

Richard van Leeuwen and Arnoud Vrolijk, *The Thousand and One Nights and Orientalism in the Dutch Republic, 1700-1800. Antoine Galland, Ghisbert Cuper and Gilbert de Flines* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2019, 172 pp., ISBN 978 94 6298 879 8).

Bibliographical research into translations – or in this case translations of translations – of books intended largely for a popular, rather than an academic, market in the early modern period has always been filled with challenges. Many of the attested editions seem to have disappeared without trace. To discover them, if they still exist, requires luck and patient research in libraries throughout the world. The translators, furthermore, were sometimes anonymous or simply signed with a set of initials. The English translation (1649) of André Du Ryer's French translation of the Qur'an (1647) is an example. Scholars are at each other's throats in an effort to determine who the translator was. The only point on which they agree is that it was not the Scottish writer Alexander Ross to whom the translation has been attributed ever since the early eighteenth century. An added problem in the case of translations of translations from Arabic is that, while the original translator was obviously an Orientalist (and can thus be identified without too much difficulty), the translator of the translations hardly ever had the slightest interest in Arab world or any knowledge of Arabic. He was usually one of many professional or amateur men of letters whose only interest in the job must have either been the money they could earn from it or the desire to produce a good translation of a work in another European language.

In their richly illustrated, beautifully written, and highly informative book Richard van Leeuwen, lecturer in Islamic studies at the University of Amsterdam, and Arnoud Vrolijk, the curator of Oriental manuscripts and rare books at the Leiden University Library, have tackled the Dutch fortunes of Antoine Galland's French translation of the *Thousand and One Nights*. Because of its immense importance as a centre of Arabic studies in the seventeenth century and the commercial interests that linked it to the Arab world, the Dutch Republic was inevitably involved in the publication and diffusion of the most popular Arabic text to have arrived in the West. Galland himself was in close touch with Ghisbert Cuper who lived in Deventer (of which he was once mayor) and who was a central figure in the intellectual community of the Republic of Letters. With a vast network of correspondents, Cuper used Galland as one of his main sources for knowledge of Arab culture. Galland, in turn, kept him informed of his progress in translating the *Nights*.

Galland's version was originally published in Paris, in twelve volumes, between 1704 and 1717, but, within a year of the publication of the first

volume, Pierre Husson, a bookseller of Huguenot descent in The Hague, produced a pirate edition. Husson's edition of the *Nights* was far more attractive than the Paris one. The French publication had no illustrations, but Husson provided frontispieces and amusing engravings designed by the Dutch painter David Coster which Van Leeuwen and Vrolijk have reproduced in an appendix. The last of the seven editions issued by the Husson family came out in 1761 and seven years later a further edition was published in Leiden by the Swiss theologian Jacob Wetstein who appears to have had his eye on the German market.

Then there were the Dutch translations of Galland. Van Leeuwen and Vrolijk have discovered a hitherto unknown edition, published by Hendrik Bosch in Amsterdam in 1719, the only known copy of which is at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign – *De duysent en eene nacht, Arabische vertellingen*, containing the first eight parts of Galland's Paris edition. The translator signed himself with the initials G.D.F. This publication of the 1719 edition of the *Nights* was followed in 1738 by a complete version, published in Amsterdam by Pieter Aldewerelt, but signed by the same translator. So who was G.D.F.? Van Leeuwen and Vrolijk have identified him as Gilbert de Flines, a Mennonite silk merchant from Amsterdam who became a British subject and died in England. Besides his commitment to trade De Flines had literary ambitions, but his interest in the East seems to have been minimal. He appears above all to have wanted to provide a good Dutch translation of a fashionable French book. In the Dutch-speaking world De Flines' translation was popular. Even if no copy seems to have survived of some of the later editions, others followed, including one by the Amsterdam bookseller Steven van Esveldt. Van Leeuwen and Vrolijk trace the fortunes of the Dutch translation to the Southern Netherlands and then to Indonesia, where a Javanese rendering based largely on De Flines by Carel Frederik Winter, a school teacher in Jakarta, came out in 1846. Yet, for all the success of De Flines' translation, and despite the vogue for the 'oriental tale' which swept over Europe and of which they give an interesting analysis, Van Leeuwen and Vrolijk remind us that the Dutch intellectual elite preferred the French version of the *Nights*. The critical response to the work, moreover, was limited. Rijklof Michaël van Goens, a professor at Utrecht, was one of the very few men of letters to mention it. As Van Leeuwen and Vrolijk write, 'in strictly academic circles, the *Nights* was deemed too frivolous for serious attention' (134). It was not until the end of the nineteenth century that a Dutch Arabist of stature, Michael Jan de Goeje, at last took an interest in the provenance and the philological aspects of the work. The first Dutch translation made directly from the Arabic, however, had to wait still longer: Van Leeuwen's version in fourteen volumes appeared between 1993 and 1999.