Introduction: The Emerging Field of Pseudotranslation

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Generally defined as "texts that are regarded as translations in the target culture although they lack a corresponding source text in any foreign culture" (Gürçağlar, "Pseudotranslation" 516), pseudotranslations have a rich and as yet somewhat unrecovered history.[1] The use of the term "pseudotranslation" in English dates back to an anonymous review of Walter Scott's novel *St. Ronan's Well* in the December 1823 issue of *The Literary Gazette*, which ends with a footnote referring to the "curiosity of literature" that "a *pseudo* German translation of this Novel reached London before the original" (818).[2] The pseudotranslation in question was a novel entitled *Walladmor*, the first volume of which was published in Berlin by Friedrich August Herbig in 1823, with the remaining two volumes appearing in 1824. Advertised as a translation of the latest novel by Walter Scott, whose fame across Europe was at its climax at that point, it was soon revealed that the work was in fact a literary hoax and an original composition by a young writer named Willibald Alexis, the pseudonym of the historical novelist Wilhelm Heinrich Häring. The case is an interesting one in several respects. While one might suspect that its publication was primarily driven by commercial motivations—it was published just in time for the annual Leipzig book fair, which had no new Scott novel on offer yet—*Walladmor* simultaneously stands out as a literary experiment in its own right, weaving Scott's own metafictional play with authenticity and authorship into its plot. Moreover, the novel inspired a translational afterlife of its own when Thomas De Quincey decided to produce an English translation in 1825, under the title *Walladmor: Freely Translated into German from the English of Sir Walter Scott, and Now Freely Translated from the German into English*. Translations into Dutch, Polish, French, and Swedish would appear later.[3]

Walladmor is far from the oldest instance of pseudotranslation, and it illustrates only one of the many functions pseudotranslation may perform. Geoffrey of

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Monmouth's twelfth-century *Historia Regum Britanniae*, presented as a Latin translation of a Welsh manuscript, provided the Anglo-Norman rulers with a fictional history of the Britons that reached all the way back to the Trojan War. In the eighth chapter of Cervantes's *Don Quixote* (1605/1615), the narrator indicates that the novel is in fact a translation from an Arabic manuscript by Cid Hamet Benengeli, which can be read both as a metafictional gesture and as a parody of the trope of the lost manuscript typical of the genre of the chivalric romance. Another famous example, *Lettres Persanes* (1721), alleged translations of letters by two Persian lodgers, allowed Montesquieu to avoid censorship. From the political to the metafictional and the critical, pseudotranslation serves many purposes and takes on a wide variety of forms.[4]

In the wake of Gideon Toury's remarks on pseudotranslation in the first excursus of his seminal *Descriptive Translation Studies and Beyond* (1995), translation scholars initially considered pseudotranslations primarily as vehicles for cultural innovation. Describing pseudotranslation as a strategy offering "a convenient and relatively safe way of breaking with sanctioned patterns and introducing novelties into a culture," Toury argued that

> [g]iven the fact that translations tend to be assigned *secondary* functions within a cultural (poly)system […], there can be no wonder that deviations occurring in texts assumed to have been translated often meet with greater tolerance, and for this very reason. (*Descriptive Translation Studies* 48-49)

Moreover, as examples such as *The Book of Mormon*, Walpole's *Castle of Otranto*, and Karen Blixen's *Gengældelsens Veje* demonstrate, "the decision to disguise a text as a translation always implies a deliberate act of *subordination*, namely to a culture which is considered prestigious, important, or dominant in some way" (*Descriptive Translation Studies* 50).

Toury's descriptive approach has been highly influential, in the first place because it put pseudotranslations on the map as "proper objects of study" allowing a privileged entry into "what a society has become conscious of in how it conceives of translation" (*Descriptive Translation Studies* 54). In the meantime, however, Toury's definition of pseudotranslation as "a disguise mechanism whereby advantage is taken of a culture-internal conception of translation" ("Enhancing Cultural Changes" 5) has been both criticized and supplemented with a range of alternative methods and approaches. As Şehnaz Tahir Gürçağlar has recently argued, the function of pseudotranslation is by no means restricted to the innovative role highlighted by Toury. In her essay on the history and complexeties of the study of pseudotranslation, Gürçağlar lists a number of additional motives related to commerce, power, gender, historiography, expansion of readership, promotion of language, literary experimentation and narrative experimentation.[5] As she also points out, recent scholarship has focused on "the theoretical potentials and complexities of the phenomenon" (520), for example, on the way in which it allows for a revaluation of the relationship between translation and original, or between fact and fiction, the focus of her own essay.

Pseudotranslation has indeed attracted much scholarly attention in recent years. In 2014, Brigitte Rath even defined pseudotranslation as one of the "Ideas of the Decade" in the *State of the Discipline Report* of the American Comparative Literature Association (ACLA). Indicating that the term still suffers from a certain terminological instability, as it competes with terms such as "fictitious translation," "supposed translation," and "original translation," Rath specifically foregrounds pseudotranslation as "a mode of reading":

> [f]oregrounding a text's imaginary origin in a different culture […] stresses the conjecture and transnational imagination that is always involved in reading a text as world literature. Pseudotranslation as a mode of reading has also much to contribute to questions of translatability, representation, voice, authorship, authenticity, and multilingualism. (Rath 2014)

Rath sees a "new field" emerging that still, however, suffers from "a scarcity of cross-references between the individual contributions" and "little awareness for the developing field." Such an emerging but as yet fragmented field can indeed be discerned. In her plea for a "new comparative literature" in *The Translation Zone* (2005), for example, Emily Apter articulated a Benjaminian notion of pseudotranslation as "the premier illustration of a deconstructed ontology, insofar as it reveals the extent to which all translations are unreliable transmitters of the original" (212). By far most contributions to the field consist of case studies dealing, for example, with the production of pseudotranslations in French (Martens and Vanacker), English (Rath, Du Pont, Toremans), German (de Groote and Toremans), Turkish (Gürçağlar), and Japanese (Beebee and Amano). In a recent special issue of *Interférences littéraires*, we present more Dutch, Russian, French, German, English, Latin, and North American cases under the rubric of metafictionality. Witnessing this proliferation of case studies and theoretical/methodological revaluations, perhaps the time has indeed come to bring together scholars on the theme of pseudotranslation to further explore the functions, variety, and intricacies of pseudotranslation, to bring the topic into focus and to explore possibilities for further research and collaboration. This special issue counts as a modest contribution towards the further consolidation of this field by presenting new work on pseudotranslation from multiple angles by both emerging and established scholars.

In the opening article, Şehnaz Tahir Gürçağlar discusses the use of pseudotranslation as a frame narrative in Murat Gülsoy's epistolary novel *Gölgeler ve Hayaller Şehrinde* (*In the City of Shadows and Dreams*, 2014). By means of a detailed analysis of both peritextual and epitextual elements, Gürçağlar demonstrates how pseudotranslation both triggers and becomes part of a larger transmetic dimension (Beebee) that drives the novel's subtle exploration of the borders between history and fiction. Together with the simultaneous foregrounding of translation on different levels, the framing of the novel as a pseudotranslation simultaneously enhances and undermines historical authenticity, thus fragmenting the reading experience and increasing the reader's self-awareness. Set in Turkey around the time of the Young Turk Revolution

of 1908, Gülsoy's novel employs pseudotranslation and other transmetic elements such as translator's notes, the inclusion of actual translations, and translator characters to produce a heteroglossic form of writing that induces a self-reflexive reading practice and a corresponding fictional complication of historical authenticity.

Christine Lombez discusses the political use of pseudotranslation during the German Occupation of France (1940-44) by analyzing four poems included in *L'Honneur des poètes II—Europe*, an anthology published clandestinely by Éditions de Minuit in May 1944. Among a number of actual translations of poems by Greek, Yugoslavian, Bulgarian, Italian, and Belgian poets, four poems were presented as translations from Norwegian, Polish, Czech, and Dutch originals, but were in fact original compositions by Robert Denos, André Frénaud, and Paul Eluard. While formally marked as translations by, for example, the addition of "traduit de," the inclusion of culturally specific references, or the emphatic presence of a local speaker, the use of specific stylistic devices such as surrealist imagery and expressions betray the presence of the actual French authors behind the poems. While the particular political purpose of the pseudotranslations was to suggest the presence of an elaborate international network of resistance poets in the occupied countries, the volume largely missed its target due to its belated publication in June 1944.

Based upon Emily Apter's critique of World Literature and its elaboration in the specific context of Latin American literature by Heather Cleary, Ilse Logie also investigates the political use of pseudotranslation, albeit in the very different context of contemporary World Literature and its politics of the marginalization and essentialist reduction of peripheral cultures. Analysing two novellas by the Mexican-Peruvian author Mario Bellatin, Logie demonstrates how the use of pseudotranslation and related processes such as pseudobiography and fictitious back-translation facilitate a double critical function of fiction. In the first place, these processes allow Bellatin to foreground the fundamentally translational essence of all fiction and to demystify notions of originality and authorship. Countering the degradation of translation to a merely secondary or derivative process, Bellatin's work posits translation as a basic mechanism underlying all text production. Against the privileging of authorial authority and originality, Bellatin's fiction promotes processes of derivation and creative appropriation, empowering the translator, rather than the author, as a subversive figure. Far from mere hoax or camouflage, pseudotranslation in Bellatin's work is endowed with an incisively critical power to counter the homogenizing and essentializing tendencies of World Literature with a heterogeneous and translational model of a truly global literature. Balancing the local and the global, Bellatin thus fictionalizes translation as a subversive mode of textual reproduction that questions the centralism and implied hierarchies of World Literature.

In her essay on twentieth-century Italian poet, editor, critic and translator Franco Fortini, Irene Fantappiè discusses the ways in which pseudotranslation involves author, text, and reader in a number of paradoxes that are similar to so-called multistable figures (or *Kippbilder*). Just as multistable figures allow for the coexistence

of two equally valid but radically incompatible interpretations, pseudotranslation generates mutually exclusive notions of authorship, textuality, and reading that are nevertheless allowed to coexist. On the level of authorship, pseudotranslations provide a free space for Fortini within which to enact different authorial postures and *milieux*, and to engage in an often self-contradictory cultural performance that is essential to his oeuvre as such. The central importance of this freedom is indicated by Fortini's own term for his textual forgeries: *traduzioni immaginarie* refers to the freedom of the imagination to create texts that are both original and translated. As it is impossible to conceive of these texts as both primary and derivative at the same time, the reader is invited to go back and forth between them, oscillating between two incompatible but coexistent textual modalities. The hermeneutic model for this paradoxical textuality and its reception is the famous multistable figure, which thus provides an apt model for the radical complication of fixed dichotomies that is effected in and by pseudotranslation.[6]

Tegan Raleigh takes an extensive diachronic look at pseudotranslation as it develops in the collections of tales by the eighteenth-century lawyer and man of letters Thomas-Simon Gueullette. By closely analzying the paratextual materials surrounding the five collections of fairy tales published by Gueullette between 1712 and 1733, Raleigh reconstructs how the author progressively lowers his mask and imitates in his prefaces both the contemporary orientalists and the *belles infidèles*. This increasingly explicit game, Raleigh argues, illustrates Toury's conception of pseudotranslation as a disguise mechanism and as an undercover strategy of innovation. In the case of Gueullette, this strategy consists of foregrounding the subjective dimension of cross-cultural transmission by explicitly hybridizing and recontextualizing oriental tales. In this respect, Gueullette's collections mark a pivotal point between early eighteenth-century orientalist translations and the openly fictitious translations that would appear later in the century.

Marie-Florence Sguaitamatti's article remains in eighteenth-century France and contextualizes Claude Crébillon's pseudotranslation *Tanzaï et Néadarné, histoire japonaise* (1734) in the broader context of the overtly metafictional novels he published in the 1730s and 1740s. As one of his most markedly autoreflexive and critical novels, *Tanzaï et Néadarné* combines pseudotranslation with the trope of the lost manuscript and other metafictional devices such as the mixing of genres, narrator's interventions, and characters' comments on the narrative in which they find themselves. Accordingly, pseudotranslation should here be considered in close relation to metafictional questions concerning the boundaries between truth and fiction. More specifically, the article pursues a closer understanding of the place of cultural alterity in Crébillon's novel, especially in its extensive preface, and of the ways in which the novel, as pseudotranslation, engages with the Modern critique of fictionality by presenting the reader with a detailed account of the translation of an imaginary Japanese work through the centuries. As such, Sguaitamatti argues, Crébillon recasts the Modern critique of fictionality into a specifically translational mode, turning

translation into an image of the mediating function of the novelist. Just as fiction for Crébillon is both dangerous and instructive, alterity is both effaced and reinforced in (pseudo)translation.

Ana Méndez-Oliver's article focuses on the case of Miguel de Luna's *Verdadera historia del Rey don Rodrigo*, first published in 1592 and presented as a translation of a manuscript by an Arab historian found in King Felipe II's library in El Escorial. Recounting the history of the last Visigothic king of the Iberian Peninsula, before the Muslim invasion of 711, Luna's pseudotranslation presents a counter-history of Spain's national myth of a homogeneous, gothic, and Christian ancestry, which became the official history of Catholic hegemony at the end of the sixteenth century. As a *morisco* and official translator at the court of King Felipe II, Luna was ideally positioned to produce such a counter-historical work playing with prevailing translation conventions at a time when censorship and the displacement and expulsion of the *morisco-granadino* community was taking place. Analyzing the various types of devices that Luna employed to frame the *Verdadera historia* as an authentic translation and to inscribe himself in the text as a reliable translator, Méndez-Oliver provides a detailed account of a specific case of the political use of pseudotranslation.

In the concluding article, Louis Watier considers problems of definition and demarcation. Surveying attempts at defining pseudotranslation, ranging from Gideon Toury and Descriptive Translation Studies to more recent works by Douglas Robinson, Roland Jenn, and others, Watier locates in these definitions a problem of demarcation and a threat that the term will become too inclusive to retain critical and analytical potential. Commenting on examples including Cervantes's *Los Trabajos de Persiles y Sigismunda*, MacPherson's *Ossian* poems, and Lönnrot's *Kalevala*, Watier scouts the borders between translation, composition, adaptation, and variation, to conclude that attempts at defining pseudotranslation in terms of the relation between text and source(s) inevitably end up with too broad and inclusive a notion that, moreover, becomes indistinguishable from and thus conceptually intermingled with other forms of hypertextuality. Consequently, Watier proposes a more limited definition of pseudotranslations as texts that postulate a missing original.

From theoretical reflections on matters of definition and demarcation, to analyses of its political, historical, and metafictional aspects, the essays in this special issue aim to contribute to and further consolidate the emerging field of the study of pseudotranslation. As such, this special issue may also be considered as an open invitation to scholars to enter this field and to explore the phenomenon of pseudotranslation from their own specific historical and/or critical vantage points.

Notes

1. For alternative definitions of pseudotranslation, see O'Sullivan, Rambelli, and Robertson.

2. Quoted by Thomas (225). Thomas in fact misquotes the article and has "pseudo-translation" instead of

"*pseudo* German translation." Also quoted by Martens and Vanacker (2013).

3. For a more detailed discussion of the case of *Walladmor*, see Burwick, de Groote and Toremans, and Thomas.

4. Apart from the case discussed in this special issue, other examples of pseudotranslation include cases as diverse as Prévost's *Cleveland ou le philosophe anglais* (1731), James Macpherson's *Ossian* (ca. 1760-13), Thomas Carlyle's *Sartor Resartus* (1833-34/1836), Akutagawa Ryūnosuke's *Hōkyōnin no Shi* [*The Martyr*] (1918), and, more recently, Andreï Makine's *La Fille d'un Héros de L'Union Soviétique* (1990) and Xiaolu Guo's *I Am China* (2014). See also the case studies discussed in Martens and Vanacker (2013), and Vanacker and Toremans (2016).

5. Providing an overview of scholarship on these functions and motives of pseudotranslation, as well as an extensive bibliography on the topic, Gürçağlar's essay is an excellent introduction to the study of the phenomenon.

6. It is interesting to note a resonance here between Fantappiè's approach and Brigitte Rath's concept of "original translation" (see Rath 2016), which she presents as an alternative to a too essentialist concept of "pseudotranslation" that emphasizes the importance of a mode of reading that is stimulated by the double nature of the text (original/translation) and that ultimately depends on the reader for its interpretative dynamic.

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