefer Galland's French, and the Grub street Englishing of Galland, to any other version and even to the original, which, in its more authentic written forms- after all it is essentially an oral work- is poor and uninteresting Arabic. In its chief

> printed manuscript versions, as distinguished from the bowdlerized and grammatically "corrected" modern Arabic editions, the Arabic *Alf Layla wa-Layla* is a bastardized mixture of literary language and colloquial dialect which in the context of Arabic literature as whole must seem as ungraceful[178].

Knipp here is not betraying a secret but laying bare a fact. That the translations are more graceful, more elegant in style and more colourful in tone becomes evident upon any skimming comparison with the original. If we, on this ground, push our analysis of equivalence to the higher level of style, we can confidently assert that all English translators equally and varyingly failed to preserve the style of the original; none more so than Burton. Each translation was an improvement upon the original. Even Lane, who was sensitive to Galland's licentious improvements and found them perverted and too off-the-mark, admitted that *The Thousand and One Nights* may be greatly improved[179]. And this is something that is understandable in view of the huge differences in the historical conditions, the modes of production and receptivity, variabilities in the audience and judgments of literary taste under which both the original and translation were produced and received. Some of these conditions are condensed by Borges in the following quote:

> I have alluded to the fundamental differences between the original audience of the tales and Burton's club of subscribers. The former were roguish, prone to exaggeration, illiterate, infinitely suspicious of the present and credulous of remote marvels; the latter were respectable men of the West End, well equipped for disdain and

[178] C. Knipp. "The Arabian Nights in England: Galland's translation and its Successors". Op.cit. P, 49.
[179] Jennifer Schacker-Mill. "Otherness and Otherworldliness: Edward W. Lane's Ethnographic Treatment of the Arabian Nights". P, 169.

> erudition but not for belly laughs or terror. The first audience appreciated the fact that the whale died when it heard the man's cry; the second that there had ever been men who lend credence to any fatal capacity of such a cry. The text's marvels- undoubtedly adequate in Kordovan or Bulaq, where they were offered up as true- run the risk of seeming rather threadbare in England[180].

Although Borges does not do justice to the original's audience and his taxonomy strikes us as ahistorical, erratic and flagrantly biased, there is a grain of truth in it. Obviously, the cultivated taste, predispositions, judgements, and expectations of the eighteenth-century English readership are radically different from the simple predilections and aesthetic penchants of the Arabic audiences of the Middle Ages, but the difference is more deeply rooted than Borges seems to realize. It is more particularly ingrained in the basic perception of the nature of the work by both audiences. For the one, the text was an artefact of verbal culture, a folkloric narrative that was experienced and enjoyed in its oral form, and its commitment to writing was only to make its performance possible and durable; and, in fact, were it feasible that the work be recited or acted completely from memory, with no assistance of the written text, the need for producing it in a written form might not have been so direly felt. The other- the Eighteenth-century learned community of English readers- faced and knew the work only in its written form; it was compiled for them, rewritten, tempered and reinscribed against backdrop of a literary and critical environment whose norms, conventions, artistic judgments and ideological affiliations were far more cultivated, coded, and institutionalised. Thus, for the former, gracefulness of style is not an intrinsic characteristic of the work, but a quality of the public performer

[180] George Louis Borges. "The Translator of the Thousand and One Nights". Op.cit. P, 40.

who acts and concretises it. It is a theatrical skill, a verbal dexterity and a playful wit of the person who recites or acts it in a marketplace or a coffee shop. For the latter it is a beauty of the idiom of the text, a contrivance of its devices and narrative techniques. Thus, the stylistic poverty of the original versions of *The Nights* is both well-known and largely understandable. It was felt not only those whose tastes and artistic judgments have been formed by a different, more complex and erudite literary system (i.e. the European readership), but also by the learned men among whom it originally appeared. Just as scholars such as Ibn al-Nadim and al-Mas'oudi found the work coarse and full of nonsensical and foolish diversions, so also, for example, Littmann, *"accuses himself of having interpolated words such as 'asked', 'begged', 'answered' in five thousand pages that know of no other formula than an invariable 'said'"*[181]. Even Burton, whose fascination with Arabic literature is proverbial, spoke of the dry and business-like tone of Arabic prose in contrast to the more stylistic luxuriance of the Persians.

The style of the Arabic version of *The Nights* is closer to the colloquial language than to the refined idiom of highbrow literature. Except in rare instances of direct citations of e.g. poetry, hadiths, Koranic verses, etc. erudite diction is almost completely absent from the work. Instead, the text is typically couched in a free-flowing conversational language which makes it intelligible and appealing to the uninitiated and commoners who by large were its main addressees. As F. Reynolds has described it,

> The language is prodigiously repetitive and at times vulgar. In essence it is quite simply the language of popular literature which, if not oral

[181] Ibid. P, 51.

> in provenance, has been composed in a manner that clearly reflects the milieu of oral story-telling. For non-Arabic speakers a comparable example in English might be works of nineteenth-century popular fiction such as those by Mark Twain, in which the dialogue is liberally sprinkled with spellings such as 'gonna' (going to), 'hafta' (have to), 'betcha' (bet you)[182].

Now, faced with the question of style, Burton had to resolve not only the challenge of how to make an epitome of thirteenth-century Arabic pulp fiction engaging to the eighteenth-century learned gentlemen, but also of how to make his own translation as far as possible stylistically distinguishable from all other previous translations. As a latecomer, he had to premise his translation no less on the need to redress the presumable failures of other translation to produce an unmutilated and unadulterated image of the original than on the imperative to cast his translation in a style that is reflective and way more expressive of the original's spirit. Indeed, the fact that many translations of *The Nights* had been already produced before Burton came upon the scene meant that many stylistic choices were taken by each translator, and consequently several stylistic options and features were already tried and exhausted. In Burton's critique of these translations, style was not was not merely incidental-a minor element in their composition; rather, he made it a cornerstone that either counts for or mars the merit of a given translation. He laboured the point that what was missing in these translations and consequently rendered them characteristically flawed was not only a complete image of the original, an adequate replicating of its substance that was calling for a new translation. No less important is also the fact that they all varyingly failed to preserve style of the original. Thus, he surveyed their stylistic

[182] Dwight F. Reynolds. "A Thousand and One Nights". Op.cit. P,275.

features and devices and produced a blistery polemic that dwells on their blemishes and shows how scandalously and incongruently they are at odds with the genuine style of the foreign text:

> Our century of translations, popular and vernacular, from …Galland's delightful abbreviation and adaptation, in no wise represent the eastern original. The best and latest, the Rev. Mr. Foster's, which is diffuse and verbose, and Mr. G. Moir Bussey's, which is a re-correction, abound in gallicisms of style and idiom; and one and all degrade a chef d'oeuvre of the highest anthropological and ethnographical interest and importance to a mere fairy-book, a nice present for little boys.
>
> After nearly a century had elapsed, Dr Jonathan Scott… printed his "Tales, Anecdotes, and Letters, translated from the Arabic and Persia"; and followed in 1811 with an edition of "The Arabian Nights' Entertainments" from the MS. of Edward Wortley Montague. This work he (and he only) describes as "carefully revised and occasionally corrected from the Arabic". The reading public did not wholly reject it, sundry texts were founded upon the Scott version and it has been imperfectly reprinted. But most men, little reckoning what a small portion of the original they were reading, satisfied themselves with the Anglo-French epitome and metaphrase. At length in 1838, Mr. Henry Torrens… took a step in the right direction; and began to translate "The Book of the Thousand Nights and One Night," from the Arabic of the Egyptian MS….The attempt, or rather the intention, was highly creditable; the copy was carefully moulded upon the model and offered the best example of the verbatim et literatim style. But the plucky author knew little of Arabic, and least of what is most wanted, the dialect of Egypt and Syria. His prose is so conscientious as to offer up spirit at the shrine of letter; and his verse, always

> whimsical, has at times a manner of Hibernian whoop which is comical when it should be pathetic….[183].

This quote (which I have liberally trimmed off from many technical details and titles) unequivocally illustrates- in addition to the fervid interest in this work of Arabic popular fiction- the utmost difficulty which a late translation as Burton's was bound to face to secure a footing for itself in so jostled a space, and among so many translations. Obviously, Burton's stylistic choices and decision-making have to be seen as - at least partly - motivated and influenced by this diversity. The multiplicity of already existing translations indicates the multiplicity of styles that have been tried and tested and, inversely, the limited range that was left for any newcomer. To translate against this background of so many translations entails, above all, that the new translation must have something to contribute; it must both differ and make its difference really or ostensibly felt within the receiving system. If it were only to be a simple image, an extension or a replica of other translation, there would, in essence, be no need for it, and therefore lack its very raison d'étre. In content as in style, Burton asserted himself not as a mere agent who contents himself with cohabiting with and living up to the already tested patterns, but as a game-changer who ventures and introduces new patterns. Thus, the radical stylistic choices which characterize his translation, as we shall see in a while, must be seen and assessed in relation to other translations, not in isolation from them. And to justify these choices, to demonstrate their validity and cogency, he had first to find fault with the stylistic features of other authors and translations.

[183] Sir Richard Francis Burton' preface to *The Arabian Nights*. Vol. I. Op. cit. Pp, xi-xii.

In Burton's judgment- or indeed polemical harangue- all previous translations are equally marred by their flawed style. Galland's is an adaptation, Foster's is diffuse and verbose, Moir Bussey's is plagued by gallicism and more suited for children, Jonathan Scott's is mutilated and gives the original only in epitome and metaphrase, Henry Torrens' is conscientious, clumsy, and whimsical. But it is against Lane that the more serious charges are pressed. Knowing that, after Galland, only the latter produced a complete translation (in large-scale production) which gained wide popularity and maintained a lasting presence while all others scored no or only temporary success, Burton reserves to him the most scathing criticism:

> That amiable and devoted Arabist, the late Edward William Lane does not score a success in his "New Translation of the Tales of a Thousand and One Nights" … He chose the abbreviating Bulak Edition; and, of its two hundred tales, he has omitted about half and by far the more characteristic half: the work was intended for "the drawing-room table;" and, consequently, the workman was compelled to avoid the "objectionable" and aught" approaching to licentiousness." He converts the Arabian Nights into the Arabian Chapters, arbitrarily changing the division and, worse still, he converts some chapters into notes. He renders poetry by prose and apologises for not omitting it altogether: he neglects assonance and he is at once too Oriental and not Oriental enough. He had small store of Arabic at the time- Lane of *the Nights* is not Lane of the Dictionary- and his pages are disfigured by many childish mistakes. Worst of all, the three handsome volumes are rendered unreadable as Sale's Koran by their anglicised Latin, their sesquipedalian un-English words, and the stiff and stilted style of half a century ago when our prose was, perhaps, the worst in Europe[184].

[184] Ibid.

Those who know Lane know for sure that many of Burton's accusations do not hold water. Lane, the well-accomplished Orientalist, lexicologist, and learned scholar whose *Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians* became an authority and a guide for everyone who wishes to traverse, actually or textually, the Orient, including Burton himself, can hardly be accused of making childish mistakes or using un-English words. His translation, though left out a massive part of the original, is described as the most readable, and-for this very reason- became a source of children literature. But it is only by criticising Lane, by exposing his real or alleged blemishes, and by distancing himself from him, that a new translation becomes possible. Burton's critique of Lane is, to borrow from K. A. Appiah, one of *"space-clearing gesture"*. For only by eliminating Lane that Burton can make room for himself.

It is on the basis of the conflict over legitimacy between an ancestor and newcomer over who best represents and discharge the debt of the original that we can understand Burton's stylistic choices in his translation of *The Nights*. Two stylistic features, however, set Burton apart from other translators, and to a lesser degree from John Payne: archaism and literalism. Counter to the plain and conversational idiom of the original, Burton cast his translation in a hard-to-read archaic English that teems with musty expressions and recherché vocabulary. At Burton's hands, the naturalness and colloquial flavour of the original gives way to overwrought prose; and simple and unfussy expression is sucked in, what Knipp calls, a pseudo-Elizabethan Gothic style. Burton's idiom was not only out of tune with the style of the original or with the time-bound language systems of his age; but, more flagrantly, it was not a natural language in essence. His archaism has been suspected by many as not being typically the

language-in-use, that is, the *parole* of a faded age, but as being at least partly invented. Even if we give Burton the privilege of doubt and suppose that his choice of archaism was moved by historicist insights, which other translator were lacking; mainly that a medieval text as *The Nights* would best be translated and its historical aura best be preserved if it were translated into a medieval target language, his endeavour was by no means fruitful. And it just produced the reverse effect of making the translation appear remote in time and distanced from the real world. By tossing the original in the depths of history- which is the history of the English language not of the original- nothing is gained, and worse, comprehension is lost or substantially nuanced. The historical ethos of the original is not retrieved in Gothic archaism but rendered more obscure. Thus, whereas the oldest versions of the Arabic text which were written more than six centuries ago- and which must have been in oral circulation for many other centuries- can now be used and comprehended by the average Arabic reader of today with utmost ease, Burton's translation smacks of being crabbed and unreadable. This is true even for professional readers and specialised scholars. The Italian distinguished Arabist and editor of the Italian *Arabian Nights*, for example, complained that to understand Burton's translation, he often has to refer to the Arabic text[185].

The other stylistic feature which makes Burton's translation uncompromisingly distinct from other translations is its excessive literalism. Not willing to *"offer up sense at the shrine of the letter"* as did some translators, he honoured the letter of the foreign idiom, highlighted its idiosyncratic characteristics, and privileged and heightened the foreignness of the foreign text over fluency and

[185] C. Knipp. "The Arabian Nights in England: Galland's translation and its Successors". Op.cit. P, 49.

readability. Burton promised to preserve the spirit and mécanique, the manner and matter of the Arabic, but, as every translation analyst knows, such a claim is more asserted in words than achieved in act. Burton's real allegiance lies more with the wording of the original than with its semantic import, more with its phraseology than with the free flow of meaning. Like the scar in his face that tells the dear price of his adventure in foreign lands and attraction to the forbidden, his translation bears the traces of the foreign text and readily betrays what many translators- Lane being one of them- strain to conceal; i.e. the fact that it is a translation. The idiosyncratic features of Arabic, its syntactic patterns, its tropes and figures of expression, the Arabs' manners of greeting, swearing, uttering prayers and supplications are mimicked and extrapolated almost at the risk of sounding clumsy, pulpy and excessively overwrought. Burton was one of those whom Arberry accused of inventing *"a strange Eurasian sort of English, that was the more readily accepted because it seemed profanely to echo the Old Testament in the Authorized Version"*. Burton was so keen to preserve intact both the manner and matter of the Arabic book even when its friction and eccentric character were too vibrant to appease. As A. J. Arberry noted, Burton with many others:

> Have almost without exception been so mesmerized by the stylistic peculiarities of Arabic that they have not hesitated to imitate them slavishly in their versions, a thing they would probably have scorned to do, and been soundly schooled to avoid, were their task Homer or Herodotus or Horace or Livy. Not content with inventing a strange Eurasian sort of English, that was the more readily accepted because it seemed profanely to echo the Old Testament in the Authorized Version- and for a good reason, the Semitic originals of those Scriptures- they went farther than they needed to have done, and

> being caught up in the eddies of the Gothic revival, imported into their diction all the bogus flummery of Ye Olde Englyshe [186].

Burton did not content himself with transferring an alien text and absorbing it within the receiving poetic system at home. He did not want the original to simply vanish and dissolve in this system as if it typically belonged to it or originally proceeded from it. Rather, he intended it to carry innovatory or subversive forces and participate actively in shaping this system. By Schleiermacher's characterization, Burton aimed to leave the original as much as possible in peace and move the reader toward it. His approach is characteristically inscribed by defamiliarisation. He violently disrupted the cultural representation of the Arabic text in the English culture which- owing to a massive amount of translations, adaptations, rewritings, forgeries- had tempered it, adapted it, and adopted it as its own. Burton sought to claim back the original to its origin, to highlight its embeddedness in a foreign culture and language, and to make this embeddedness stringently felt and experienced by the English reader. And where else can this embeddedness be readily found or more openly expressed than in the original's manner of saying? Second only to the erotic content, which was Burton's strategic point of focus and main contribution, was his endeavour to reproduce what he calls the mécanique of the original. And here, too, his stylistic choices are not governed by the basic order of equivalence; that is, by a hierarchy of priorities on the basis of which translation shifts (forms of departure from formal equivalence) are applied when, and only when, other options and possibilities are exhausted. His stylistic choices are not necessitated by any inadequacy of correspondence between the two natural languages involved in translation; they are

[186] Quoted in Knipp's "The Arabian Nights in England'. Ibid. P, 50.

deliberate and thoroughly meditated, and taken from a wide range of equally attainable possibilities. Burton's fondness for the idiomatic features, acoustic effect and expressive capabilities of Arabic language is well known, that he even was tempted to compose an ode that is typically fashioned on the Arabic Qassida. And in his translation of *The Nights* he was no less under its mesmerising spell. The considerations underlying his stylistic choices are best expressed by Rudolf Pannwitz in the following quote:

> Our translations, even the best ones, proceed from a wrong premise. They want to turn Hindi, Greek, English into German instead of turning German into Hindi, Greek, English. Our translators have a far greater reverence for the usage of their own language than for the spirit of the foreign works…. The Basic error of the translator is that he preserves the state in which his own language happens to be instead of allowing his language to be powerfully affected by the foreign tongue. Particularly when translating from a language very remote from his own he must go back to the primal elements of language itself and penetrate to the point where work, image and tone converge. He must expand and deepen his language by means of the foreign language[187].

If we allow ourselves a degree of generalizations, we can see Burton's stylistic choices as fitting more within the German humanistic tradition which favours defamiliarisation and foreignisation than within the British tradition which privileges appropriation, naturalisation and domestication. What was actually seen by Arberry as a slavish imitation of the stylistic peculiarities of Arabic and an invention of a strange

[187] Quoted in Walter Benjamin's "The Task of the Translator". Op.cit. P, 22.

Eurasian language is regarded by Rudolf Pannwitz as the dutiful task of the translator in whose discharge he should spare no effort. To unleash the expressive powers of the foreign language in the native language, to let it be powerfully affected and deeply penetrated by it, and to give full vent to its primal elements is the translation ideal which many German theorists such as Pannwitz, Schleiermacher, and Benjamin attached to and sought out in translation. In Germany, the best example of this ideal was offered by Hölderlin. His translations of classical literature, particularly of Sophocles, have become proverbial models and unmatched tour de force of successful literalism. Burton's exploits, though never reached the heights of Hölderlin's success, are strongly evocative of his endeavours.

Burton's rendering of *The Nights* is conspicuously and prodigiously literal. It is weighted toward being a verbatim rewording of the original. Holding, like Pannwitz, that the translator's glory is to add something to his native tongue, Burton made bold excursions into the original's idiom with the intent to reproduce in his own language the syntactic patterns, tropes and stylistic features and intricacies of the foreign language. At the risk of sounding terse, clumsy and even offensive to the English ear, he replicates the exact phraseology of the original. And his best device to this is calquing. Thus, for example, when Shahrazad and Dunyazad wanted to put their scheme into effect to keep the king distracted by marvellous tales, Dunyazad asked her sister: "*Allah upon thee, O my sister, recite to us some new story, delightsome and delectable, wherewith to while away the waking hours of our latter night*." Shahrazad answered: *"With joy and goodly gree"*. Although the more conventional English expression of answering a polite request- "with pleasure"- proposes itself for such contexts, Burton opts for a verbatim and obscuring rewording

of the original. Elsewhere, he sometimes translates this same formula with *"with love and gladness"*. Likewise, in the story of the *Trader and the Jinni*, when the merchant was held accountable for murdering the Jinni's son and the Jinni braced for killing him in retribution, he addressed him in these words: *"Arise that I may slay thee, as thou slewest my son, the life-stuff of my liver".* In both classical and colloquial Arabic 'falthata al-kabid' (literally a piece of the liver) is a trope that expresses the paternal bond between the parents and their offspring and the strong emotional attachment that characterises this bond. In English, however, liver is a mere organ, the abdomen of vertebrates, that is responsible for certain physiological functions, and in no way conveys any emotions or states of mind. Even when these tropes and stylistic patterns are lacking in the original, Burton finds no harm in inventing them. For example, in an episode which is apparently intended to dramatize women's universal treason and man's helplessness vis-à-vis their schemes, Kings Sharhrazad and Shahrayar- both being deeply traumatised by their wives' lechery- decided to leave their kingdoms and roam aimlessly as hermits. And as they meandered away in distant lands and seas, they came across a giant Ifrit who, out of envy and fear for her unfaithfulness, keeps a damsel locked in a box. But the damsel, who was captivated on her weeding day, seized the Ifrit's short nap and commanded the kings to have sex with her, menacing them, if they desist, to wake the Ifrit to tear them to pieces. In Burton's translation we read:

> They were in a terrible fright when they found that she had seen them and answered her in the same manner, "Allah upon thee and by thy modesty, O lady, excuse us from coming down ! " But she rejoined by saying, " Allah upon you both that ye come down forthright, and if ye

> come not, I will rouse upon you my husband, this Ifrit, and he shall do you to die by the illest of deaths[188].

In the original the expression *"allah upon thee"* (billahi 'alayk) simply expresses the desperateness of imploring and earnest begging for something, particularly when the implorer is in a weak position vis-à-vis the implored and lacks all means to press his plea. In English the semantic field of imploring teems with hyponyms that express different degrees of earnest request such as beg, beseech, solicit, pray, implore, entreat, plead, request, etc. but Burton, as if unimpressed by this richness, chose to retain the literal phraseology of the original that risks intelligibility and heightens defamiliarisation. Whereas, the phrase "by thy modesty" is Burton's own contribution and has no antecedent in any version of the foreign text. It is part of the clichés and constructs that maximise the otherness of Orientals and portray them as being in every respect, in their way of behaving, thinking and speaking, at odds with the airs and manners of Westerners.

Not infrequently, Burton mimics grammatical categories that are unknown to the English system of grammar. It is characteristic of Arabic, for example, to express emphasis through the use of the same root in the verb and base form in a category known as 'al-mafu'l al-mutlaq'. The acoustic effect and parallelism which results from this grammatical form lay more stress on the referent and brings it into focus. Burton forcibly interposes this category into English in a way that can hardly make sense to the English ear. Thus, expressions such as *"they marvelled with exceeding marvel", "he waxed wroth with exceeding wrath", "he loved her with love exceeding",* etc. dots his translation. For Burton, these twists and curious warp of his

[188] Sir Richard Francis Burton' preface to *The Arabian Nights*. Vol. I. Op. cit. P, 11.

native language to accommodate the tropes, figures of speech and syntactic structures of the original *"adds sparkle to description, and a point to proverb, epigram and dialogue"*[189], but a in a literary tradition that favours fluency and demands intelligibility of expression, they must look monstrous, strained and barbaric. Norman Daniel, for example, found them irritating and obstructing comprehension, noting that writing as an Arab would have in English has no virtue in English.

[189] Sir Richard Francis Burton' preface to *The Arabian Nights*. Vol. I. Op. cit. P, xiv.

5 *Kalila and Dimna*: myths of Oriental wisdom

5.1 The origin and peregrination

The textual life of *Kalila and Dimna* was neither smoother nor less complicated than that of *the Arabian Nights*. The text exists in such an inherent diversity that makes the search for a springhead origin a certainly fruitless and an almost absurd endeavour. Its relation to its alleged origins is still a subject of unsettled debates. Not only were some versions of its originals lost, but also the extant versions of these origins contain only portions of the work that are incomplete and at wide variances from one another. By various accounts, the book of *Kalila and Dimna* is traced back to two Indian sources, the oldest of them dates back to the 3rd century BC. Long before being compiled into collections, the fables which make up the *fons et origo* of the work were transmitted orally and handed down over generations. At a certain point, these two sources were committed to writing, initially in Sanskrit. They came to be known respectively as Pankatantra, literally Pentateuch or Pentamerone; and the Hitopadesa, i.e. Salutary Advice[190]. Both these collections were published in England and Germany, and were translated to many European languages. As is well known, the Sanskrit literature is very rich in fables and apologues and metempsychosis which informs them was a well-established cultural belief in India. These facts led many scholars to regard India as the birthplace of animal fables in which, as Edward Burnett Taylor made it clear, people in primitive communities project their personality into all surrounding objects, animate and inanimate. In the sacred literature of Buddhism, animal fables held a most prominent place. *"The Buddhist preachers, addressing themselves chiefly to the people, to the untaught, the*

[190] See Max Muller's lecture "On the Migration of the Fables" delivered at the Royal Institution on June 3, 1870. Golbal Grey, 2018. P,2.

uncared for, the outcast, spoke to them as we still speak to children, in fables, in proverbs and parables"[191]. Many of the fables that came to constitute *Kalila wan Dimna* predate the rise of Buddhism; others were improvised to fit specific contexts and to serve certain moral purposes. But *"Buddhism gave a new and permanent sanction to whole branch of moral mythology, and in the sacred canon, as it was settled in the third century before Christ, many a fable received, and holds to the present day, its recognised place"*[192]. The deep embedment of these fables in the Buddhist religion led men like Joseph Jacobs, an editor of an English translation, to advance the bold claim that the fables of Bidpai (the title of his translation) are none others than those of Buddha himself[193]. This, however, remains a mere claim unsupported by concrete evidence. When Buddhism declined in India, the Brahmans claimed the inheritance of this mythological tradition and used its moralizing fables for educational purposes.

No less interesting than the fables themselves is their wandering and spread across different continents, their accommodation within diverse cultural systems, and their appeal to people of different classes, ages, castes and social standing. Once canonized in their place of origin, they soon found wide vogue and stimulated relentless interest outside it, among the royals and the commoners, the initiated and the uninitiated, the pious and the impious, all alike. However, the fictional and realistic elements in the migration and afterlife of these animal fables are strongly intertwined to such an extent that telling the ones from the others tend to bog down to the expression of one's opinion over this issue. The most solid account is presented by

[191] Ibid.
[192] Ibid.
[193] See Joseph Jacobs's preface to *The Fables of Bidpai, the Moral Philosophy of Doni.* Tran. Sir Thomas North. The Strand, London. P,li.

Ibn al-Muqaffa', one of the work's earlier translators through whose mediation the work first gained its popularity and cultural capital that allowed for its peregrinations to other cultures and nations. In the preface to his translation, Ibn al-Muqaffa' gives us to understand that he translated the fables from the Pahlavi language, the ancient language of Persia; and that these fables were translated two hundred years before by a physician of the Sasanian king, Khosrau Anushirvan, named Barzouyeh. Having learned that there exists in the treasury of the king of India a precious book *"composed by its scholars, refined by its masters of wisdom, perfected by its vigilant men, the like of which is to be found in no king's treasury"*[194], the king found in Barzouyeh a most apt candidate for the secretive mission to grab it. He then dispatched him to carry out this risky mission and, with the help of an Indian scholar, he managed to bring back a copy of *Kalila and Dimna*. Upon successfully completing his task, lavish rewards were offered to him but he refused to be rewarded except in one way: that his name be attached to the book and a separate chapter in it be assigned to immortalize his life and keep track of the risks he took in the execution of his task. All this is reported through the metanarrative voice of Ibn al-Muqaffa' in a section entitled *the Subject Matter of the Book of Kalila and Dimna, from the Pen of Ibn al-moqaffa'*; the full story of Barzouyeh is recounted in a two separate sections, not by Ibn al-Muqaffa', but by Bouzurjimher b. Bakhtan, Anushirvan's vizier who was commanded by the king to give a full account of Barzouyeh's life and exploits. The order in which these sections occur with or without a much suspected introduction by Ali b. Shal al-Faressi differ from one recension to another.

[194] Abd al-Wahhab 'Azzam, Ed. *Kalila wa Dimna*. Beirute: Dar al-Shoruq, 1941. P,51.

This stream of events which throw light on the migration of *Kalila wa Dimna* from India to Persia and then to Arabia is given a dramatic twist in Ferdowsi's account. In his *Shahnameh*, he relays that a Persian physician read in a book that there existed in India an herb capable of restoring life to the dead. And having informed the king of the benefits of this magical herb, he was soon dispatched to fetch it. The physician spent a long period of painstaking research in the Indian mountains but found no such herb. Unwilling to return empty-handed to the king, he sought the advice of an indigenous sage who, having learned of his impasse, figured out a way out for him. The physician's journey, he said, could still come to fruition not by more strenuous search but by working out a reinterpretation of the journey and the herb; by simply reinterpreting the magical plant in a spiritual sense, as meaning not an effective chemical compound, but as figuratively representing ancient books of wisdom preserved in India which impart life to those who wallow in ignorance and are dead in their folly and sins[195].

> The corpse is the man without knowledge, for the uninstructed is everywhere lifeless. In the king's treasury, there is a book which the well-qualified call Kalila. When people become weary of their ignorance, the herb for them is Kalila, knowledge being the mountain. If you seek this book in the king's treasury, you will find it, and it will be your guide to knowledge[196].

Although the fictional nature of this account is unmistakable, many scholars found it closer to the truth. The fact that Ferdowsi lived almost two centuries after Ibn

[195] Max Muller's lecture "On the Migration of the Fables". Op.cit. P

[196] See George Grigore's "Kalīla wa Dimna and its Journey to the World Literatures", his contribution to of the 2nd international conference on the History of Arabic Literature Kyiv, May 19–20, 2016. Ed. Olena Khomitska and Bohdan Horvat. Kyiv, 2018. P, 75.

al-Muqaffa‘, and that the Persian rendition of the Pankatantra was already lost further weakens Ferdowsi’s position.

The least credible account of Kalila wa Dimna’s afterlife in Arabic is produced by a eleventh-century scholar, Abraham Ibn Ezra, a wandering Jew who visited many lands, and wrote on a motley subjects. Ibn Ezra came up with this account:

> In the olden times there was neither science nor religion among the sons Ishmael that dwell in tents till the Koran arose and gave them a new code of religion…till the great king in Ishmael, by name Essaffah, arose, who heard there were many sciences to be found in India…and there came men saying that there was in India a mighty book on the secrets of governments, in the form of a Fable placed in the mouths of dumb beasts, and in it many illustrations, for the book was greatly honoured in the eyes of the reader, and the name of the book was Kalila and Dimna, that is, the Lion and the Ox, because the story in the first chapter of the book is about them. The aforesaid king fasted for forty days, so that he might perchance see the Angels of dreams, who might allow him to have the book translated to the Ishmaelitish tongue. And he saw in his dream according to his wish. Thereupon he sent for a Jew who knew both languages, and ordered him to translate this book, for he feared that if an Ismaelite versed in both tongues were to translate it he might die[197].

That this account is frivolous and lacks the smallest grains of truth is self-evident to everybody, except to Joseph Jacobs whose unusual leniency thrusts the genealogy of the work into a series of untestable hypotheses that suppose the existence of some other Arabic versions of Kalila wa Dimna which nobody knew of.

[197] Quoted in Joseph Jacobs’s preface to *The Fables of Bidpai, the Moral Philosophy of Doni.* Op.cit. P,xviii.

Such a claim is starkly incongruent with historical facts and with Essafah's own cast of character. The latter's reign lasted only for four years, most of which was devoted to exterminating his enemies, tightening his grip over power and laying the foundation for the Abassid dynasty and its new state apparatus. As to his commissioning a Jew to carry out a translation of this book for fear that an Ismaelite might die, it hardly holds water as this would be, in the nature of things, the last concern for somebody whose name- literally meaning blood-shedder- and reputation derived from his gory acts and ruthlessness against his Ishmaelites rivals and enemies. Neither Jacobs nor Ibn Ezra cite any reliable authority to support their claim. In the Arabic annals, the name of Essafah is rarely- if at all- linked to any translation program or scholarly endeavour. The advance of both was the contribution of his successors, starting with al-Mansur and reaching the pinnacle of development with al-Ma'mun.

Brushing aside the myths and exaggerations that pepper both Ferdowsi's and Ibn Ezra's accounts, we are left with Ibn al-Muqaffa''s narrative as the only realistic and first-order storyline that describes the migration of the Indian animal fables outside their original milieu of production. The mediation of Ibn al-Muqaffa' was very pivotal for the afterlife, wandering and diffusion of *Kalila wa Dimna* across many languages and cultures, which occurred in twofold way: (1) first, through translation, recasts, renditions and retranslations of Ibn al-Muqaffa''s translation into many Asiatic and European languages including Syriac, Greek, Hebrew, Latin, Castilian, Turkish, Persian, etc.; and (2), following from the former, incessant inquisitions about and inquiries into the (lost) origins, sources and next of kin of the Indian fables.

In Ibn al-Nadim's *Fehrist*, the name of Ibn al-Muqaffa' is mentioned with a frequency that clearly attests to his influential contribution. Under his entry we read:

> His Persian name is Zorbah. He is Abd Allah, the son of al-Muqaffa'. Before embracing Islam he [the father] was surnamed Abi 'Amro, which after Islam he changed to Abi Mohamed, and al-Muqaffa' ibn al-Mubarak; he was so named because al-Hjjaj b. Yousef hit him so badly and mutilated his hand for having stolen some money from the Sultan's treasury…he served as a secretary first for Daoud b. 'Umar b. Habira and then for 'Issa b. 'Ali. He was a true master of eloquence, and a versed secretary and poet. He drafted the terms of surrender of 'Abd Allah b. 'Ali to al-Mansur, and he was so discourteous to him; so when Sufien b. Mu'awiya burned him to death, al-Mansur did not disapprove his murder[198].

Before meeting his tragic end at the untimely age of 36, Ibn al-Muqaffa' made valuable contributions in the establishment and institutionalization of Arabic prose in both epistolography and fiction. Together with his mentor, 'Abd al-Hamid al-Katib, he laid the ground for a literary tradition whose lore and examples generated a wide appeal among the Arabic audience. Ibn al-Muqaffa''s presence in the translation dynamism that was started by al-Mansur was strongly felt since its inception. His contributions include *Khudaynama*, a royal chronicle portraying the historical traditions in pre-Islamic Iran; the A'i-nama, an account of the institutions, customs, and hierarchy of the Sassanid court under the Sassanid dynasty, and biographies of famous Sassanid kings Ardashir and Anu Shirvan, and most importantly his translation of *Kalila wa Dimna*. Ibn al-Muqaffa' also penned works of his own. These include *al-Adab al-Saghir, al-Adab al-Kabir, Risala fi al-Sahaba*. Although, Ibn al-

[198] Ibn al-Nadim. Fehrist. Op.cit. P,132. (my translation)

Muqaffa‘ embraced Islam, many suspected the veracity of his beliefs. Whether real or nominal, Ibn al-Muqaffa‘’s professing Islam did not seem to wean his attraction to the Zoroastrian traditions. Indeed, as Tarek Shamna has remarked, one may see his efforts both in translation and original composition as a revivalist attempt to breathe life into this tradition, and to infuse elements of the Sassanid culture into the empire which now was ruling his land[199]. Dmitri Gutas points out two crucial elements that came into play in the activities of Persian cultural revival which Ibn al-Muqaffa‘ spearheaded: Zoroastrian imperial Ideology and political astrology. Central to the former was the idea that Greek sciences had their roots in Persia; that when Alexander the Great conquered Persia and defeated Darius, among the things he did was that he ordered the translation of the Persian funds of knowledge found in the Zoroastrian canonical scriptures, particularly the Avesta,[200] and the commitment of the originals to fire. Whereas political astrology or astrological history was of particular significance to the Sassanids as form of predicting the course of history; it is grounded in the idea that dynastic history evolves in cyclical periods of varying lengths governed by the movements of stars and planets. It was used to prognosticate momentous episodes such as the emergence of a prophet, the rise or fall of a ruler, a dynasty, a major military event, etc.[201] Although these beliefs and teachings are prima facie irreconcilable with the basic principles of Islam, their practical utility permitted their incorporation into the mainstream political culture of the Abbasids. The veritable founder of this dynasty, al-Mansur, did not object their propagation for two obvious reasons: firstly, because he himself took a keen interest in astrology, surrounded

[199] Tarek Shamma. ”Translating into the Empire”. *The Translator*. V. 15. No. 1 (2009). P,72.
[200] Dimitri Gustas. *Greek Thought, Arabic Literature. The Graeco- Arabic Translation Movement in Baghdad and Early Abbasid Society*. Routledge, London, 1998. P,25.
[201] Tarek Shamma. ”Translating into the Empire”. Op.cit. P,71.

himself with renowned astrologists such as Ibn Nawbakht, al-Farazi, and others, and lent attentive ear to their advice[202]; secondly because he wanted to appease the Persian factions- Persian converts, Persianized Arabs, Zoroastrians, etc.- who took an active part in toppling down the Umayyad rulers. In sharp contrast to the parochial quasi-racist mode of ruling of the Umyyads, al-Mansur wanted to posit his own as all-embracing and having a universalist appeal.

The attachment of al-Muqaffa‘ to the Persian cultural riches must have been so great. As Gabrieli notes, he "must have profoundly appreciated the cultural values of the Iranian civilization from which he sprang, and made them known to the Arab world which had conquered his native land and relegated the religion of his ancesstors to a subsidiary position"[203]. This truth is made obvious by the fact that his conversion was very often held in suspicion, and the charge of heresy and yearning for his old beliefs of Manichaeanism were very frequently levelled against him. When he translated *Kalila wa Dimna*, or the Fables of Bidpai as they are well known in Europe, elements of Sassanid imperial culture that were valorised and promoted by the pro-Persian intellectuals of his time, strongly resounded in his translation; most importantly, the Persian courtly protocol and royal administrative principles, disguised in animals acts and dialogues, were unloaded into an Arabic political environment that had been formerly largely characterized by austerity and lack of courtly etiquette.

Once *Kalila wa Dimna* cut across into Arabic, it soon found various channels to make its way out to other languages and cultures. In its migration from *"the*

[202] Dimitri Gustas. *Greek Thought, Arabic Literature. The Graeco- Arabic Translation Movement in Baghdad and Early Abbasid Society*. Op.cit. P, 33.
[203] Tarek Shamma. "Translating into the Empire". Op.cit. P,72.

hermitages of Indian sages, to the courts of the kings of Persia, and from thence to the residence of the powerful caliphs at Baghdad"[204], this collection of Eastern fables was rolling like a snowball, but the more it gathered pace and grew bigger in size, the more the core elements in it became by hidden by outer textual layers, and the imprints of their origins, i.e. the Panchatantra and Hitopadesa, became fainter and only dimly traceable. About the year 1080, a Jew by the name of Symeon, the son of Seth, translated the fables from Arabic into Greek. His translation was based on some version of Ibn al-Muqaffa''s *Kalila wa Dimna* and was retitled *Stephanites kai Ichnelates*. Out of this translation many others soon followed. One was made into Hebrew as early as 1250, which was itself translated into Latin by another converted Jew, Johanes of Capua, under the title *Directorim Humanae Vitae*. This latter had a more enduring and influential presence, enjoyed wide popularity in medieval times, and triggered multiple translations into many European languages; but it was also a source of confusion because in it the name of Sendebar was substituted for that of Bidpai[205]. This along with a Castilian translation of *Kalila wa Dimna* made for Alfonso the Wise yielded up a most provocative recast commissioned by the French queen, Jeanne de Navarre, and carried out by Raymond de Béziers.

The scope of de Béziers's intervention and extent to which the translation has been appropriated at his hand is appalling even to the most zealous advocates of interventionism. Jeanne de Navarre was intent to give the translation as a gift to her husband, king Philip the Fair, but she died before the translation was completed. Her sudden death brought de Béziers's project to a halt, which- it is said- he resumed only after he learned of the completion of Johanes of Capua's Latin translation upon which

[204] Max Muller's lecture "On the Migration of the Fables". Op.cit. P,13.
[205] Ibid. P,15.

he heavily drew. In his translation, it seems that de Béziers was acting according to the principle that he who pays the piper orders the tune. That is why he strained himself to make this Oriental text look like a prototype of biblical lore. He adulterated the original with additions and insertions from grammar-school, Christian scriptures, classical traditions, prefatory and single-column miniatures, often luxuriously ornamented with gold leaf[206]. The narrator of the narrative frame, Barzouyeh, is made to entertain *"a vision of Christ, dream of God surrounded with angels, and see himself miraculously in the company of the Virgin and her infant son"*[207]. Barzouyeh is forced into conversion into the catholic faith which is described through a series of texts and illuminations that have been initiated by questioning, followed by textual learning and glimpsing divinity to a deep understanding of the divine providence. His soul is said to have been redeemed not from a former espousal of a Hindu or Islamic apostasy, but from a state of ignorance and indifference[208]. The conversion of Barzouyeh goes hand in hand with a systematic Christianization of the text. The latter is dotted with heavily loaded Christian references such as Solomon, Seneca, Paul, etc.[209] Only after enacting his drastic measures of purification and spiritualization did de Béziers feel that he could pass with confidence the fruits of his labour to his commissioner, that is, the practical uses of the courtly protocol which abound in this work and which he found useful for the upbringing and cultivation of young princes. *"You will learn", he said, "how to rule yourselves, and to conduct yourselves among*

[206] Amanda Luster. "The Coversion of Kalila and Dimna: Raymond de Béziers' Religious Experience and Translation at the Fourteenth-Century French Court". *Gesta* 56, no. 1 (Spring 2017). P, 82.
[207] Ibid.
[208] Ibid. P,84.
[209] Ibid. 87.

princes and barons, and preserve yourselves from the dangers that arise in royal courts"[210].

Thus Ibn al-Muqaffa' translation opened up a wide horizon for the work to regenerate and proliferate in a variety of forms across a myriad of languages and cultures; in direct and second hand translations, adaptations, recasts, free-handed appropriations, etc. Once in the European literary soil, *the Fables of Bidpai* enjoyed unparalleled popularity. Between the eleventh and the thirteenth centuries they were extremely popular. They survived and flourished in a variety of forms, in polished translations as well as codified literature. The outreach of their appeal was so broad as to whet the appetite of both secular and religious circles. As Max Muller notes:

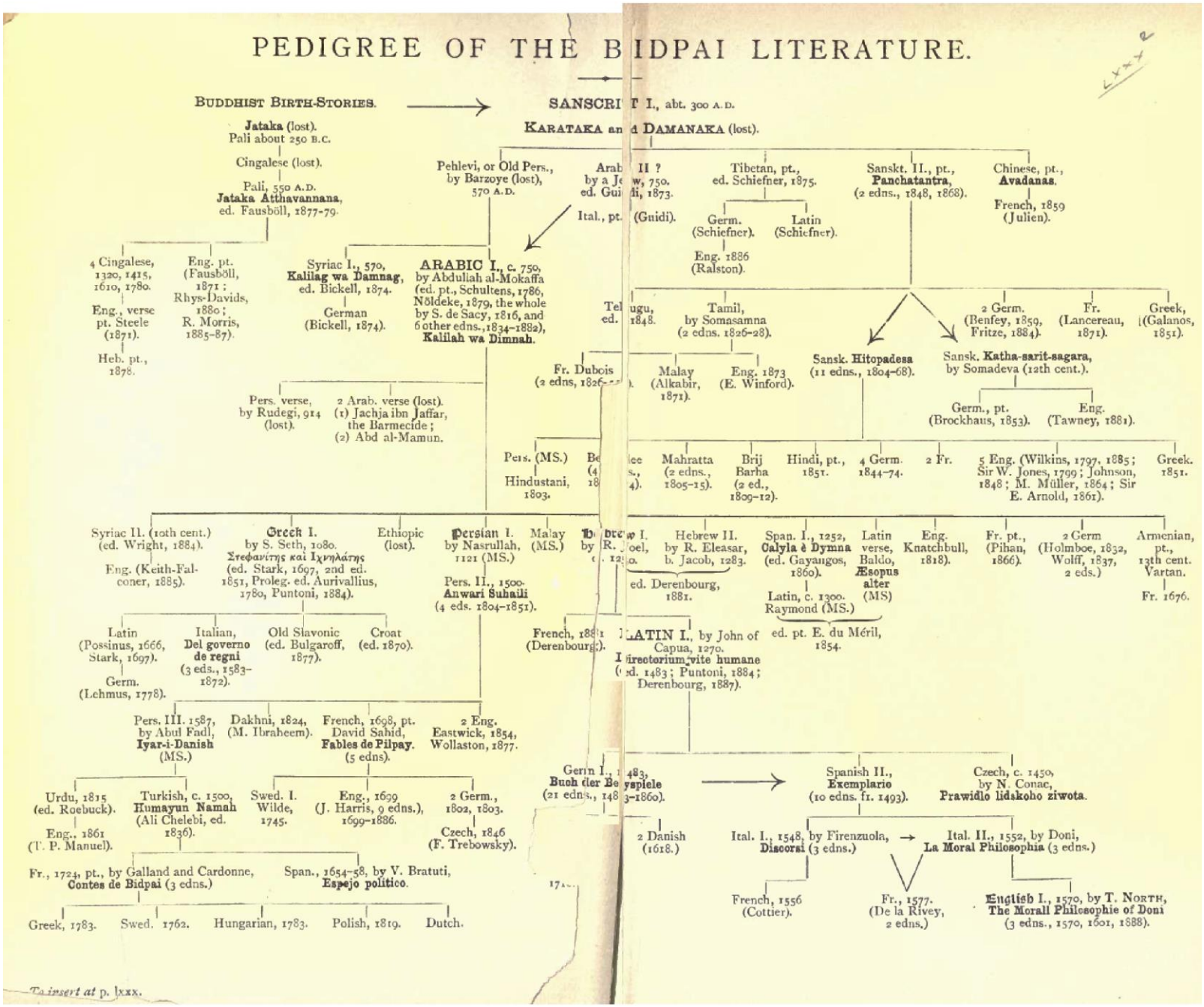
> [They]were, indeed, more widely read in Europe than the Bible. They were not only read in translations, but having been introduced into sermons, homilies, and works on morality, they were improved upon, acclimatized, localized, moralized, till at last it is almost impossible to recognize their Oriental features under their homely disguises[211].

The uniqueness of the fables of *Kalila wa Dimna* rests, more than anything else, on the fact that it appealed to or at least was able to cohabit with all the great religions of the world. Originated in Buddhism, they were adopted by Brahmanism, passed on by Zoroastrianism to Islam, which transmitted it to the Christendom via the mediation of Jews[212]. That they have successfully adjusted to their systems of beliefs, tenaciously evaded their animosity, and curiously embedded themselves into their deep structures attest to their tremendous elasticity and their universal humanistic

[210] Ibid.
[211] Max Muller's lecture "On the Migration of the Fables". Op.cit. Pp, 17-18.
[212] Joseph Jacobs's preface to *The Fables of Bidpai, the Moral Philosophy of Doni.* Op.cit. Pp,xxv-xxxvi.

ethos. It was their moral philosophy, not their story-interest or aesthetic merits that made possible their spontaneous spread. they were accepted and read as a sort of "secular Bible", to use Joseph Jacobs' fine trope[213]. Their load of Oriental wisdom is what commanded them to people of diverse creeds, class factions, gender sensibilities, racial categories, and age groups. This fact speaks volumes when we look at the number of translations, recasts, and adaptations through which they sifted to a wide cross-cultural readership as represented in the figure below:

[213] Ibid. P, xxxviii.



This figure is taken from Joseph Jocobs' *The Fable of Bidpai: the Moral Philosophy of Doni* and shows the wide popularity which *Kalila and Dimna* enjoyed in various forms in the European literary system

This figure clearly shows the wide spread and uncontested popularity of *Kalila wa Dimna*, and a tenacious ability and flexibility to cut across the artistic and sociocultural barriers which few works in world literature are possessed of. Certainly, the vogue which these Eastern fables came into is crucially explicable by the fact that they were viewed as carriers of Oriental wisdom whose appeal and universal applications coupled with the vehicle of their transmission; i.e. their being narrated through the mouths of *"our dumb brethren, beasts"* who could not be suspected of heresy[214], accrued them an unreserved acceptance. Still, however, the figure shows only part of the fables' afterlife. Their actual cultural influence on host cultures has been far greater.

5.2 Wyndham Knatchbull's translation: sermonising the apologue

Of the numerous translations and retranslations of *Kalila wa Dimna*, a fair share was made into English. In the nineteenth century alone, Joseph Jacobs counts more than twenty English translations of the Fables of Bidpai, of which fourteen were based on various Indian offshoots of the work. The earliest and perhaps the most renowned being that of Thomas North, which saw light in 1669 and was entitled *The Moral Philosophy of Doni*. This Joseph Jacobs describes as the English version of an Italian adaptation of a Spanish translation of a Latin version of a Hebrew translation of an Arabic adaptation of the Pahlavi version of the Indian original[215]. Its very title is symptomatic of how far it was removed from the original. Of the many English translators who took an interest in *Kalila wa Dimna*, few ventured to work directly from an Arabic source. One of this last category, Rev. Wyndham Knatchbull, picked

[214] Ibid. P,xxxix.
[215] Ibid. P,xi.

such an interest and based his translation on a de Sacy's collated text of an Arabic manuscript. Immediately upon the appearance of De Sacy's unscrupulous recension in 1816, Knatchbull was quick to take precedence of the ground. His translation was soon completed and appeared a couple of years later.

The name of Wyndham Knatchbull is by no means well established. There is little impressive about his career. The slight renown which he had is owed more to his line of descent from a family of successive baronets or otherwise to his religious status as a cleric than to any special academic contributions. When one bends one's thought to survey his life, one is struck by the scarcity of information about him. Apart from his date of birth and death and his occupation of the chair of Laudian Professor of Arabic between 1823 and 1840, and his service as a rector of Westbere, Kent, we know almost nothing.

How a cleric came to pick an interest in the Oriental *Fables of Pidpai* remains unaccounted for. Except for a tiny preface which he attaches to his translation and in which he elaborates on the circumstances which occasioned his translation, namely the publication of de Sacy's text, the services which the latter offer for the study of the Arabic tongue and the history of Eastern nations, and a few glimpses about the liberties he took to deliver *"the innumerable beauties of [his] model"*, not much is said about the work. But in the few remarks which he makes, one can nonetheless glean the broad outline of his approach.

Knatchbull's remark that he allowed himself *"a certain range of freedom of expression, wherever too close an imitation would have been in some passages*

offensive to a modern ear"[216] is adequately suggestive of what course of action he took in his translation. That he has opted for a domesticating, familiarizing strategy of translation that puts the original in the service of the aesthetic and moral system at home is something that Knatchbull spares us the pain of inductively eliciting from the fabrics of his text; rather he made it his starting point. By "modern ear" which Knatchbull seems at pain to leave unoffended, he compacts a whole gamut of moral beliefs, aesthetic values, literary conventions, and ideological prejudgments which held firm in the eighteenth-century England, and which together form what Lawrence Vinuti calls "canons of accuracy". To the latter Knatchbull brings the foreign text to heel. The foreignness of the foreign text is reduced to a bare minimum and only to the extent that allows it to live, circulate and be digested as an Oriental text, that is richly imbued with Oriental wisdom. Although what Edward Lane has somewhere called "the oriental coarseness" is rarely visited in the Fables of Bidpai, Knatchbull's rendering of the original is typically appropriative. His ultimate goal is to make it fit and live up to the horizon of expectations of his implied readers; in a word, to endow it with the character and naturalness of an English text, as would an English man write it.

Knatchbull follows de Sacy's text loosely. While violence is indeed variably inherent in very act of translation, translators wreak it only occasionally and mostly when they have exhausted other options; but in Knatchbull's case, it is inflicted with such an explicitness and frequency that elevate it to a status quo. Knatchbull's appropriation fits much within Andre Lefebvre's definition of translation as a rewriting. Thus, for example, for some Arabic scholars, like Ibn al-Nadim, *Kalila wa*

[216] Wyndham Knatchbull's preface to his translation: *Kalila and Dimna or the fables of Bidpai*. Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, and Brown, London, 1819. P, ix.

Dimna was often valued less for the seriousness of its purpose as for the colourfulness of its style, and virtuosity of its language[217]; in Knatchbull's version these stylistic features are thwarted and watered down in favour of unencumbered fluency and transparency. The beauty of the style of the original is achieved through such stylistic features and vehicles as parallelism, tautology, hyperbole and detail. In lieu of this, Knatchbull takes recourse to paraphrasing and abridgment. Thus for example the framing episode which involves the circumstances in which the king Anu Shirvan knew about the Indian origin of Kalila and Dimna, and how he instructed his vizier to find someone with special qualities to fetch it to Persia is presented in the original as follows:

> Having learned that there exists in India a book which is the springhead of all literatures, the eponym of all sciences, the guide to all [worldly] exploits and the key to the [good] deeds of the next world and to gaining cognition of it and eschewing its woes, The king then ordered his vizier, Buzerdjmiher, to scout around amongst his subjects for a person of good manners and discreet judgment, who is well versed in the tongue of Persia, having a good command of the language of India, eloquent in both tongues, bent on the acquisition of knowledge, diligently using exploits of literature, possessed of initiative in the pursuance of learning. So he brought him a man, named Barzouyeh, of good manners and sound reason, famed for the craft of medicine, mastering both Persian and Indian languages. When he was presented to him, he kneeled down before him. Addressing him, the king then said oh! Barzouyeh I have chosen you

[217] Robert Irvin. "Arabic Beast Fables". *Journal of Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*. V. 55, 1992. P,40.

> on account of the merits of erudition, prudence and sagaciousness [for which you are well known][218].

This long passage which teems with dreary details that in effect highlight the benefits to be accrued from the acquisition of the Indian book and the qualities of the man who was tasked with acquiring it, is rigorously abridged in Knatchbull's translation and reduced to a bare-bones account that retains only the scaffolding elements of the original. In the translation the above-quoted passage reads:

> [He] got information of a book preserved in India, which contained every species of instruction, together with rules of conduct for the profitable employment of the present, and for a confident and happy anticipation of the future. He therefore commanded his Vizier Buzurdgmiher to look out for some clever and able person amongst his subject, who, possessing a thorough of the Persian and Indian tongues, was distinguished as much for his eagerness as his ability to acquire instruction[219].

In their Arabic usage, tautology and detail are not mere forms of stuffing and unmotivated redundancy. They are ornamental devices whose stylistic effect lends the text its elegance and gracefulness. They are also the expedients through which writers and tale-tellers endow their narratives with a make-believe character and give them a hue of realism. However, Sacrificing the formal features and manner of saying of the original and focusing instead on prose-meaning and interpretation, as J.M. Cohen would put it[220], is Knatchbull's shortcut to make the text readable at home with the least friction and maximal fluency. Knatchbull wrestles with the attempt of

[218] Kitab Kalila wa Dimna. Translated from Pehlavi to Arabic by Ibn al-Muqaffa', collated by Silvestre de Sacy. Royal Printing House, Paris, 1814. P,33. (my translation).
[219] Wyndham Knatchbull. *Kalila and Dimna or the fables of Bidpai*. Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, and Brown, London, 1819. P,33.
[220] Lawrence Vinuti. *The Translator's Invisibility*. Op.cit. P,6.

producing- to draw again on Vinuti- a *"fluent translation [that is] immediately recognizable and intelligible, familiarised, domesticated, not disconcertingly foreign, capable of giving the reader unobstructed access to great thoughts, to what is present in the original"*[221]. Nevertheless, Knatchbull's means to achieve this, that is, abridgment and paraphrasing are not only detrimental to the foreign text's 'manner and form', but are also inadequate and fall short to convey crucial elements of its "thoughts". Thus for example in the foregoing passage many details are left out. Knatchbull crams in general statements minute specificities which in the original add to, e.g., the significance of the book's earthly and afterlife benefits, the qualities required in the person who has been nominated to execute this grave mission, the introduction of Barzouyeh to the king and the solemn address of the latter to the former.

Knatchbull's manipulative treatment of the original is not occasional or limited to isolated instances. Nor is it dictated by linguistic possibilities or impossibilities (untranslatability). For as, Andre Lefevere put it, such instances of manipulation make it clear that the problem lies not with the dictionary, in the sense that there is more to say in the original that cannot be said in the translation. That is, it is not a matter *of "semantic equivalence, but rather one of a compromise between two kinds of poetics, in which the poetics of the dominant system plays the dominant part"*[222]. Knatchbull's approach is therefore systematic, methodical and robust. It is exploited to the hilt even when, ironically enough, some passages in the original explicitly point to the opposite. This, for example, is clearly the case at that juncture in the narrative, when Barzouyeh brought back the book of *Kalila wa Dimna*. He

[221] Ibid. P,5.
[222] Andre Lefevere. "Mother Courage's Cucumbers: Texts, System and refraction in a Thoery of Literature" in *The Translation Studies Reader*. Ed. Lawrence Vinuti. Op.cit. P,242.

begged the king that of all the precious rewards lavished on him he only wished to take a royal robe and see his name singularly mentioned and his life and achievements meticulously dwelt upon in separate chapter in the book. In the original we read something like:

> I only request one thing from the king, may Allah the Almighty elevate him to the highest distinctions [of honour], that he commands his vizier Buzerdjmiher ben Bakhtukan, and make him solemnly pledge to exert his thought and energy, use his power of judgment, and pour out his heart into producing a well-framed belletristic account on my life and exploits, and that he would spare no exaggeration to this effect, to the best of his ability.

Even this express call for details and thoroughness from within the text, and its incarnation in the text, is met by the translator's persistent inclination for abridgment, summation, and paraphrasing. The emphasis on exaggeration and redundancy in relating Barzouyeh's account is a wish expressed by Barzouyeh, granted by the king and thwarted by the translator. In Knatchbull, no mention of it is made in both Barzouyeh's request and in the king's favourable answer to it. Such examples attest to the leeway which Knatchbull allowed himself in appropriating and domesticating this Oriental *no man's* text. In his translation, the foreign text is less *"communicated as inscribed with domestic intelligibilities and interests"*[223]. It is attuned to the demands of fluency and transparency.

But Knatchbull's approach is elastic enough to include what one may call opposed pairs. When fluency and easy readability could no longer be achieved by abridgement or paraphrasing, he takes recourse to addition and elaboration. In a

[223] Lawrence Vinuti. "Translation, Community, Utopia" in *The Translation Studies Reader*. Ed. Lawrence Vinuti. Op.cit. P,468.

dialogue that takes place between Barzouyeh and an Indian scholar whose collaboration gave him access to the Indian king treasury in which the book *of Kalila wa Dimna* was preserved, the scholar vents his witticism, and tells his interlocutor that a man's good judgment is typified in eight qualities:

> Sound understanding in a man manifests itself in eight qualities: by Charity; by truly understanding one's worth and preserving it; by obeying kings and seeking their satisfaction; by preserving one's secrets and minding about divulging them to a friend; by being mannerly and maintaining a courteous tongue once among the king's retinues; by guarding one's and others' secrets; by being watchful of one's words that one must only speak about matters from which no unpleasant consequences are likely to follow; and lastly, by refraining, in public gatherings, from speaking unless spoken to[224].

In Knatchbull's translation this passage is rewritten as such:

> A man of sound understanding is distinguished by eight qualities: by courteous and affable behaviour; by a knowledge of himself, united with a strict and impartial observation of his own heart; by submission to lawful authority; and an endeavour to conciliate the good will of those who are in power; by great circumspection in his confidential communications; by becoming language and irreproachable conduct at the courts of kings; by secrecy, where his own interest is at stake and fidelity in his engagements with others; by moderation in his discourse, so that no unpleasant consequence

[224] Kitab Kalila wa Dimna. Translated from Pehlavi to Arabic by Ibn al-Muqaffa', collated by Silvestre de Sacy. Op.cit. P,36. (my translation)

> may arise from any hasty or intemperate word; and lastly, by a prudent reserve and modest diffidence in delivering his opinion[225].

Obviously, a comparison between a verbatim rendering of the original and the English rendition strikes us with Knatchbull's scope of free hand and misprision. It clearly shows how lightly Knatchbull touches upon the original. For example, the word *charity*, the equivalent for the Arabic term *al-rifq*, is dispensed with and replaced by a three-word expression which is much off the mark. The second quality which implies in Arabic gaining cognition of one's true value and giving oneself one's due so that one may neither be carried away by conceit as to be arrogant nor steep low as to be too humble. This idea is only partially and rather insipidly conveyed in the phrase "by knowing himself"; but "united with a strict and impartial observation of his own heart" is the translator's addition. Whereas the third quality which reveals a man's sound understanding is measurable in Ibn al-Muqaffa's version by his devotion to the service of kings. The word *kings* is obscured in the semantic field of power and rendered as "lawful authority". As to the phrase: "an endeavour to conciliate the good will of those who are in power", it has no antecedent in the Arabic text, and is a mere contribution of the translator. Thus one cannot help feeling that the image which Knatchbull ultimately draws about a man of sound understanding is not the same as that which Ibn al-Muqaffa' wraps up as the archetype of a member of an Oriental king's retinue; it corresponds more to the model of the nineteenth-century English gentleman as made voguish by such novelists as Jane Austen, Henry Fielding and others.

[225] Wyndham Knatchbull. *Kalila and Dimna or the fables of Bidpai*. Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, and Brown, London, 1819. Pp,37-8.

Another important aspect in which Knatchbull improves the original to read fluently at home is his handling of obscene passages in the foreign text. References to erotica in the original are systematically allayed. Lacking none of the religious sensibilities of a priest, and least of all his religious discipline, Knatchbull reduces all mentions of sexuality to a faint mumbling. In the story of the Lion and Bull is nested a subplot which follows from a dialogue between the two jackals, Kalila and Dimna. The subplot is occasioned by Dimna's untoward curiosity to inquire about their sovereign, the lion. Kalila found the inquiry more of a nose-poking gesture and advised her against further meddling, lest she may expose herself to the fate of the carpenter's monkey. In the Arabic version we read that the latter, desiring to imitate his master in splitting a piece of wood, placed himself on the log of wood, as the carpenter does; but forgetting about the fissure he had made in the log, his testicles dangled into it. By some mistake, the fissure suddenly closed up and his testicles were caught up inside. The monkey passed out from pain; and when the carpenter returned and found him still entrapped, he beat him more severely that the pain he experienced from the wood seemed milder to him. This is how the story reads in Arabic, and its moral load is hardly mistakable. The dysphemism of the original is diluted in the translation by the use of a more neutral word, "tail" in lieu of the *offending* "testicles"; but not without incurring some loss in the moral weight of the story. Intrusively poking one's nose into people's private affairs is posited in the story as a punishable act, the sereneness of which is only perceivable on the basis of the analogy with the intensity of the pain experienced by the monkey. Thus, Knatchbull's euphemism for one element of speech in the story had also the corollary of alleviating the moral bearing of the story.

Likewise, in the story of the hermit and the thief, an account is given of a hermit who was deceived by a thief. Disguising himself as an admirer of the hermit's learning, the thief stole from him a magnificent robe that was offered to him as a gift by a sovereign. Once he realized the trick played upon him, he went out to track him. In the search after the trickster, he became witness of marvellous stories of several ill-fated victims in which, the victims, in each, were alone to blame for the misfortune that befell them. One of these stories involves a woman who had a maid to attend to her. The maid became fond of a man who was frequenting their house. Now the woman became jealous of the love affair between them, and determined to ruin it. Thus she devised a scheme to poison the man. In the Arabic text, the unfolding of events is given a comic travestying twist. As the man turned up, he was served wine till he got inebriated and fell asleep, attended by his mistress. The woman then, patiently waiting to bide her time, was intent to administer poison to the sleeping man through his anus, using a cane. Just as she was executing her plan, the man suddenly farted and blew out the poison into her nose, and the woman instantly died of her own mischief. Unmistakably, the Arabic version contains manifest indelicacies. With the religious leanings of a Christian devotee, Knatchbull seeks them out with rigour, cancels out their effect, and incorporates them into a normative discourse. Thus he comes up with this light-sounding version:

> [The] monk… arrived at a town, where…he took up his quarters in the house of a woman who had a young girl in her service…. The young woman having formed a sincere and strong attachment, her mistress had determined by the murder of the lover on the very night on which the monk arrived…. For this purpose, when the lover came to visit his future bride, the woman placed before him an intoxicating liquor, which having drunk of, he soon fell into a sound

> sleep: she then took a reed, and was in the act of blowing the poison with which she had previously filled it into his ear, when suddenly and unintentionally catching her breath, the poison returned into her own throat, and caused instant death[226].

Compared to the original version, the story of the hermit underwent irrecoverable adulteration in translation. From being a moralizing fable intended to impart a tip of worldly advice; that he who sowed the seeds of mischief reaps the harvest of his deeds, it was watered down to sound like a homily which any member of a church organization, like Knatchbull, can preach with ease to a Sunday congregation. Knatchbull tiptoes around obscene elements. He softens the secretive love affair between the man and his mistress and refers to the latter as his "lawful future bride", which has no basis in the original, as if Knatchbull's priestly lips cannot utter an illegal union. Also, when the man fell tightly asleep from intoxication his mistress slept by his side, which reveals the cordial and corporeal involvement of the couple. Not unintentionally, this detail escapes the notice of the translator. The more offending elements in the story, which in the original lend it a comical air; namely the place through which the woman planned to administer poison to the man and the latter's spontaneous reaction, were subjected to significant changes. The man's *anus* became the woman's *ear*, and the gout of flatulence which the man sent out and was the cause of the woman's instant death was trimmed off into the woman "unintentionally catching her breath". Thus at Knatchbull's hands the hermit's story was categorically altered and disfigured to fit into his ideological hues and those of his implied readers. While in the original, the fable was weighted to convey earthly

[226] Wyndham Knatchbull. *Kalila and Dimna or the fables of Bidpai*. Op.cit. P,105.

advice, an example of Oriental sagacity that stresses the deserved punishment of the treacherous; in Knatchbull's translation it is given a religious twist that can feed well into a sermon. The religious bearing of the story in translation is most evident in the use of the fuzzy-match *monk* instead of *hermit* for the Arabic word *Nassik*. Undeniably, both Arabic and English glossaries agree on a variance in meaning between the two words. Oxford dictionary for example defines a *monk* as "a member of a religious community of men typically living under vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience; and a *hermit* as *"A person living in solitude as a religious discipline".* But in none of the synonyms which it provides figures the word *hermit*. In the Arabic dictionary of Ibn Mnadhur, the term *Rahib* or monk is defined as a person devoting himself to worshipping in a in a minaret, and hence the close association in Arabic usage between being a monk and the specific religion under whose auspices the profession of monks is established; namely Christianity and Judaism. Ibn Mandhur further cites Ibn Ishaq saying "monks, having witnessed their kings behaving in manners they could not acquiesce to, confined themselves in spires and minarets, [a practice which] they have invented for themselves and willingly committed themselves to its fulfilment". Thus, to be a monk is to vow oneself to worship and chastity in a monastery or a convent, but to be a hermit is to give up oneself to a life of austerity and chastity for some religious purposes. Umayya Ibn Abi al-Salt, the famous pre-Islamic poet, who by some accounts was expecting himself to be announced as the promised prophet, was a hermit but not a monk; and William of Gellone was not only a mere hermit, but a devoted monk who was canonized a saint in 1066. A hermit is a monk irrespective of a specific religion; a monk is a hermit as a function of a specific religion. Of course one cannot imagine that Knatchbull was unaware of the shade of meaning that sets apart a monk from a hermit; but only that

by choosing the one over the other, he wanted to endow his translation with a colour of familiarity, a degree of intelligibility, and a sense of ‘feel-at-home’ that enables the foreign text to circulate and be received as a naturalized origin.

6 Sirat ‘Antara: the epic of the Arabic Noble Savage

6.1 Text and context

Sirat ‘Antara is another Arabic pseudo-narrative that at once enjoyed wide popularity among the masses, and provoked the ire of the custodians of high culture. As with other siras, ‘Antara is a work of *“heroic adventure and romance primarily concerned with depicting the personal prowess, military exploits, innate virtues and incomparable nobility of its heroes”*[227]. It bases its narrative frame on actual historical figures and fashions its plot on a historical period whose fraught events, heroic characters and high-minded ideals became for later posterity reminiscent of their glorious past, indicative of their chivalric ethics and expressive of the heroic acts of their ancestors.

Sirat ‘Antara is a forced union of historical fragments from the life and exploits of the pre-Islamic poet, ‘Antara ibn Shaddad, and legendary elements and stretches of imaginations that surrounded this figure. Of ‘Antara, the real person and author of one of the most celebrated odes, which makes along with six others the *Mu‘allaqat* or *Suspended Odes* that are said to have been, on account of their poetic merits, written in gold and hung on the walls of Ka’bah, little is known. Of the few sources which provide exiguous details about him, the earliest and most reliable are found in Ibn Qutaiba’s *al-Shi‘r wa al-Shu‘ara’* and al-Isphahani’s *al-Aghani*. In these rich philological compendiums, both authors are at one in their bottom line account. We learn through them that ‘Antara was born a mulatto, of black slave mother called Zabiba, and a chieftain of the tribe of ‘Abs named ‘Amro b. Shaddad; that it was then

[227] Peter Heath. “Other Siras and Pupular Narratives” in *Arabic Popular Literature in the Post-Classical Period.* Op.cit. P, 319.

a custom among the Arabs to treat children of slave maids as slaves; and that he became involved in a love affair with a damsel, 'Abla, which was hampered by his Negroid descent; and finally that 'Antara earned both his freedom and the hand of his beloved by dint of his martial prowess and poetic merits. Such is, in brief, the composite image that one can draw about this renowned pre-Islamic poet, warrior and lover of 'Abs. How this sketchy story which is told in tantalizing brevity in both books evolved into an epic that runs for several thousands of pages, when it evolved into the epic shape, and at whose hands, etc. is still subject to unsettled speculations.

As A. J. Arberry notes, alone among the authors of *Mu'allaqat* 'Antara fired popular imagination to such an extent that he became the hero of a vast repertory of folk-legend and the famous *Romance of 'Antar*[228]. Yet much as it delighted large audiences, it did not seem to trigger off their intrigue respecting its origin. sirat 'Antara has no claimed author and no definite point of origin. For those among whom it flourished and was appreciated the most, that is, the auditors to whom it was lively recited, the reciters who eked out a living by its recitation, and scribes who churned out copies for them etc. they were only enthralled by its riveting content but hardly concerned themselves with inquiries about its origins. As to questions of when it was composed, who composed it, was it written by a singular author or was it the product of collective authorship, was it the creative composition of an individual or was it a loose matter of oral tradition that gained a fixed identity at later times, etc. such questions were of secondary importance. Even in the more learned circles of classical Arabic scholarship the origins of this work, as the work itself, stimulated only a light interest. And much of this interest was directed to not tracing out the genealogy of the

[228] A. J. Arberry. *The Seven Odes*. London: the Mackmillan Company, 1957. P, 153.

work, or to a critical study of its artistry, but to its renunciation altogether. Ibn al-Athir for example levels drastic criticism against the sira genre and crams together its most renowned prototypes as no more than ornamented lies and fabrications that appeal only to the uninitiated and the ignorant.

> As for what the common folk [‘amma] mention regarding [the hero] al-Battal in the epic [sıra] attributed to Dalhimma [= Dhat al-Himma], the amir Abd al-Wahhab and the qadi ‘Uqba, it is nothing but lies, falsehood, stupid writings, complete ignorance and shameless prattle which is only in demand by fools and lowly ignoramuses. The same is true of the fabricated epic of Antar al-Absı and likewise the Sıra [Life of the Prophet Muhammad] by [Abul-Hasan] al-Bakrı and [Ahmad] al-Danaf, and others. The forged lies in the Sıra of al-Bakrı are more wicked and offensive than those of others because their fabricator has crossed into the realm of what the Prophet– Peace and God’s blessings upon him– said: ‘And whosoever purposefully tells lies about me, his place [on the Day of Judgement] shall be in the fires [of hell]’[229].

Generally, the unworthiness of siras and other forms of popular prose was seen by these scholars to rest on their fictitious nature, as creations of untamed imagination and forgeries that impart no truths; and on their lacking any practical value or utility function that one can glean from them such as a useful message or lesson, as their tales are intended by their authors to distract not to instruct. While the religious leanings are very explicit in the unfavourable judgments of Ibn al-Athir and other medieval scholars, Ibn Abd Rabih tried to give them a stronger religious twist that make them, in effect, subject a crucial religious injunction that is expressed in the verse 23:3: *‘When they hear idle talk (laghw) they turn away from it’*. Although the

[229] Quoted in Dwight f. Reynolds’ “popular prose in the post-classical period”. Op.cit. P,260.

immediate denotation of this verse is to the indulgence in music and singing, Ibn Abd Rabih is in earnest to overstretch it beyond its intelligible reference and bend it for purely polemical purposes.

> This verse was revealed only about people who were purchasing books of siyar [legendary histories] and tales of the ancients, and comparing these to the Koran, saying that they were better than it[230].

What is arresting about this quote is that it implicates into Ibn Abd Rabih's judgment a historical figure that is heavily laden with guilt. The implicit reference here, which Ibn Abd Rabih abstains from disclosing, is to al-Nadhr ibn al-Harith who, according to Arabic sources, made light of the prophet's revelation, claiming that the tales he knows about such kings as Rostam and Isfandiyar are way more captivating. The wilful association of siras with this eponym of apostasy, though lacking any foundational basis, is certainly intended to give a personal judgment and prejudice the strength and decidedness of a religious injunction.

Surprisingly, no mention of sirat 'Antara is made in Ibn al-Nadim's *Fehrist*. On the face of it, one can only imagine two possibilities that might explain the reason why this bulky book of popular fiction might have escaped the notice of a man of encyclopaedic knowledge as Ibn al-Nadim: either this work was circulating only orally in the form of loosely connected folktales, or it was written sometime after his death; but in both cases there is no reason to believe that the absence of this book from his fastidious inventory implies the writer's own judgment on the literary or cultural value of the book, for the simple fact that Ibn al-Nadim did not build his catalogue of works and authors on the basis of his personal taste, but tried to provide a

[230] Ibid. P,253.

useful reference index for customers, traders of books and men of letters, irrespective of his own opinion about them. Nevertheless, passing hints to sirat 'Antara continued to surface now and again, throwing only a dim light on this archetype of sira genre. One such hint is found in the autobiographical account of a Jewish convert; Samaw'al al-Maghribi's *Ifham al-Yahud*. In this work he evokes his reminiscences as a young boy, when, being eager to know about ancient times and the events of previous centuries, he used to while away long hours reading stories and tales, anecdotes and apologues. Then his curiosity grew keener in evening tales and fictional stories [al-asmar wa al-khurafat-al-tiwal], which led him later to immerse himself deeper into great compilations of tales [al-dawawın al-kibar] such as the *Book of the Tales of Antar* [dıwan akhbar Antar], and *the Book of the Tales of Dhat al-Himma* and *al-Battal*, and *the Tales of Alexander the Two-Horned*, and *the Tales of the Phoenix*, and *the Tales of al-Taraf ibn Ludhan*, and others[231]. And thus it became clear to him while he was studying these works, that most of them were written by historians, and then he began to seek out true stories [akhbar sahıha] and to veer his interest to books of history.

Although there is nothing in al-Maghrib's recollections that is explicitly disapprobative of the works of sira or demeaning of their artistic value, however one cannot fail to note that exposure to them is described by al-Maghrib as an experience typical of boyhood, and that once one comes of age, it become more befitting for him give up fiction and engage in truly worthwhile enterprises such as history where one deals with truths not fancies, facts not bouts of imagination. And thus it becomes clear that even when scholars, such al-Maghrib, appear to be more appreciative of sira

[231] Ibid. P,254.

literature, they could not dispose entirely of their prejudices vis-à-vis some forms of popular culture. Even when this prejudice was less informed by religious hues, evaluation of fictional texts on the basis of the opposite pair of truth and falsehood retained its vitality, and as long as in effect, they relegated them to secondary positions.

One last instance regarding sporadic references to sirat ‘Antara acquired particular significance owing to its vague allusion to a possible author of the work. This is found in Ibn Abi Usaibi‘a’s *Tabaqat al-Atibba’* in which a man named Abu Mu’ayyad Mohamed Ibn al-Sai’gh who lived in the twelfth century is said to have been known by the name of al-‘Antari. Although the details that are given about his figure make it clear that the association of this man with the name of ‘Antara is due to the fact that this young poet worked at a certain time in his life as scribe who collected tales and earned his living by producing copies of sirat ‘Antara, some critics took this allusion at face-value and suggested that he might be the original writer of the work.

Passing and sporadic are the allusions to sira ‘Antara that one can glean from the annals and chronicles of classical Arabic scholars; and they generally range from outspoken disdain toward the book, usually couched in religious register and overstretched exegesis, and reserved and timid reception. But, as with other works of popular literature, it is not in the snobbish circles of academia that sirat ‘Antara spread and flourished, but in the strategic locus of popular culture; in marketplaces, coffee shops and occasional festivities that it found the widest popularity and warmest applauds. Of this popularity we have ample testimonies of many Western scholars who travelled to the east and experienced first-hand its recitation in public

performances. And here again Edward Lane is cited as an assertive authority that produced the most vivid account on sira recitations in one of its most thriving places: in Egypt.

> The reciter generally seats himself upon a small stool on the mastabah, or raised seats, which is built against the front of the coffe-shop: some of his auditors occupy the rest of that seat, others arrange themselves upon the mastabahs of the opposite sides of the narrow street, and the rest sit upon stools or benches made of palm-sticks; most of them with the pipe in hand; some sipping their coffee; and all highly amused, not only with the story, but also with the lively and dramatic manner of the narrator. The reciter receives a trifling sum of money from the keeper of the coffee-shop, for attracting customers: his hearers are not obliged to contribute anything for his remuneration: many of them give nothing; few give more than five or ten faddahs.[232]

Lane's unfailing eye for details leaves little room for his readers' imagination. In his description, sira recitation is presented as having the elements of the cult. It is not only a mere matter of popular work that is performed in front of a public, but of a typically Oriental work whose performance is curiously dependent on the fulfilment of a series of rituals. Here rituals are not only those which obtain in the circumstances of speech production (i.e. of recitation) as Foucault would call them, e.g. the solemn organization of the setting, the reciter seating himself, upon a raised *mastabah*, the auditors arranging themselves around him, the allowance of some indulgences such as pipe smoking and coffee; but also are those which derive from or characterize the manner of recitation. Not all siras are recited in the same way; some are sung with the

[232] Edward Lane. *Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians*. Op.cit. Pp,397-98.

accompaniment of musical instruments such as that of Abu Zayd al-Hilali whose reciters are called *poets* [*sha'ir*]; others such as the siras of 'Antara and Dhahir Baybars are narrated and their narrators are called story-tellers [mo*haddith*]. Usually, these reciters, whether they are poets or story-tellers and whether they recite from memory or they read out from a text, derive their appellation from their exclusive specialisation in the recitation of specific siras. Thus, for example, a reciter is called a 'Antari, or a Hilali or a Dhahiri in view of making one of these siras his exclusive subject of narration. Lane groups their reciters into classes of which the most numerous is that of *sho'ara'*, and the next in point of number are those who are particularly and solely distinguished by the appellation of Mohadditheen[233]. Of this last class, Lane counted almost thirty in Cairo alone, while the least numerous are the 'Antarees, a subclass of the Muhadditheen, whose number, if he was rightly informed, was not amounting to more than six.

Lane's detailed account of siras' public narration clearly reveals the recognition and uncontested popularity of the sira genre among the less educated and lower orders of society. Although his observations are confined in place and time to the mid-eighteenth century Cairo, these cultural practices also prevailed, more or less in similar forms and over a long period, in many parts in North Africa, Turkey and the Levant. The dexterity in which they were performed and the wide acceptance with which they were met obviously attest to the idea that they were regulated by longstanding conventions that have been in the making long before they became visible to Lane's naked eye. In some parts of North African they continued well into the late twentieth century, even when new forms of mass entertainment and culture

[233] Ibid. P,406.

industry were made at everybody's disposal at no cost by the tremendous advance in media technology. The actual sira performance, though very rare, are not quite extinct. They still find some zeal in a persevering public performer, and some withered attention among handfuls of scattered auditors. As Remk Kruk notes, *sirat Bani Hilal* is still occasionally recited live in Egypt, possibly also in Tunisia, and many siras including 'Antar were read until recently in their traditional context without any interference from 'cultural heritage' bodies at Dar al-Barud, a somewhat run-down orchard near the Kutubiyya in Marrakesh. There a story-teller named Si Milud "*daily read the popular siyar, 'Antara among them, for over thirty years to a partly illiterate audience ever since he took over from his predecessor*"[234].

The aversion which Arabic medieval scholars showed toward *sirat 'Antar* found its inversed parallel in the dazzling pleasure and delight which it delivered to large Arabic audiences, and was exploited by public performers who eked out their living by it. The popular appeal, which it invoked among both was arresting to many who eyed it closely; "*to the Arabs",* states Terrick Hamilon who was the first to translate it to a European language, *"it is their standard work, which excites in them the wildest emotions; even read by some, firm in the memory of others; but listened to with avidity by all*"[235]. Citing in a footnote Burkardt's letter to him, Hamilton further adds that when the latter "*was reading a portion of [sirat 'Antar] to the Arabs, they were in ecstasies of delight, but at the same time so enraged at his erroneous pronunciation, that they actually tore the sheets out of his hands*"[236]. Brushing aside the unmistakable Orientalist overtones which spice both Hamilton's statement and his

[234] Remke Kruk. "Sira 'Antara Ibn Shaddad" in *Arabic Literature in the Post-Classical Period*. Op.cit. P,302.
[235] Terrick Hamilton's preface to his 2nd Volume of his translation: *Antar:A Bedoueen Romance*. London: John Murray, 1820. P,xv.
[236] Ibid.

cited authority, one can still elicit in them grains of truth evidencing the spectacular popularity of this popular romance. Claude Mckay goes a step further and describes the fame which *sirat 'Antar* enjoys in North Africa as:

> One of the big surprises of my living in North Africa was the discovery that even the illiterate Moor is acquainted with the history and poetry of Antar. Often in the Arab cafés, when I was especially enthralled by the phrasing of a song, I was informed that it was an Antari. When I was first introduced as a poet, there was not a suspicion of surprise among the natives. Instead, I was surprised by their flattering remarks: *Mezzian! Mezzian!* Our greatest poet, Anrtar, was a Negro[237].

For someone who is well acquainted with the 'Moors' and soaked in their poetic and musical sensibilities, this quote must reveal some readymade clichés and stereotypes unexpected of a seminal figure in the Harlem Renaissance, who shares with them, among other things, the condition of subalternity. Obviously, Claude Mckay's experience as a man of colour does not seem to have helped him much in understanding the cultural situation of those who have been, like himself, reduced to the periphery. Otherwise there is much more enthralling about the phrasing of the Moors' music than 'Antari songs, more plentiful poets in their literary tradition than 'Antar, and more flattering expressions in their language than Mezzian! Mezzian! Stripped of their hyperbolic tinges, Mckay's words can be taken to point to the established fame of the works of or about 'Antara among the Moors.

Since the tenth century, 'Antara has become the hero of Arabic imagination. He *"is the Arab Hercules, whose strength and valour have become proverbial. He is the*

[237] Quoted in A. J. Arberry's *The Seven Odes.* Op.cit. Pp, 164-65.

personification of Arab manly virtue, stoically enduring hardship, generous, protector of the helpless and a paragon of knightly skills"[238]. In common usage, his name has become emblematic of chivalry virtues which the Arabs hold high in regard. Philip Hitti notes that the name of 'Antar "*has lived through the ages as the paragon of Bedouin heroism and chivalry*"[239]. To give oneself the title of a 'Antari is, as C.W. Doughty observed, is to set an example of honesty and loyalty[240].

Nonetheless, none of these virtues were adequate to command sirat Antar for the appreciation and critical contemplation of Arabic scholars, both classical and modern. Not even the prophet's allusion to 'Antar as the only Arab from pagan times whom he wished he had met seemed enough to deliver this work from disregard and neglect [241]. Such a delivery was only achieved when this work of popular romance cut across to Europe and was transplanted into its literary soil.

In the year 1799, an Austrian Orientalist and diplomat, Baron Joseph von Hammer Purgstall left for Istanbul to serve in his country's embassy. And given the seriousness of his mission as an interpreter to the internuncio and later as secretary in the campaign of the English and Turks against the French in Egypt, von Hammer included in his busy agenda obtaining an original manuscript of *The Arabian Nights* at the behest of his friend, then minister of foreign affairs, Baron Thugut. He diligently scouted Turkish libraries and bookstores, but instead of *the Nights* he came perchance across some portions of another Oriental work: *sirat 'Antar*.

[238] Remke Kruk. "Sira 'Antara Ibn Shaddad" Op.cit. P,292.
[239] Cederic Dover. "The Black Knight" *Phylon.* Vol. 15, No. 1 (1st Qtr., 1954), P. 41.
[240] Ibid.
[241] Abu al-Faraj al-Isphahani. Al-aghani. V XIII. Op.cit. P,172.

'Antar Ibn Shaddad *"was already known to European Orientalists as a famous pre-Islamic warrior and poet, the composer of one of the long poems of the famous Mu'allaqat anthology"*[242], but his sira was only dimly acquainted to them. Until the publication of *Mines de l'Orient* in 1802, it was hardly heard of in Europe. Among the few allusions to the work, the earliest are found in Sir William Jones' *Commentaries on Asiatic Poetry*. Although Jones admitted seeing only some volumes of the original, his reception of the sira 'Antar was highly favourable.

> There is nothing graceful or sublime which cannot be found in this work. So transcendent is its style, so flexible and bold, that I do not hesitate to place it among the supreme poems… 'Antar verse is lofty, forceful, passionate and sublime. It also shows an unmistakable beauty of arrangement and thought[243].

In the absence of the work itself, Jones' words had only an immediate effect and remained a mere impression of an Orientalist of note whose judgment, though unquestionable, still needed to be put to the test. But when von Hammer laid hands on an Arabic manuscript and lodged it in the Imperial Library of Vienne, Jones' judgment served as a horizon of expectation in the light of which this work was to be received and evaluated. Von Hammers task was by no means easy. In Istanbul he found only shreds of the original, and the difficulty to obtain wholesome versions proved invincible, "*owing to the unwillingness of those who live by reading stories in the coffee-houses, to part with them, and the expense of transcribing is very heavy*"[244].

[242] Peter Heath. *The Thirsty Sword: Sira 'Antar and the Arabic Popular Epic*. University of Utah Press, 1996. Pp,3-4.
[243] Quoted in Cederic Dover's "The Black Knight". Op.cit. P,48.
[244] Quoted by Terrick Hamilton in the preface to *Antar:A Bedoueen Romance*. V. II. Op.cit. P,XX.

Not until he arrived in Cairo did he manage to obtain six large volumes which constitute the complete text of *sira 'Antar*. As he delivered up the manuscripts to Vienne in 1802, he appended them with a brief note sketching the circumstances of obtaining the work, the latter's importance in providing a fuller image about the manners and customs of the pre-Islamic Arabs, the loftiness and gracefulness of its style as well as von Hammer's future plan to make this otherwise voluminous popular romance accessible to Western readership in some abridged form.

> This work, which must be reckoned as very instrumental towards learning the manners, dispositions, and habits of the Arabs, seems to us more interesting than the celebrated "Thousand and One Nights"; not indeed with respect to the fictions, in which this work almost entirely fails; but as a picture of true history. There is nothing about genii, magicians, or talismans, or fabulous animals; and if, indeed, the bravery of the hero, who, unwounded, slays hundreds and thousands of the foe, or the swiftness of his generous steed, that outstrips the wind, appear incredible; these are rather the results of a hyperbolic style, than to be considered fabulous figures, which never, in the opinion of Orientals, invalidates the truth of history. The whole of this work may be esteemed as a faithful account of the principal tribes of the Arabs, and particularly of the tribe of Abs, from which sprung Antar, in the time of Nushirvan, King of Persia, more faithful in painting manners than in describing events.
>
> The style is often flowery and beautiful, mixed with poetry, frequently in a common diction, and sometimes the augmentations and more recent interpolations plainly prove the adulterations of the copyist. (What would that light of oriental literature, Sir William Jones, have thought of the style and merits of this work, who only treated the fourteenth volume, in his Commentaries on Asiatic Poetry). It chiefly treats of the

> love of Antar and Abla, and also of their family, down to the death of the hero.
>
> This work, which is generally called a romance of chivalry, though impossible to be translated, owing to the number of volumes, may be gleaned; every part appertaining to history, should be carefully collected, and nothing relative to manners omitted. Such, with God's help, we intend to publish[245].

By this time the fame of *The Nights* reached towering heights in Europe. It had run into several editions and been translated into many European languages; it gained its discoverer, Galland, wide celebrity, thrust him to eminence, and attracted the attention of European readers to the riches of the Oriental tale. When von Hammer stumbled upon his find in a recently evacuated Egypt from Bonaparte, he had every good reason to compare himself to Galland. Not only did the two men pursue similar careers in the East and both served in the capacity of diplomats, but they also gave the West some of the best treasures of Oriental literature. Von Hammer was aware of how firmly established was the name of Galland, and of the difficulty of contending with him on a ground which he was already in possession of; and therefore he was intent to hit a different note. As comparison with the widely celebrated *Nights* was bound to haunt readers and critics of Oriental literature in the West, he made sure to demonstrate that his text, *sirat 'Antar*, was a ground-breaking specimen which, though not amounting in significance to the former in fictionality, is superior to it in one important aspect; in presenting a faithful image of the history of the Arabs in

[245] Ibid. Pp. xvi-xviii.

pagan times. Von Hammer thus appeals more to ethnographers than to pastime seekers even though his text is not lacking in attraction for the latter type either.

Von Hammer's note provided the first first-order insight into this Arabic epic and paved the way for a new mode of its receptivity. But having busied himself with other prodigious enterprises, including a translation of the Persian poet Hafez which was published in nearly a thousand pages, and the preparation for a seven-volume study on the history of Arabic Literature, this work lingered unattended to, in the shelf of a Vienne library, for almost two decades of undisturbed hibernation, until it was awoken by the eager curiosity of Scottish Orientalist, Terrick Hamilton, who produced the first translation of the work into a European language in 1819.

6.2 Terrick Hamilton's translation: reframing reality and romanticising the past

Like von Hammer, Hamilton was also a diplomat. With the expertise of a late servant in the East Indian Company (from which he resigned in 1813), he came to serve as the Oriental Secretary to the British Embassy at Constantinople and became the ambassador's right-hand man. When he was not dutifully engaged in reporting to the British Foreign Office at home the daunting insurgencies and turbulences that broke out in a then disintegrating Ottoman Empire, or negotiating commercial navigation and other power discussions relating to the Eastern Question, he devoted his leisure time to useful purposes and delved into the concealed treasures of Arabic literature. One of these treasures which he set out to make public is none other than that which von Hammer only tantalizingly disclosed: *sirat 'Antar*. This text however

exited in two recensions; the lengthier, which von Hammer had access to, is called Hijaziah; and the abridged, which Hamilton translated, is known as Shamiah. In addition to considerable variances in details of the plot, sequence of events, style and length, the Hijaziah version opens up with a genealogical chronicle of the prophet Ibrahim which does not figure in the abridged version. But the already abridged was not abridged enough, and one of the toughest challenges which Hamilton had to wrestle with, in addition to finding the text itself, was how to render a work that runs for several thousands of pages and that was chiefly intended in its place of origin for oral recitation and whose cessions of recitation take almost a year, into a digest for a Western-style Western-trained reader.

> The translation, now made public, was undertaken from a copy procured at Aleppo, by the kind exertions of Mr. Barker. It proved to be a very valuable work, being comprised in a smaller form than any other as yet sent to Europe. In general, the copies are bound up in numerous volumes of various sizes, from forty to twenty or less, exhibiting a mass to appal the most enterprising translators, well aware, as he must be, that whatever his determination might effect in making a translation of so ponderous a work, he could not expect any corresponding success in printing it for general perusal.
>
> The difficulty, and still the greater difficulty of abridging a work of so curious a texture, must have prevented anyone, acquainted with its merits, on venturing on so arduous a task, and not until the translator saw it in so compressed a shape, did he ever anticipate the possibility of putting it into English.
>
> Whilst he was engaged on the work, he had the advantage of receiving from Mr. Burkardt a letter in which he accounted for the abridged state of that copy of Antar, stating that the voluminous work had been

> curtailed of many of its repetitions and much of its poetry by some learned inhabitants of Syria[246].

Obviously, the defensive and self-exonerating note in this quote cannot be lost on no one. Hamilton seems at pain to justify his choices; first, for having taken the risk to translate this massive text, for having chosen to base his translation on the abridged version, and finally, supported by the recognized authority of J. L. Burkardt, proceeding to make clear that abridgment was not forcibly inflicted upon the text by the translator, but is an inherent quality of the text itself, a result of the intervention of some learned men of Syria to trim off the text of its redundancies and some undesirable interspersions of poetry. Such justifications may sound normal, and in some cases it becomes incumbent on translators to explain away their actions and decision-making strategies, particularly when translations are felt to provoke reservations and unreceptive fidgets. Typically, justifications and statements of reasons are given in advance, not in retrospective; addressed to an incognito public, not to well-defined recipients. In Hamilton's case, however, it is the other way round; the passage quoted above is excerpted from his preface to the second volume of his translation which was published in 1920, a year after the first volume, the feeler, had wormed its way to the public of readers. The publisher was so eager to get the first set of the work to the market that he could not wait for the translator to affix it with a preface; instead, he hastily wrapped up a short introduction that only tiptoed around the work and left the room wide for others to insinuate. The appearance of the first volume in print "*caught the jealous eye of von Hammer-Purgstall, who lost no time in*

[246] Ibid. Pp. xx-xxi

publishing a feline review in the Jahrbucher der Literatur of Vienna"[247], and made sure that copies have been sent to the leading English journals.

Although Hamilton translated the entire Syrian edition, only four volumes, which roughly amount to a third of the original, got into print; the remainder never came to light. Cederic Dover's remark that Hamilton "*planned a literal and carefully orientalized translation of sirat 'Antar*" seems to need further qualification[248]. To describe it as literal is to blind oneself to the author's tendentious licence and appropriative measures with which he handles the original whenever occasion calls for it; and more importantly, to take him against his own words. Describing his approach to translation, Hamilton points out that he has endeavoured to make the appearance of the original less objectionable to his readers and that, to this end- he took free-handed liberties make it fit within the target cultural system.

> The translator, unwilling to quit his original without having some decided land mark to guide him when deviating from the straight course, has adhered as closely as possible to the Arabic idiom, only endeavouring to render it intelligible to the English reader; and if he has succeeded at all in combining what is rarely compatible, an easy English style with the character of the Oriental, he will not consider his perseverance misapplied, or his opinion of the original as erroneous[249].

Torn between fascination with the foreignness of the original and the need to render it intelligible to his implied readers inscribes Hammilton's approach as crucially synthetic. However, synthesis in the sense of combining what is "rarely compatible"; i.e. rendering the foreign text in an easy English style and at the same

[247] Cederic Dover. "The Black Knight". Op.cit. P,53.
[248] Ibid. 52.
[249] Terrick Hamilton in the preface to *Antar:A Bedoueen Romance*. V. II. Op.cit. Pp,xli-xlii.

time preserving its oriental character is a promise whose fulfilment may not be firmly guaranteed; in practice there is always the risk of leaning to one pole of the these extremes. In other words, Hamilton's attempt to create a third space that, in Schleiermacher's metaphor, neither leaves the original in peace and moves the reader towards it, nor leaves the reader in peace and moves the original towards him; but at once brings both the reader and the foreign text into a mid-distance is a wish that is more asserted in claim than achieved in action.

Although abridgment is claimed by Hamilton to be characteristic of the original (the Syrian recension), it is in his translation that is more stringently felt. In part, abridgment is not a choice that the translator's deliberately make, but is his only way to make the original live up to the demands of receiving environment. In one printed edition, the work occupies thirty two volumes, and in another, which was first advertised to Europe by Sir William Jones, is made up of 154 books. A text of such length must have looked prodigious to lay out to a reader who is used to digest fictional narratives in a confortable sitting. Even in its abridged state, Hamilton's translation was not regarded as abridged enough; some of the harshest criticisms which were levelled against it addressed crucially the issue of size. Thus, for example, *the Edinburg Magazine* which warmly received the first volume "*with the hope of being soon enabled, by the Editor, to resume our account of this Wild and Wondrous Tale*", appeared more reserved and groaned about the fact that "*the English translator and editor of Antar "have not told us of the length of the work; nor have they told us about many little things it seems desirable to know*"[250]. The magazine turned to "*the leaned and eloquent German [von Hammer] for his abridgment of the whole*" which

[250] Cederic Dover. "The Black Knight". Op.cit. P,54.

he promised eighteen years earlier, resuscitated after the publication of the first set of Hamilton's translation, and ingloriously failed to honour during his lifetime. Von Hammer was not irked by the manner Hamilton's translation was carried out, but by the fact that it was carried out in the first place, by an amateur whose name had hardly been heard of. His assumption to "*correct the unfortunate impression made by the voluminous and unreadable mistranslation of an interloper*"[251] irrecoverably havocked the translator but never benefitted the original or its translation.

Contrary to von Hammer's assumption, the bare fact which any inattentive comparison between the original and the translation readily reveals is that abridgment is the predominant character of Hamilton's rendition. The original is a specimen of Arabic oral literary repertoire; it was chiefly intended not for silent reading but for publicly recitation. The form in which it has survived clearly bears the stamps of story-tellers and public reciters to exploit it to the hilt to this effect. Repetition, redundancy and excessive details which were their effective expedient to capture the undivided attention of their auditors became a cumbersome burden which Hamilton found convenient to spare his reader from.

Intelligibility and the urge to make the original readable at home are Hamilton's "decided landmark" to unwillingly quit the original. Except in few cases where the illusion of the Oriental character of the original is occasionally created through a verbatim rendering of some expressions, the translation is, in much the greatest part, weighted toward fluency and intelligibility. All signs of the foreignness of the original are eliminated in favour of the uninterrupted naturalness of the English style. The frequency, robustness and systematic regularity in which this approach is

[251] A. J. Arberry's *The Seven Odes.* Op.cit. P,157.

enacted leave little doubt that Hamilton allows himself unrestrained leeway to rewrite the original. The idiosyncratic features of the classical Arabic idiom which privilege musicality and structural parallelism as stylistic features that add weight to the semantic content and make the signified and the signifier intricately intertwined are eclipsed in the translation by the requirements of naturalness and free-flowing meaning. One does not need to exert oneself in search for evidence to support this claim; a random selection of a passage from the translation would readily demonstrate this fact. For example, in a passage which relays the first encounter between Saddad, 'Antar's father, and his mother Zabeeba, the slave who fell to Shaddad's lot after a raid on a neighbouring tribe, Hamilton's translation gives this account:

> The Absians drove away the camels and cattle, and returning home, they halted by the side of a stream, in order to divide the property. But the woman who was carried off with the camels had made a great impression on the heart of Shedad, and he longed for her in his soul; her form was delicate, her eye inspired love, her smile was enchanting, and her gestures graceful […] He therefore took the woman, and gave them the booty, that they might renounce her. So he kept her to himself.
>
> This woman's name was Zabeeba […]he remained with [her] in the field and the children tended the flocks. Shedad visited her morning and evening, and thus matters continued till she became pregnant; and when her time came, she brought forth a boy, black and swarthy like an elephant […] His shape, limbs, form and make resembled Shedad; and Shedad was overjoyed at seeing him, and called him Antar[252].

[252] Terrick Hamilton, Trans. *Antar:A Bedoueen Romance*. . London: John Murray, 1820. V. I. P,p,24-25.

Although the translation concurs with the original in the broad outline of this episode, it departs from it in general details. This incident is presented in the original as:

> Having killed their warriors and looted their property, they drove away their camels and headed to their encampments. They traversed long distances of wastes and barren lands and valleys till, at dusk, they halted at a tarn. Shaddad then gazed at the slave and was impressed by her charm, for a secret which Lord the Creator wanted to make public. The woman was possessed of great beauty and lures that make men instantly enamoured of her… Now Shaddad was alone with her afield and started seducing her; but she declined his entreaties and said to him that a man of gallantry such as himself would not gratify his desires by brute force; at which he laughed and asked her hand for marriage. His colleagues, being equally captivated by her beauty, wanted to do the same with her, but soon backed up, at Shaddad offering them the booty in return.
>
> This woman's name was Zabeeba; and she had two boys. The elder was called Jareer and the youngest Shiboob. Shaddad left them with their mother, and called on them every morning and night. Left as a pawn toyed with by the freehand of fate as her Lord predestined, Zabeeba lived through in this fashion till she became pregnant. Days and months passed by, and the moment of her delivery arrived; and whenshe was at labour, as her Creator so willed, she kept screaming until dawn and brought forth a black boy….[253]

Obviously, a quick comparison between Hamilton's translation and a verbatim rendering of this passage reveals instances of loss and gain in translation. The account

[253] *Kitab 'Antara Ibn Shaddad*. V. I. Beirute:al-Matba'a al-Adabiya 1908. Pp,6-7. (my translation)

of this episode is fuller and more meticulous in the original; it features a vivid description of the raid and plundering. Hamilton glosses over many such details; For example, he makes no mention of Shaddad's proposal to Zabeeba, with the implicit corollary that the mulatto 'Antar was not born out of wedlock but was the offspring of a legal union. Even though she was plundered as any piece of property or cattle, the half-savage Arab still found it indecent to molest a fragile woman against her wishes. Also, Hamilton carefully obliterates every allusion to the religious ideas entertained by the pagan Arabs. The passage above is dotted with hints to an omnipotent Lord who reigns over the universe; Shadda's taking a liking to Zabeeba is described in the foreign text as a mystery which the Creator desired to deliver on; the vicissitudes which Zabeeba passed through and her conception of 'Antar are interpreted as prearranged by the invincible power of destiny, etc. None of these signs of a nascent religious consciousness, important as it is for a pagan people who were best known as idolaters, found their way to Hamilton's translation. In turn, the description of Zabeeba's charm: *"her eye inspired love, her smile was enchanting, and her gestures graceful"*, is an inculcation of the translator and has no antecedent in the original, and it is much in line which the Aristocratic standards of beauty of his age.

The translator's way of handling the foregoing excerpt does not constitute an instance of singular extremity in which departure from the original is the result of some unavoidable necessity; rather, it signifies the inner logic of his deliberate choices and actions and makes such departure, at its various levels and manifestations, the translation's status quo. Very frequently Hamilton crams long linguistic stretches in the original, which contain weary descriptions, vivid scenes, and minute details, into condensed statements and generalizations. He blots out the specific by appealing

to the general and absorbs the abundance of hyponyms into the economizing reductiveness of superordinates. His best means to this are paraphrase and summation. Hamilton's approach to translation strongly evokes Walter Benjamin's fine trope which likens translation to gluing a broken vessel; the fragments that are to be glued together must match one another in the smallest details, although they need not be like one another[254]. Hamilton does perfectly well in gluing those fragments which he deems necessary to the vessel, but finds no harm in leaving many others unglued.

When it is not interrupted by intermittent verbatim renderings, the principle of equivalence, in Hamilton's translation, predominantly falls under Eugene Nida's definition of functional or dynamic equivalence. Like Nida, Hamilton "*aims at a complete naturalness of expression, and tries to relate the receptor to modes of behaviour relevant within the context of his own culture*"[255].

At one important juncture in the epic, as 'Antar became assured of his poetic and martial endowments, he seized the precarious occasion of being under attack by a neighbouring tribe to ask 'Abla's mother for her daughter's hand in marriage. Hamilton's translation presents this scene as follows:

> Then began the woman to scream and weep. Antar cast his eyes toward Ibla, and she was bathed in tears: he looked at her mother and her grief was great. Antar smiled and presented himself before Ibla's mother. Oh mistress, said he, what think you of these our enemies? Verily, they are eager for their prey. Oh Antar, said she, my force and spirits are exhausted; in a moment we shall be prisoners of our enemies, and they will scatter us over this desert. Oh my mistress, said Antar, give Ibla to

[254] Walter Benjamin. "the Task of the Translator". Op.cit. P, 260.
[255] Eugene Nida. "Principles of Correspondence" in *Translation Studies*. Ed. Lawrence Vinuti. Op.cit. P,127

me in marriage, and I will disperse your enemies at a single onset. I will reduce them to annihilation; and I will give you their horses and armour as a dower. This is no time for merriment, said she. No, cried Antar, by the God of day, and the animator of souls: he that is God the merciful, and the Lord of victory, if you promise to marry her to me, I will make over to you these horses and slay their masters[256].

In the original we read something like:

They were approaching 'Antar, brandishing their spears and yelling. The women then shrieked in terror, and groaned and moaned. 'Antar cast a glance at 'Abla who was vehemently tearful; tears poured off her cheek, neck and necklace. Sumaya and 'Abla's mother were wailing and howling, being afraid lest their honour and reputation be marred. 'Antar then presented himself before 'Abla's mother and addressing her, he said: oh mistress, give me 'Abla in marriage and I strike back the raiders; I will annihilate them in one go; their horses and all their belongings I will make over to you as part of the dowry, and their corpses will be left dispersed in the wilderness. Woe betide you 'Antar, said she; this is no time for jesting; our souls are about to depart our bodies. No, replied 'Antar, by He who created the morning, and blew the wind, I will drive back the marauders, and whatever we loot of them of horses and possessions shall all be yours. To war, said 'Abla's mother. I promise you what you desire, but deep down she knew she could not keep her word. For he was a slave and the Arabs abhor to marry a free woman to a slave of no noble descent[257].

[256] Terrick Hamilton, Tran. *Antar:A Bedoueen Romance*. . London: John Murray, 1820. V. I. P,p,77-78.
[257] *Kitab 'Antara Ibn Shaddad*. Op.cit. P,34. (my translation)

Unmistakably, a comparison between the two passages makes clear Hamilton's earnest pursuance of fluency and intelligibility. Not only does he compact minutiae and details in general statements, but he also spices his translation with elements that have no basis in the original. Thus, for example, while he disposes of many details that give full account of the state of heart of the women who descry the danger of being taken captives looming in sight, he inserts expressions of his own that have no antecedent in the original. The expressions *"Antar smiled"* and *"what think you of these our enemies? Verily, they are eager for their prey"* are the translator's own additions that are unaccounted for in the original. Meanwhile, the last segment in the passage, i.e. the false promise which 'Abla's mother makes to 'Antar in return for protecting them from the raiders, though very consequential to the unfolding of the plot, is utterly jettisoned. Like Oliver Edward, Hamilton seeks not the whole truth but approximate truth in translation; for both of them, "*what we expect to have is the truest possible feel of the original. The characters, the situations, the reflections must come to us as they were in the author's mind and heart, not necessarily precisely as he had them on his lips*"[258].

For Hamilton, as for many other Western scholars of the nineteenth century who avidly received *sirat 'Antar*, part of the enthusiasm which the discovery of this work stimulated among them was attributable to the fact that:

> It filled an important gap felt to exist in Arabic literature. Unlike other well-known literatures, Arabic literature seemed to have no epics. Caussin de Perceval's remark that 'Antar was, in a manner of speaking, the Arab *Iliad* echoes this view. Another reason was that with *Sirat 'Antar*, scholars thought to have in hand a rich and authentic source of

[258] Quoted in Eugene Nida's. "Principles of Correspondence". Op.cit. P,132.

> information about Bedouin life, more specifically life in pre-Islamic Arabia, the cradle of Islam[259].

Undoubtedly, both considerations which Remke Kruk illustrates in this quote are overwhelmingly present in Hamilton's translation. Although many scholars pointed out, since the discovery of this work, to its poetic and artistic merits, such as William Jones who found it arrestingly sublime, *"so transcendent in its style, so flexible and bold that I do not hesitate to place it among the supreme poems"*; still, however, the work was more enthusiastically hailed as a repertory of information that presents the readers with a faithful account of Bedouin life in pagan times. This ethnographic aspect was initially highlighted by von Hammer who first discovered the work and capitalized on by Hamilton who was the first to make it accessible to Western readers. For von Hammer, it was in this respect that *sirat 'Antara* asserts its superiority over *the Arabian Nights*; namely because it makes it "*instrumental towards learning the manners, dispositions, and habits of the Arabs*", and it offers "*a picture of true history*", which he was intent to make public, in some abridged form, for general perusal. For Hamilton, who succumbed to the temptation presented by Von Hammer's plan and gave it hasty concretization, foregrounding the historical character of the epic was his stock-in-trade. Thus, identifying the world of *sirat 'Antar* with that of the people and period it purports to describe is something that both men were at pain to pass as axiomatic. Even when faced by disobliging evidence from the text, such as the frequent mention of sorceries and miraculous exploits of its heroes whose improbability is self-evident to a scientifically trained mind; or by the bold

[259] Remke Kruk. "Sira 'Antara Ibn Shaddad" Op.cit. P,294.

assumption that al-Asma'i (whom they both regard as the true author of the work) had lived for more than four hundred years and personally witnessed many events of the epic, etc.) when they are faced with such bouts of fancy, they are quick to note that such insinuations are either interpolations of later story-tellers or instances of the hyperbolic twists and frenzies of the oriental mind.

> if, indeed, the bravery of the hero, who, unwounded, slays hundreds and thousands of the foe, or the swiftness of his generous steed, that outstrips the wind, appear incredible; these are rather the results of a hyperbolic style, than to be considered fabulous figures, which never, in the opinion of Orientals, invalidates the truth of history[260].

Both the translator Hamilton and the numismatist von Hammer had an interest in accentuating the factual and historical elements over the fictional content of *sirat 'Antar*. First, the work was found, introduced and translated against a backdrop which the publication and wide celebration of *the Arabia Nights* had created; and, as it were, it was not just intended by those who brought it forth to be simply absorbed or rolled over into its yet unabated tides, but to generate its own with such a force and momentum that would immortalize their names along with that of Galland. Therefore, this emphasis in *sirat 'Antar* on a key element, i.e. its historical character, which is found wanting in *the Arabian Nights*, is meant to highlight the valuable benefit that can be gleaned from the introduction of this work to the European reader. And this, in effect, qualifies it to be viewed as historical masterpiece, just as *the Arabia Nights* is a master piece of oriental fiction. Secondly, *sirat 'Antar* is prized for throwing light on a period in Arabic history, pre-Islamic times, that is at best ill-lit or otherwise

[260] Terrick Hamilton in the preface to *Antar:A Bedoueen Romance*. V. II. Op.cit. P,xviii.

misrepresented in the biased narratives of Arabic chroniclers. Finally, and more importantly, *sirat 'Antar* lends itself to and ideally fits within a paradigmatic model in ethnography that enjoyed wide popularity in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Reference here is to the category of the Noble Savage which came to vogue at this period as a conceptual tool to represent and make sense of the cultural experience of primitive societies.

The heuristic concept of the Noble Savage, as Ter Elingson notes, is falsely attributed to Jean Jack Rousseau. It is not only much older, but it was never used by Rousseau. It dates back to 1609 when it was first introduced by Marc Lescarbot as a concept in comparative law[261]. It signified a mythic personification of natural goodness by a romantic glorification of the savage life in which Man lived in a pure state of nature- benevolent, innocent, wise, and undefiled by the vices of civilization. Its entrance into literature is first noted in one of John Dryden's seventeenth century dramas, *The Conquest of Granada by the Spaniards*:

> I am as free as nature first made man
> Ere the base Laws of Servitude began,
> When wild in woods the noble savage ran[262]

By the eighteenth century, this concept dotted many literary writings and became a recurrent theme for many writers such as Shelly, who describes the sketches of one of his unfinished dramas, written in 1822, as it shadowed his mind: "*an Enchantress, living in one of the islands of the Indian Archipelago, saves the life of a*

[261] Ter Elingson . *The Myth of the Noble Savage*. California: California UP, 2001. P,xv.
[262] Ibid. P, 8.

pirate, a man of savage but noble nature"[263]. And also, in a like manner, Sir Walter Scott states in his work *The Heart of the Midlothian* (published in 1818): "*One… stood upright before them, a Lathy young savage…. Yet the eyes of the lad were keen and sparkling; his gesture free and noble, like that of all savages*"[264].

Now the question as to whether Hamilton, who published his translation of *sirat 'Antar* and gave it the catchy title of "*Antar: a Bedoueen Romance"*, just around the same time that Shelly and Scott mused on the concept of the Noble Savage, flocked together with them and saw 'Antar in the same light, seems an important one. The answer to this question admits of no speculation and comes straight from Hamilton's lips. In the preface to his translation we come across this:

> These chiefs, when bound on a marauding enterprise, often meet extraordinary adventures; sometimes forlorn maidens, whose distresses they relieve, or matrons, whose husbands and sons have been slain, and even heroes of inferior stamp, whose cause they will adopt, and thus either soften their sorrow or die in their defence. It must be acknowledged, that sometimes they take advantage of the unprotected states to which females are reduced, when their attendants have resisted the assault of a stranger; but instances of the purest generosity, and the most chivalrous sentiments of honour and decency will often mark their acts, and induce us to marvel how nations so barbarous in blood could ever be melted into pity and tenderness[265].

In the same breath, Hamilton adds in the next page:

[263] Ibid. P,5.
[264] Ibid.
[265] Terrick Hamilton's preface to *Antar: A Bedoueen Romance*. V. II London: John Murray, 1820. . Pp, xxxiii-xxxiv.

> A nation of shepherds, dwelling in tents, surrounded by deserts, appears at first sight, as the very antipodes of those nations whose usages and habits have supplied matter for romance and historic fiction. In minds thus savagely constituted, where could love dwell? Where could courtesy, discretion, and those nameless decencies and distinctions, persons of cultivated manners can only feel and express, find a place?[266]

Although Hamilton does not use the wording, the Noble Savage, this constant oscillation between opposite pairs; between the qualities of nobility and vices of savagery, between the highest virtues in human nature and the lowest state of baseness to which the latter can degenerate is adequately emblematic of this ethnographic category. Only the Noble Savage can yoke together in himself these extreme polarities; only he is capable of retaining this symbiosis of incompatibilities, of being at once so mean and most generous, genuinely peaceable and insatiably blood thirsty. The broad configuration of this model was already consummated by Lescarbot, and Hamilton needed only to put it to good use and apply it to different situations. To see how the two are at one in every particularity, we only need to compare how they both try to account for the rules of conduct of Man in the state of nature. Lescarbot states:

> As for justice, they have not any law, neither divine nor human, but that which Nature teacheth them- that one must not offend another. So they have quarrels very seldom. And if any such thing do chance to happen, the Sagamos quieteth all, and do justice to him that is offended….[267]

Hamilton echoes:

[266] Ibid. P, xxxv.
[267] Ter Elingson . *The Myth of the Noble Savage*. Op.cit. P29.

> Such are the personages who now, for the first time, are found to have inhabited the wilderness of sands, under no cultivation of mind, and bound by no moral restraints, but what love and friendship excited and established.[268]

This symmetrical tendency among these proponents of the ethnographic model of the noble Savage clearly shows that the model was well tested and in wide currency at Hamilton times. But, aside from the pride of place that sets apart a progenitor from an imitator, there is one important aspect that differentiates Lescarbot from Hamilton. The former drew his model from direct encounter with some Indian tribes, Micmaq, during the earliest expeditions to Canada in the late sixteenth century. It is based on his direct observations and day-to-day exchange with them. For Hamilton, his model is purely textual; it is gleaned from the textual world of a single text of popular literature that is obscured by its dubious authorship and removed from him, in time, by several hundreds of years of oral transmission. This indeed largely explains his angst to stress the historical character of *sirat 'Antar*. Lacking the gaze of the ethnographer that allows him first-hand exposure to his object of contemplation, he turns to what he considers historical evidence to assert the veracity of his account. It is with a view of exhibiting to the world a stronger proof of the truth of this recorded evidence, he says, that the translation of the history of Antar is now for the first time submitted to the public; a work which represents, with utmost details, the most faithful narrative of that mode of life in all its variety, whether public or domestic, which prevailed among the Arabs, in that 'period of ignorance'. For him, that the world of *sirat 'Antar* is an inspired and faithful representation is susceptible of no doubt. "*That the Arabs of those days thus thought and thus acted",* he purports,

[268] Terrick Hamilton's preface to *Antar: A Bedoueen Romance*. Op.cit. P,xxxvi.

"is founded on the concurrence of such respectable authority, that the authenticity of this statement has never been questioned"[269]. Among this respectable authority he mentions few names; a certain Abulfeda, the biblical scholar Pococke, and elsewhere the illustrious D'Herbelot whose mere mention evokes masterly expertise and uncontended knowledge about the Orient. How do they concur and on what points are questions that are left unanswered. But supported by this appeal to established authority, he feels emboldened to venture contributions of his own and totalizing generalizations as, for example, when he attributes the cruelty and rapine habits of pre-Islamic Bedouins to their feeding on camel flesh:

> Their own writers acknowledge that they have a natural disposition to war, bloodshed, cruelty, and rapine; being so much addicted to bear malice, that they scarce ever forget an old grudge; which vindictive temper, some physicians say, is occasioned by their frequent feeding on camel's flesh, (the ordinary food of the Arabs of the desert, who are therefore observed to be most inclined to these vices) that creature being most malicious and tenacious of anger.[270]

Once we run down Hamilton's argument to its root, it becomes clear to us what considerations he weighed in his translation of *sirat 'Antar*, and what limitations and conditions of receptivity he prefigured for the reception of his translation. He viewed the text not as a work of popular fiction or a product of low culture entertainment, as did the people among whom it lived and flourished; but as an account of true history whose veracity and authenticity are proved by the unwavering testimonies of many Orientalists, the truth of which he deems unquestionable. And added to the importance of being a historical account of a historical period about which Europeans

[269] Ibid: P,x.
[270] Ibid. P, ix.

were largely uninformed, it presents them with an image of the Arabs in a state of nature, of Noble Savagery. It is within this paradigmatic model of nineteenth century European ethnography, in which the Hobbes-vs.- Rousseau debate was at its highest, that Hamilton wanted his translation to be received and interpreted. And while the original, which abounds in chivalry ethics and ideals lends itself easily to be incorporated within this model, Hamilton misses no opportunity to magnify every aspect in it to this effect, to read ostentatiously as an epic of the Noble Savage. Thus, for example, in a singular instance when 'Antar first proves himself a true hero in arms and a gallant man in spirit who risks his life to defend the cause of the weak and the helpless, the original describes him as "*verily, this slave will prove a brave warrior, and will rise high in fame*"[271], Hamilton renders it as: "*he will shine a noble warrior and destroy his opponents*"[272].

[271] *Kitab 'Antara Ibn Shaddad*. Op.cit. P,36. (my translation)
[272] Terrick Hamilton, trans. *Antar: A Bedoueen Romance*. V. II. Op.cit. P,36.

Conclusion

Now that we have come full circle, it becomes evident that the main points which I advanced in the hypothesis have been adequately demonstrated in the course of this thesis. The transfer of Arabic pseudo-narrative, namely *Alf Layla wa Layla (The Arabian Nights), Kalila wa Dimna (The Fables of Bidpai), and Sirat 'Anatra (the Epic of Antar)*, into the nineteenth-century England was never smooth or entirely disinterested, but was subject to various forms of appropriation, manipulation and subversion. It was intricately caught up in higher and more complex hierarchies of power, in the historical disposition of the period, the intricacies of the cultural and political relationship between the east and west that was dominated by the latter's imperial experience in Oriental lands, and in the dynamics, imperatives and prejudices of the poetic system at home.

This manifold relation between the foreign texts and their new context of reception inscribed the act of translation as one of rewriting. To various extents and depending on each translator's agendas and special ends, these texts were suited to fit a wide variety of purposes. In their place of origin, they appeared as products of verbal culture; they were produced and circulated, mostly orally, among commoners and lay people for whom tale-telling was a primary source of entertainment, a means of preaching moral lessons and commonly shared values, and, as Claude Levi Strauss would say, an ideal form of resolving, in the aesthetic realm, the conflicts and contradictions that could not otherwise be resolved within the institutions originally devised for them. Drawn from a variegated stock of folktales that goes back to different origins and ages, they were in the main recited or lively acted to an immediate audience in market places, coffee-shops, or other loci where festivities and

social events were held or performed. During long centuries of their circulation and performance, they survived in a condition of absolute anonymity and authorial orphanage; they were passed down across generations and spread over many regions without being neither claimed nor attributed to specific authors. They remained the common property of story-tellers and public performers. In their written form, they lived and coexisted in an immanent diversity in style, length, details of the plots, number and arrangement of tales etc. that never seemed to nuance their appeal or affect their currency. Their main reproducers were scribes and redactors who, almost always producing them upon demand, never hesitated to customize their copies in accordance with the nature and requirements of the demand or even to refine, improve and correct them at will to fit them in with their own predilections, stylistic preferences, and ideological affiliations and prejudices.

At the hands of their translators, these Arabic pseudo-narratives metamorphosed into well-finished discursive forms that, governed by the different norms and conventions of a more matured literary system, could accommodate, in addition to the texts themselves, images and narratives of the culture from which they emanate. The translators of these texts not only endowed them with a new life, but also with a new type of life. Under the new conditions of the metropolitan, they were no longer tailored to be recited or acted in public performances, but to be read silently in drawing room tables by literate readers whose tastes, expectations, aesthetic judgments and political and ideological attitudes were formed or influenced by the overall circumstances of their life and the world-historical situation in which they lived. To their originals, all translations stood in an appropriative and manipulating relation. Despite the vast differences that exist among them- personal, professional,

intellectual, as well as differences in literary merits, etc. all their translators appropriated their originals in their own way.

First, at the external level, appropriation starts with the compilation of the primary text through merging together several texts or fragments of texts into a single text that was to serve as the basis of the translation, to the arrangement of tales that make up each text and, in certain cases, the interpolation in the translation of some stories that never made part of the original, all the way to the consecration of certain versions of the originals as the only correct and the renunciation of others along with the principles of selection and exclusion involved in this process. It was characteristic of these Arabic pseudo-narratives that the originals were not treated by their translators as already accomplished textual feats, as finished enunciations that were to be taken at their wholesomeness but as incomplete texts that had to be constructed and fixed, stabilised, and given their final form before being translated. And while, indeed, in this process, a certain degree of interference may seem tolerated or even unavoidable, such as the comparison between various manuscripts of the same text, the attempt to bring out traces of the scribes' meddling with these manuscripts, and to establish or restore to them a sense of integrity and intrinsic unity etc., this should not blind us to the more obtrusive and visible forms of appropriation that warped and manipulated the originals to certain special ends. We have seen many instances of how very lightly Galland touched upon the original in some stories of *The Nights*, how many stories he either completely invented, drawn from other sources or were only orally narrated in epitome to him out of which he carved out well polished stories; and even more scandalously there were, in some cases, stories that were translated by other translators but attributed to him due to the reputation he earned for

himself as the progenitor of a new genre of tales and the need to meet the vastly growing demand for them among the reading public. Though less conspicuous for such intrusions, Maximilian Habicht and Francis Burton were, to a lesser degree, guilty of similar acts.

The other form of appropriation which is more systemic and more vital and which form the main focus of this thesis is enacted interiorly and affects these texts from within not from without. It is inflicted in the body of the texts and governs the transfer of the ensemble of their signs into the target language. It is in this second level that the translators' methods, attitudes, stylistic choices and ideological hues are revealed and made manifest. A close analysis of the translations of the Arabic pseudo-narratives under study showed that they demonstrate varying degrees of appropriation. Whether they are inscribed by domesticating tendencies that seek to maximize fluency, adjust the foreign texts to the norms and conventions of the receiving system, and cancel out all traces of its peculiar individuality and foreignness to the effect of making it read not as a *translation* but as an *original*; or whether they tend toward foreignisation and defamiliarisation that magnify the visibility and idiosyncratic features of the foreign texts and inflate their stylistic and sematic import to the native language, appropriation in both cases was actively in place. In both tendencies, it differs in form not in essence, in manifestation not in character.

Appropriation, which may be technically defined as the *unmotivated* departure from formal correspondence between the SL and TL, is heavily employed by both trends, because they both seek in the originals something more than their internal systems of signs were encoded or intended to convey. Appropriation is not the result of a lack of equivalence or the dictate of a deficit in correspondence between two

languages; rather, it signifies deliberate choices, conscious decision-making options and wilful actions. It is neither objective nor procedural as, for example, one would say of a *translation shift* in the sense that it is not entailed by the exhaustion of other choices and possibilities that are made available to the translator by the expressive means and capabilities of his native language and culture at the time of translating. Translation shift belongs to the realm of necessity and is therefore inherent in every act of translation. One can hardly imagine a translation of an utterance beyond the sentential level which does not involve some aspects of departure from formal correspondence between the SL and TL. It signifies the absence of absolute equivalence between different natural languages and cultural systems, and attests to the translator's dexterity to negotiate and find alternatives when faced with intermittent gaps and instances of non-equivalence at different levels of speech units. Appropriation, however, is motivated by no such imperatives. In its different manifestations in the translations under study, it has been found to occur in situations where equivalence was easily procurable; but, against its tremendous odds, translators chose to resolve it at a totally different level wherein their deliberate poetic and ideological choices, and not limitations of correspondence, function as the main drivers.

Generally, appropriation is enacted and achieved through different means by representatives of the domesticating and foreignizing tendencies. For those who chose to naturalize, to temper the foreign text and to adjust it to the poetic and ideological imperatives of the receiving system, and ultimately adopt it to the English culture as if it were its own, appropriation was achieved ideologically through expurgation, bowdlerization, deletion and misprision and stylistically through euphemism and

paraphrase. For those who tended toward foreignisation and defamiliarisation (and only Burton stood typically representative of this trend) appropriation was effected through calque, neologism, and monstrous literalism. Yet, regardless of how it manifests itself in both tendencies, appropriation reveals the leeway and the degree of license which these translators allowed themselves in carrying across these Arabic pseudo-narratives into the English language, and by implication the extent of damage they have wreaked upon the originals.

In this thesis appropriation was not only expounded as an individualized translation behaviour, i.e. as a relation between the translator and the text he translates. It was situated within higher and more general frameworks that set and delimit the mental horizon of the translator. Viewed from this wider perspective, appropriation does not appear as the personal choice of the individual translators alone, as a question of method which they handle independently of any exterior factors, but rather as more deeply rooted, as history-bound and having to do with the time and place in which these translations took place. Translators of the Arabic pseudo-narratives did not carry out their work in the void, in a transcendental space, but in concrete historical situations, in real social contexts of complex structures, interests, conflicts and relations of power. As social agents who are informed, conditioned by and caught up in the dynamics that characterize and obtain in these contexts, in performing their tasks these translators were not beyond their power of influence, as either acting under them or reacting to them; as engaged in their consecration or dedicated to their subversion. Thus, the operative factors which hold sway in these contexts are variously present and bring to bear in the transfer of texts, initially from the very choice of the texts to be translated as worthy of being

translated, to the mode of transfer, the models to be followed or modulated, all the way to decision-making and the range of options that are available to the individual translators. They act as norms and conventions that have a directive and regulatory function on their work which may exist in explicit or implicit forms. The translators may be partly or fully aware of them but they may also be quite unconscious of them and their power and binding character is felt less when they are observed as when they are breached, less when they are abided by as when they are violated. The public outcry which, for example, the publication of Burton's translation of *The Arabian Nights* instigated is, as we have seen, crucially attributable to his failure to observe certain well-established norms and conventions; and in the meantime the scathing reactions which it provoked expressed themselves as a confirmation and validation of these norms in the first place. In this thesis, I contended the idea that appropriation, above being a translation method employed by such-or-such translator, was a world-view, a shared attitude and an established practice supported and invigorated by entrenched conventions long before these translators came upon the stage, and that it did not originate with them but that they only put it to effective use and gave it full vent in their area of specialisation. In essence, appropriation is the result and manifestation of an imbalanced relation between two cultures coming into contact with one another; more specifically, it is expressive of a triumphant condition in which one culture- the more powerful post-renaissance European culture that is buttressed by military and economic strength and unprecedented technological advance and puffed up with the conceit of its self-image- came to dominate a relatively weak, a once strong and now degenerating Arabic culture whose glory is steeped in a distant past and whose present is plagued by insurmountable decadence. Appropriation as such is conceived within a paradigmatic model that unravels its

rootedness in a concrete historical situation, its dependence on power relations between two cultural entities, and its employment to the service of vested interests and well-defined purposes. In this sense, it unfolds as an exercise of power by politically and culturally empowered agents over a subaltern culture and its artefacts. And it is in this sense that appropriation acquires its essentialist character. In other words, one cannot imagine that these translators would have translated these texts in the way they did had they not translated them under the specific conditions of the history of Britain- and that of the whole of Europe- in the nineteenth century in relation to other political entities and cultures- including the Arab world- that were increasingly falling under the European colonial rule.

Finally, in the thesis, I treated the translated Arabic texts not in their singularity as individual texts, as translated works of an alien literature arbitrarily grouped and completely detached from one another and from their home context, but as part of a holistic totality, as elements within a unified system; i.e. as a translated literature. By this I mean I tried to bring out a set of verbal and cultural relations that exist among them and that endow them with a distinct character, an identity, and a mode of being within the literary polysystem of the target language. Approaching them from this polysystem perspective enables us to determine their position vis-à-vis the hosting literature as either central or peripheral, and to gauge the degree of their active participation within it and their innovatory import into it. Although, from this standpoint, one must admit that the transfer of the Arabic pseudo-narratives into the English literary system produced a considerable effect and made their presence felt in a variety of ways; e.g. the rise of a new generic form- the Oriental tale, the emergence of a sizable segment of literary criticism that took these narratives as its main object

of interest, the appearance of many forms of rewritings, forgeries, plagiarisms, imitations, parodies, etc. that were variably modelled on or initiated by these narratives, the inspiration of many works and writers with new themes, topoi, and motifs particularly that engage with the uncanny, the exotic, the marvellous, etc. generally the position of the Arabic pseudo-narratives with regard to the English mainstream literary production remained peripheral, and its impact marginal, ineffectual and feeble. They did not carry any innovatory forces or bring forth novelties that could contribute into shaping the centre, nor were they associated with any great events or changes in it that can disrupt or displace the established models. And this should come as no surprise since, for their translators, these narratives were not primarily linked to the Kantian principle which relates the raison d'être of every literary work to the unfolding of beauty. At best, they subordinated this principle to other more worthwhile objectives and uses that seek in the texts not their aesthetic values and poetic ethos but images and accounts of the culture of the people among whom they appeared, clues and intimations that give access to and make intelligible how an Arab or an Oriental thinks, acts and speaks.

I want to conclude this thesis with a short remark on its limitations. In attempting to explain the translators' behaviour in transferring Arabic pseudo-narratives into English, I have tried to let the outreach of my line of inquiry go as far as concrete evidence would support it and to premise my findings and conclusions on the basis of evidence thus acquired. The latter is generally of two types: one is intrinsic, collected from the body of the text (i.e. the translation) through a thorough empirical probe of alignment between the ST and TT; the other is extrinsic, gleaned from the translators' own statements in which they express their views and opinions,

their theoretical insights and understanding of translation, their preferred methods and pursued aims, etc. for example in prefaces, annotations, glosses, or other forms of external commentary which they produced about their primary texts. And out of the collected evidence I tried to posit the translators' actions and decision-making within comprehensive conceptual models that unearth- beneath surface contingencies and chance events- deep structures, essential relations and patterns that display a high degree of systematism, consistency and regularity. Once these models are founded on sufficient data and evidence, they are assumed to explain not only those instances that have already been surveyed but also to apply to any analogous situations and elements in the translated texts and consequently are held not only describe but also to predict that a translator would follow a certain course of action in a given situation (e,g. Lane's handling of erotica, Burton's verbatim phraseology, etc.) since they are predicated on the premise that translators' behaviour is not arbitrary and random but systematic and consistent. In so doing, I could not avoid a certain degree of abstraction, generalisation and induction. Where intrinsic and extrinsic evidence converge, translators' behaviour and methods, and more importantly their consciousness of their translation actions, could be described with ease and a good deal of precision; but where only the former type was available, recourse to inference and retrospective reasoning was indispensable; and although from the point of view of internal critical analysis the findings may be valid and methodologically consistent in describing and explaining these actions, they do not always guarantee to reconstruct the theoretical consciousness out of which they arose or in the light of which they were effected. This invites more inquiry into many points evoked in this study which, without further substantiation, would remain mere claims.

Another obstacle which hampers this study is the prodigious size of its primary texts. As is known, these texts are artefacts of popular culture that run for thousands of pages, which indeed makes it difficult to adequately tackle them within the scope of a single study. Therefore, this thesis cannot make the claim to exhaust its object of study and contents itself with throwing light on the typical instances that, from my point of view, best capture or reveal a translator's method, pattern, trend, course of action, etc. in such a way or to such an extent that makes his translation practices explainable within distinct methodological models. But, sometimes, some of the conclusions thus reached may not help giving the impression of being far-fetched and hastily drawn. Faced with all this, I only find solace in the fact that the imperfections and limitations of the present study may lay the ground for and provide me with strong motivations to pursue this topic more thoroughly and rigorously in future endeavours.

Appendix

The following excerpts are translation samples that have been analysed in this thesis as representing instances of departure from formal equivalence and revealing the translators' appropriative behaviour.

E.g. 1

At midnight, however, he remembered that he had left in his palace an article which he should have brought with him; and having returned to the palace to fetch it, he there beheld his wife sleeping in his bed, and attended by a male negro slave, who had fallen asleep by her side. (Edward Lane, *The Thousand and One Nights*, P,3)

فلما كان في نصف الليل تذكر حاجة نسيها في قصره فرجع ودخل قصره فوجد زوجته راقدة في فراشه معانقة عبدا أسودا من عبيده فلما رأى هذا اسودت الدنيا في وجهه وقال في نفسه إذا كان هذا الأمر قد وقع وأنا ما فرقت المدينة فكيف حال هذه العاهرة إذا غبت عند أخي مدة... (طبعة بولاق، ص، 2)

At midnight, he remembered something he had forgotten in his palace; and when he returned to fetch it, he found his wife lying in his own bed holding one of his black slaves in her arms. Beholding the scene, the world waxed black in his eye; and he whispered in soliloquy: if such is the conduct of this whore while I haven't even left the city, how will she act in my absence…?

E.g. 2

Then they stripped off their clothes and behold, ten of them were women, concubines of the King, and the other ten were white slaves. Then they all paired off, each with each: but the Queen, who was left alone, presently cried out in a loud voice, " Here to me, O my lord Saeed ! " 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. He walked boldly up to her and threw his arms round her neck while she embraced him as warmly; then he bussed her and winding his legs round hers, as a button-loop clasps a button, he threw her and enjoyed her. On like wise did the other slaves with the girls till all had satisfied their passions, and they ceased not from kissing and clipping, coupling and carousing till day began to vane; when the Mamelukes rose from the damsels' bosoms and the blackamoor slave dismounted

from the Queen's breast; the men resumed their disguises and all, except the negro who swarmed up the tree, entered the palace and closed the postern-door as before (Sir Richard Francis Burton, *The Arabian Nights*, Pp, 5-6)

وكان في قصر الملك شبابيك تطل على بستان أخيه فنظر وإذا بباب القصر قد قد فتح وخرج منه عشرون جارية وعشرون عبدا وامرأة أخيه تمشي بينهم وهي في غاية الحسن والجمال حتى وصلوا إلى سقية وخلعوا ثيابهم وجلسوا مع بعضهم وإذا بامرأة الملك قالت يا مسعود فجاءها عبد أسود فعانقها وعانقته وواقعها وكذلك باقي العبيد فعلو بالجواري ولم يزالوا في بوس وعناق ونحو ذلك حتى ولى النهار فلما رأى ذلك أخو الملك قال والله أن بليتي أخف من هذه البلية وقد هان ما عنده. (طبعة بولاق، ص، 2-3).

وإذا بباب السر الذي لأخيه قد فتح وخرجت الملكة زوجة أخيه ومعها عشرون جارية كأنهن الأقمار وهي مثل الغزال العطشان فنظر إليها شاه زمان وأعطاهم باله من حيث لا يشعرون ولم يزالوا يمشون إلى أن وصلوا إلى تحت القصر الذي هو ساكنه وفيه الشباك الذي هو جالس فيه وكان هناك بركة ماء كبيرة فلما وصلوا إليها الجواري خلعوا ثيابهم ونشروا ذوائبهم ,غذا بهم قد صاروا عشرين عشرة منهن ذكور وعشرة إناث فتصرف كل واحد بواحدة وأما الملكة زوجة أخيه فإنها صاحت بصوت عال هلم يا سيدي سعيد إلى عندي وإذا بعبد أسود طمطماني بصاص قبيح المنظر قفز من أعلى الشجرة وجاء إلى الملكة واعتنقها ثم إنه قبلها وتزرر بسيقانها ولم يزالوا كذلك مقدار نصف النهار حتى أنهم شفوا غليلهم ثم إن المماليك قاموا عن الجواري والعبد الأسود عن صدر الملكة فمضت هي مع الجواري إلى باب السر ودخلوا القصر وأغلقوا الباب .... (طبعة كالكوتا الأولى، صص، 5-6)

They stripped themselves naked… and the queen called out: "here to me oh, my master Said!" And there came to her an unsightly, gruesome slave with a most hideous look, who, having leaped from the top of a tree, began to hug her and kiss her, coiling his body tightly around her legs. And they remained so engaged till the day was half-spent and they all gratified their desires. Then, the white slaves let go the concubines and the black slave unloosed himself from the queen's bosom (my translation)

E.g. 3

When the drink got the better of them, the portress stood up and doffed her clothes till she was mother-naked. However, she let down her hair about her body by way of shift, and throwing herself into the basin disported herself and dived like a duck and swam up and down, and took water in her mouth, and spurted it all over the Porter, and washed her limbs, and between her breasts, and inside her thighs and all around her navel. Then she came up out of the cistern and throwing herself on the Porter's lap

said, " O my lord, O my love, what callest thou this article?" pointing to her slit, her solution of continuity. "I call that thy cleft," quoth the Porter, and she rejoined, "Wah ! wah ! art thou not ashamed to use such a word?" and she caught him by the collar and soundly cuffed him. Said he again, "Thy womb, thy vulva;" and she struck him a second slap crying, "O fie, O fie, this is another ugly word; is there no shame in thee?" Quoth he, "Thy coynte;"and she cried, "O thou art wholly destitute of modesty?" and thumped him and bashed him. Then cried the Porter, "Thy clitoris,"whereat the eldest lady came down upon him with a yet sorer beating, and said, "No;" and he said, "'Tis so," and the Porter went on calling the same commodity by sundry other names, but whatever he said they beat him more and more till his neck ached and swelled with the blows he had gotten; and on this wise they made him a butt and a laughing-stock. At last he turned upon them asking, "And what do you women call this article?" Whereto the damsel made answer, "The basil of the bridges." Cried the Porter," Thank Allah for my safety: aid me and be thou propitious, O basil of the bridges!" (Sir Richard Francis Burton, *The Arabian Nights*, P, 90)

فلما تحكم الشراب معهم قامت البوابة وتجردت من ثيابها وصارت عريانة ثم رمت نفسها في تلك البحيرة ولعبت في الماء وأخذت الماء في فمها وبخت الحمال ثم غسلت أعضاءها وبين فخذيها ثم طلعت من الماء ورمت نفسها في حجر الحمال وقالت له يا حبيبي ما اسم هذا وأشارت إلى فرجها فقال الحمال رحمك فقالت يوه يوه أما تستحيي ومسكته من رقبته وصارت تصكه فقال فرجك فقالت غيره فقال كسك فقالت غيره فقال زنبورك فلم تزل تصكه حنى ذاب قفاه ورقبته من الصك ثم قال لها وما اسمه فقالت له حبق الجسور فقال لها الحمد لله على السلامة... (طبعة بولاق، ص، 33)

When wine sported with their wits, the portress undressed and threw herself into the basin. She dashed in water and filled her mouth and spurted the porter. She washed her genitals and between the thighs; then she came up out of the water and tossed herself into the porter's lap, and pointing to her vulva, she asked. "O my dear, what do you call this?" "Your womb", replied the porter. "Yoh! have you got no shame", cuffing him on the neck. "Your vulva" he added. "Make a better guess", she said, thumping him more stringently till his neck was almost torn up; "and what do you call

it?" Cried he. "The basil of the bridges", she answered. "O, yes. Yes, the basil of the bridges; thanks to God for my deliverance" (my translation)

E.g. 4

[He] got information of a book preserved in India, which contained every species of instruction, together with rules of conduct for the profitable employment of the present, and for a confident and happy anticipation of the future. He therefore commanded his Vizier Buzurdgmiher to look out for some clever and able person amongst his subject, who, possessing a thorough of the Persian and Indian tongues, was distinguished as much for his eagerness as his ability to acquire instruction. (Windham Knatchbull, *Kalila and Dimna or the Fables of Bidpai*, P, 33)

بلغه عن كتاب بالهند علم أنه أصل كل أدب ورس كل علم والدليل على كل منفعة ومفتاح عمل الآخرة وعلمها ومعرفة النجاة من هواها فأمر الملك وزيره بزرجمهر أن يبحث له عن رجل أديب عاقل من أهل مملكته بصير بلسان الفارسية ماهر بكلام الهند ويكون بليغا باللسانين جميعا حريصا على طلب العلم مجتهدا في استعمال الأدب مبادرا في طلب العلم والبحث عن كتب الفلسفة فأتاه برجل أديب كامل العقل والادب معرف بصناعة الطب ماهر بالفارسية والهندية يقال له برزويه لما دخل عليه كفّر له وسجد بين يديه فقال له الملك يا برزويه إني قد اخترتك لما بلغني من فضلك وعلمك وعقلك وحرصك على طلب العلم... (كليلة ودمنة " ترجمة ابن المقفع، تأليف دو ساسي، ص،33)

Having learned that there exists in India a book which is the springhead of all literatures, the eponym of all sciences, the guide to all [worldly] exploits and the key to the [good] deeds of the next world and to gaining cognition of it and eschewing its woes, The king then ordered his vizier, Buzerdjmiher, to scout around amongst his subjects for a person of good manners and discreet judgment, who is well versed in the tongue of Persia, having a good command of the language of India, eloquent in both tongues, bent on the acquisition of knowledge, diligently using exploits of literature, possessed of initiative in the pursuance of learning. So he brought him a man, named Barzouyeh, of good manners and sound reason, famed for the craft of medicine, mastering both Persian and Indian languages. When he was presented to him, he kneeled down before him. Addressing him, the king then said oh! Barzouyeh I have chosen you on account of the merits of erudition, prudence and sagaciousness [for which you are well known] (my translation; Pp, 187-88)

E.g. 5

A man of sound understanding is distinguished by eight qualities: by courteous and affable behaviour; by a knowledge of himself, united with a strict and impartial observation of his own heart; by submission to lawful authority; and an endeavour to conciliate the good will of those who are in power; by great circumspection in his confidential communications; by becoming language and irreproachable conduct at the courts of kings; by secrecy, where his own interest is at stake and fidelity in his engagements with others; by moderation in his discourse, so that no unpleasant consequence may arise from any hasty or intemperate word; and lastly, by a prudent reserve and modest diffidence in delivering his opinion. (Windham Knatchbull, *Kalila and Dimna or the Fables of Bidpai* Pp, 37-38)

وإن عقل الرجل ليبين في ثمان خصال الأولى منها الرفق والثانية أن يعرف الرجل نفسه فيحفظها والثالثة طاعة الملوك والتحري لما يرضيهم والرابعة معرفة الرجل وضع سره وكيف ينبغي أن يطلع عليه صديقه والخامسة أن يكون على أبواب الملوك أديبا ملق اللسان والسادسة أن يكون لسره وسر غيره حافظا والسابعة أن يكون على لسانه قادرا فلا يتكلم إلا بما يأمن تبعته والثامنة إذا كان بمحفل لا يتكلم إلا بما يُسأل عنه... (كليلة ودمنة، ترجمة ابن المقفع، تأليف دو ساسي، ص،36)

Sound understanding in a man manifest itself in eight qualities: by Charity; by truly understanding one's worth and preserving it; by obeying kings and seeking their satisfaction; by preserving one's secrets and minding about divulging them to a friend; by being mannerly and maintaining a courteous tongue once among the king's retinues; by guarding one's and others' secrets; by being watchful of one's words that one must only speak about matters from which no unpleasant consequences are likely to follow; and lastly, by refraining, in public gatherings, from speaking unless spoken to. (my translation)

E.g. 6

[The] monk… arrived at a town, where…he took up his quarters in the house of a woman who had a young girl in her service…. The young woman having formed a sincere and strong attachment, her mistress had determined by the murder of the lover on the very night on which the monk arrived…. For this purpose, when the lover

came to visit his future bride, the woman placed before him an intoxicating liquor, which having drunk of, he soon fell into a sound sleep: she then took a reed, and was in the act of blowing the poison with which she had previously filled it into his ear, when suddenly and unintentionally catching her breath, the poison returned into her own throat, and caused instant death (Windham Knatchbull, *Kalila and Dimna or the Fables of Bidpai*, P,105)

ومضى الناسك حتى دخل تلك المدينة فلم يجد فيها قِرى إلا بيت امرأة فنزل بها واستضاف بها وكانت للمرأة جارية تؤاجرها وكانت الجارية قد علقت رجلا وهي له مريدة وقد اضر ذلك بمولاتها فاحتالت لقتل الرجل في تلك الليلة التي استضافت بها الناسك ثم غن الرجل وافا فأسقته من الخمرة حتى سكر ونام ونامت الجارية إلى جانبه فلما استقلا نوما عمدت إلى سم كانت قد أعدته في قصبة لتنفخه في دبر الرجل فلما أرادت ذلك بدرت من دبر الرجل ريح فعكست السم إلى حلق المرأة فوقعت ميتة وكل ذلك بعين الناسك. (كليلة ودمنة، ترجمة ابن المقفع، تأليف دو ساسي ، ص، 95)

E.g. 7

The Absians drove away the camels and cattle, and returning home, they halted by the side of a stream, in order to divide the property. But the woman who was carried off with the camels had made a great impression on the heart of Shedad, and he longed for her in his soul; her form was delicate, her eye inspired love, her smile was enchanting, and her gestures graceful […] He therefore took the woman, and gave them the booty, that they might renounce her. So he kept her to himself.

This woman's name was Zabeeba […]he remained with [her] in the field and the children tended the flocks. Shedad visited her morning and evening, and thus matters continued till she became pregnant; and when her time came, she brought forth a boy, black and swarthy like an elephant […] His shape, limbs, form and make resembled Shedad; and Shedad was overjoyed at seeing him, and called him Antar (Terrick Hamilton, *Antar: A Bedoueen Romance*, Pp, 24-25)

بعدما قتلت أبطالهم وأخذت أموالهم فعند ذلك ساقت بنو عبس النياق والجمال ثم طلبوا الديار والأطلال وجدوا في قطع الفيافي والقفار والوديان إلى أن أمسى المساء فنزلوا على بعض المياه والغدران فنظر شداد إلى تلك

الأمة التي ساقوها مع النياق فحلت في عينه لأمر يريد أن يظهره الملك الخلاق وهي ذات رونق وجمال تستميل إليها قلوب الرجال... فعند ذلك اختلى بها شداد في تلك البطاح وراودها عن نفسها فأبت وقالت حاشا مثلك أن يأخذ بالسفاح فضحك من كلامها ووضع يده بيدها على عقد النكاح ولما رآه رفاقه ارادوا أن يفعلوا كفعله وقد حلت في عيونهم كمثله فأعطاهم الغنيمة كلها حتى رجعوا عنها... وكان اسم هذه الأمة زبيبة وجرير اسم ولدها الكبير وشيبوب اسم أخيه الصغير فتركهما شداد مع أمهما وهو يتفقدها في الصباح والمساء ويد القدر تقلبها كيف ربها شاء وما زالت على ذلك العمل حتى بان عليها الحبل وتداولت عليها الأيام والشهور كما يشاء الملك الغفور فلما كانت إحدى الليالي جاءها الطلق كما شاء خالق الخلق فباتت تصرخ إلى وقت السحر وبعدها جاءت بولد ذكر وهو أسود ادغم افطح المناخر واسع المحاجر.... (كتاب عنترة بن شداد، طبعة بيروت، صص،5-6)

Having killed their warriors and looted their property, they drove away their camels and headed to their encampments. They traversed long distances of wastes and barren lands and valleys till, at dusk, they halted at a tarn. Shaddad then gazed at the slave and was impressed by her charm, for a secret which Lord the Creator wanted to make public. The woman was possessed of great beauty and lures that make men instantly enamoured of her… Now Shaddad was alone with her afield and started seducing her; but she declined his entreaties and said to him that a man of gallantry such as himself would not gratify his desires by brute force; at which he laughed and asked her hand for marriage. His colleagues, being equally captivated by her beauty, wanted to do the same with her, but soon backed up, at Shaddad offering them the booty in return.

This woman's name was Zabeeba; and she had two boys. The elder was called Jareer and the youngest Shiboob. Shaddad left them with their mother, and called on them every morning and night. Left as a pawn toyed with by the freehand of fate as her Lord predestined, Zabeeba lived through in this fashion till she became pregnant. Days and months passed by, and the moment of her delivery arrived; and when she was at labour, as her Creator so willed, she kept screaming until dawn and brought forth a black boy (my translation)

E.g. 8

Then began the woman to scream and weep. Antar cast his eyes toward Ibla, and she was bathed in tears: he looked at her mother and her grief was great. Antar smiled and

presented himself before Ibla's mother. Oh mistress, said he, what think you of these our enemies? Verily, they are eager for their prey. Oh Antar, said she, my force and spirits are exhausted; in a moment we shall be prisoners of our enemies, and they will scatter us over this desert. Oh my mistress, said Antar, give Ibla to me in marriage, and I will disperse your enemies at a single onset. I will reduce them to annihilation; and I will give you their horses and armour as a dower. This is no time for merriment, said she. No, cried Antar, by the God of day, and the animator of souls: he that is God the merciful, and the Lord of victory, if you promise to marry her to me, I will make over to you these horses and slay their masters (Terrick Hamilton, *Antar: A Bedoueen Romance*, Pp, 77-78)

ومدوا إلى عنتر برماحهم وأقبلوا عليه بصياحهم فعلا من النسوان البكاء والعويل والاشتكاء ونظر عنتر إلى عبلة ودموعها تنحدر على خدودها وقد جرت على نحرها وعقودها وسمية وأم عبلة تصيحان بالويل والحرب وقد حشيتا على العرض والنسب فتقدم إلى أم عبلة وقال أتزوجيني عبلة حتى أرد هذه الخيل من أول حملة أعطيك اسلابهم وخيولهم من بعض الصداق واتركهم مبددين في الأفاق فقالت له ويلك يا عنتر افي مثل هذا الوقت يكون المزاح والأجساد قد كرهت الارواح فقال عنتر لا وحق خالق الصباح ومنسم الرياح إن وعدتني بذلك رددت هذه الخيل كلها على أعقابها وأعطيتك كل عددها وأسلابها فقالت دونك الخيل ولك ما تريد غير أنها لم تضمر له الوفاء لأنه من العبيد وذلك منكر عند العرب أن تتزوج الحرة بعبد لا نسب له ولا حسب. (كتاب عنترة بن شداد، طبعة بيروت، صص،34)

They were approaching 'Antar, brandishing their spears and yelling. The women then shrieked in terror, and groaned and moaned. 'Antar cast a glance at 'Abla who was vehemently tearful; tears poured off her cheek, neck and necklace. Sumaya and 'Abla's mother were wailing and howling, being afraid lest their honour and reputation be marred. 'Antar then presented himself before 'Abla's mother and addressing her, he said: oh mistress, give me 'Abla in marriage and I strike back the raiders; I will annihilate them in one go; their horses and all their belongings I will make over to you as part of the dowry, and their corpses will be left dispersed in the wilderness. Woe betide you 'Antar, said she; this is no time for jesting; our souls are about to depart our bodies. No, replied 'Antar, by He who created the morning, and blew the wind, I will drive back the marauders, and whatever we loot of them of horses and possessions shall all be yours. To war, said 'Abla's mother. I promise you what you desire, but deep down she knew she could not keep her word. For he was a

slave and the Arabs abhor to marry a free woman to a slave of no noble descent. (my translation; P,222).

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