

## Pseudotranslation

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### Introduction

A pseudotranslation, sometimes also known as a fictitious translation, is a text that is presented and/or widely received as a translation, but for which no single corresponding source text has ever existed (cf. Toury 1995, 40). Most scholars use the terms ‘pseudotranslation’ and ‘fictitious translation’ interchangeably, though some, such as Anikó Sohár (1998, 1999), draw a distinction between the two. Sohár reserves the term ‘fictitious translation’ for cases in which, in addition to the apparently translated text, a publication is accompanied by fictitious bibliographical information about the supposed source text, such as its original title or date of publication.

Pseudotranslations are accorded considerable importance within the field of translation studies. One of the first scholars in the field to devote attention to the phenomenon was Gideon Toury (1984). His work in *Descriptive Translation Studies* sought to direct the focus of the discipline towards the role of a translation in the target culture, and emphasised the concept of ‘assumed translation’, whereby a text that a given culture considers and treats as a translation should be assumed to be one unless evidence proves otherwise. Toury’s case studies of pseudotranslations such as *Papa Hamlet* emphasise the usefulness of these examples in revealing what in the target culture are considered to be key features and roles of translation. *Papa Hamlet*, published in Germany in 1889, was presented as translated from a Norwegian original written by an as-yet-undiscovered author. Both the author and the source text were invented, however, and the true (German) authors were only revealed some months later. With this text, the authors succeeded in introducing a new and innovative kind of writing into the German literary system, one whose critical reception was very much shaped by the origins of its apparent author, and which was unlikely to have been received as positively had it simply been presented, from the outset, as the German original it was (Toury 1995, 47-52).

Over the last thirty or so years, many more investigations within the field of translation studies have looked at examples of pseudotranslation from throughout history. This research has provided valuable insights into the motivations behind the choice to produce a pseudotranslation, the reception of pseudotranslations, and what the phenomenon can tell us about ‘genuine’ translation in a given literary system at a given time.

Researchers have identified several possible reasons why an author might choose to present an original work as a translation. In their masquerade as translations pseudotranslations may be more or less ‘believable’. In some cases, the technique is used largely as a literary device, as a kind of narratorial fiction, and the author most likely would not expect readers to take literally the claim that the text is a translation. Indeed, the author might expect – or even want – to be ‘found out’, or might present the text as a translation while at the same time acknowledging his or her own authorship. A very famous example of this is Miguel de Cervantes’ *Don Quixote*, an early seventeenth-century masterpiece of Spanish fiction, which is presented as having been translated from the Arabic of an author by the name of Cide Hamete Benengeli. This literary device, quite commonly used at the time, added to the illusion that this could be a true story, and that the manuscript had undergone a kind of ‘adventure’ before reaching the reader. A more recent example is Umberto Eco’s 1980 novel *Il nome della rosa* (*The Name of the Rose*, 1983), ostensibly a nineteenth-century translation into French of a manuscript by the German monk who is one of the protagonists of the story, but at the same time very clearly proclaimed on the front cover to be a novel by the Italian author Umberto Eco. Even more elaborate is *S.* by J. J. Abrams and Doug Dorst (2013), a multi-layered text in which the novel-within-the-novel, *Ship of Theseus* by V. M. Straka, is the object of convoluted textual and paratextual investigations by two junior scholar-detectives who write each other notes in the margins of a library copy. Straka, his editor and his novel are inventions of Abrams and Dorst; within the mysterious world of the story they may be revealed a second time around to have been inventions, pseudonyms, pseudotranslations. In cases such as these, the device of pseudotranslation serves to add narrative layering to a text and, often, an element of parody, due to the game of stylistic imitation to which this kind of writing lends itself. However, in other cases, an original text might be presented as a translation because the author wishes to remain anonymous, perhaps because of the controversial or experimental nature of his or her work. In yet other situations, the existence of an exotic foreign ‘original’ is perceived as appealing to audiences, and pseudotranslation is selected so that a text will be easier to describe, package and sell to readers. These and other possible motivations behind pseudotranslation are discussed in more detail in below.

### **Motivations for pseudotranslation**

Olaf Du Pont (2005, 329-331) gives a very helpful outline of some of the reasons that might lie behind an author’s decision to present his or her work as a translation even though it lacks a source text. Pseudotranslation can be a way of introducing innovation into the target culture through literary experimentation or transgression, possibly even by exploring or calling into question pervasive notions of authorship. Moreover, the choice of a ‘source’ culture that is granted prestige in the target culture can allow the author further leeway with his or her literary style, since works of that origin may be accorded greater indulgence and respect by readers and critics. Pseudotranslation can give an already prominent author a degree of anonymity, allowing him or her to explore a new style, theme or genre, unimpeded by the preconceptions readers might have formed on the basis of the author’s earlier work.

Writers might opt to publish a pseudotranslation to get around censorship laws, as in some cultures, regimes and historical periods it has been the case that translated works have benefited from more lenient treatment by censors. In other contexts, pseudotranslation can be a convenient marketing technique if the purported source language and its cultural production are popular in the target culture. This is sometimes the case when a new genre of fiction is introduced to a literary system. At a textual level, pseudotranslation can allow an author to

attribute certain unusual features of the text, such as odd turns of phrase or references to exotic cultural artefacts, atmosphere, or places, to supposedly untranslatable qualities of the source text or to stylistic peculiarities of the 'original' author. In these cases, translation and foreignness are associated with prestige, and stylistic creativity is linked in a positive way to the kind of strange newness introduced by translation. The device of pseudotranslation can also be used to make a text seem more authentic, for example by claiming the manuscript was found and translated well after it was originally written; this can be particularly useful in accounting for the appearance of 'older' works hitherto 'undiscovered'.

Regardless of an author-pseudotranslator's motivations, it is important to point out that a pseudotranslation can only be studied as such once the text's true nature has been revealed, or as Toury puts it, 'after the veil has been lifted' (1995, 40); up until that point, it is received, quite simply, as a translation. It may take weeks, months or years for a pseudotranslation to be unmasked, and some texts presented as translations might never be subjected to the kind of literary detective work that would be required to prove the non-existence of a source text. Even once scholars have revealed a text to be a pseudotranslation, regular readers may continue to consume it as a translation (Sohár 1998). The case studies summarised below illustrate a range of pseudotranslations and the conditions under which they were written.

### **Pseudotranslation and censorship**

In situations where literary creativity is significantly curtailed by censorship, pseudotranslation can be a convenient and somewhat safer way for writers to comment on sensitive topics or introduce politically or socially controversial themes. For example, in eighteenth-century France, one of the functions of pseudotranslations was as an 'alibi' for writers. A work that 'didn't represent the views of the French crown or church was considered a threat to the established order', and thus subject to censorship. By masquerading as a translator, however, an author can transmit 'literature that is critical of society and religion [...] while evading the responsibility for it' (Kupsch-Losereit 2014, 190). This enables a writer to get controversial ideas safely into circulation. (For more on the role of pseudotranslation in French literature, see Martens and Vanacker 2013.)

However, pseudotranslations do not by definition transgress censorship boundaries. Merino and Rabadán found that during Franco's dictatorship in Spain (1939-1975), in the area of imported popular fiction, both genuine translations and pseudotranslations (which abounded) were often *self-censored* by authors or translators, or by the publishing houses, meaning less intervention was required on the part of the authorities (Merino and Rabadán 2002, 138). Indeed, the large-scale employment of Spanish writers to produce pseudotranslations may have been seen as advantageous by publishing houses and by the authorities, as those writers were already familiar with the country's censorship regime and thus knew how to produce work that would get official authorisation (Merino and Rabadán 2002, 142, see also Camus Camus 2010).

In Mussolini's Italy (1922-1943), the dictatorship was troubled by the considerable popularity of crime fiction, which was condemned for presenting a negative image of the country and hence of the regime, which preferred instead to promote the image of an orderly, law-abiding land where crime had been all but eliminated. In 1937 a law was introduced to counter these negative depictions of the country; among other requirements it decreed that the culprit in a crime novel must not under any circumstances be Italian (Pistelli 2006, 234). One side effect of this was that many Italian crime novels began to be set in foreign countries; this allowed authors to widen the pool of possible culprits and maintain the suspense inherent in

the all-important ‘whodunit’ element. Some of these foreign-set novels were essentially akin to pseudotranslations. While they were not necessarily published under foreign pseudonyms, in their setting and style they were in many ways similar to those translated works that were already in circulation, and thus familiar to readers.

## Pseudotranslation and genre fiction

It was noted above that in certain contexts pseudotranslations might be considered more marketable than originals. This can be particularly the case with genre fiction, which generally entails recognisable models and is sometimes produced in ways similar to factory production (Milton 2000, 171), following established conventions for length, plot structure, thematic elements and character types. This makes it relatively easy to attempt to produce new works that will fit into the existing market – pseudotranslations that will sit on the shelves alongside an already popular assortment of genuine translations. Moreover, genre fiction might, in a given context, be closely associated in the minds of readers with one particular country of origin, conferring added prestige or marketability upon works (apparently) from that country.

For example, in France during the 1940s, Anglo-American thrillers were enormously popular and for some years, locally written crime fiction largely took the form of pseudotranslations, due to the overwhelming pressure to conform to the foreign model (Robyns 1990, 38). It was only some years later that the French genre system began to diversify and new kinds of French crime writing became established. One very famous pseudotranslation published in 1949 was by the French writer, translator and critic Boris Vian. Entitled *J'irai cracher sur vos tombes (I Spit on your Graves)*, it purported to be a work of American hard-boiled fiction by a certain Vernon Sullivan. Vian's authorship was soon revealed but the book became a bestseller regardless. Heavily influenced by American hardboiled and noir models, the novel also shows traces of the context in which it was written: recently liberated post-war France. Petit describes it as combining ‘prime US pulp and French sado-eroticism’ (2001). In short, it met readers' desire for the kind of reading experience that was being imported from the US, but it also closely reflected domestic concerns. In this respect, the book reminds us of the special capacity of pseudotranslation to present foreignness and the exotic in a way that can be especially meaningful to the domestic readership.

In Turkey, too, crime fiction and pseudotranslation went hand in hand for a period. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, books featuring Arthur Conan Doyle's investigator Sherlock Holmes were in high demand, and locally-written pseudotranslations appeared that starred Holmes as the protagonist. Tahir Gürçağlar observes that these Turkish Sherlock stories were often less humorous and less focused on deduction than Doyle's originals were (2008, 145-146).

By the mid twentieth century, Turkish readers' enthusiasm for crime fiction had extended to the hardboiled variety that was coming out of the United States in those years. Particularly popular were Mickey Spillane's Mike Hammer novels. However, there were not enough texts available to meet the demand and soon, Turkish writers and translators were being commissioned to write fresh novels with Hammer as the protagonist (Tahir Gürçağlar 2010, 177). Some of these were credited as original works (though they might still have been consumed by readers as translations), while in other cases they were marketed as translations. Tahir Gürçağlar observes that the protagonist of these Turkish-penned ‘Mike Hammers’ underwent significant ideological changes. Translator and author Kemal Tahir added anti-capitalist and anti-militarist elements to his pseudotranslations and explored the problem of racism, taking the

character a long way from the anti-communist protagonist of Spillane's original novels (2010, 178). Tahir Gürçağlar notes that, although pseudotranslation was common in Turkey up until the 1960s, attitudes to authorship have changed considerably since then, and nowadays Turkish authors who use pseudotranslation do so for quite different ends – in the service of literary experimentation, rather than for commercial reasons.

Crime fiction is not the only popular genre whose importation into new literary systems was aided by pseudotranslation during the twentieth century. In Hungary, science fiction and fantasy were virtually unknown until the early 1990s. Prior to that time, literature as entertainment had been frowned upon by the communist regime, as were influences from the West (Sohár 1998, 41-42). With the arrival of capitalism and the elimination of subsidies for publishing houses, publishers, translators and authors had to be innovative in order to survive in a very new commercial environment. The massive popularity of science fiction and fantasy novels led to many new works being produced in Hungary under the guise of translation, and a certain Wayne Chapman was credited with numerous publications that had actually been written locally (Sohár 1998). This writing and publishing activity ultimately led to the consolidation of the genre within the Hungarian literary system.

In Spain, during the 1940s, '50s and '60s, the most favoured genre was the Western – fiction dealing with narratives of the 'Far West' of the United States. Carmen Camus Camus observes that, although it might seem paradoxical that the nationalist Franco regime permitted such wide readership of fiction set in a foreign country, the Western's popularity was in fact facilitated by the regime in an act of what Toury (1995, 2005) terms 'culture planning'. The Book Promotion Law (1946), brought in to make books cheaper and at the same time promote the work of Spanish writers, meant that already popular genres like the Western were made more accessible to readers, and Spanish writers were asked to produce more such novels under pseudonyms redolent of the American West (Camus Camus 2010, 44).

### **Pseudotranslation and literary innovation**

Pseudotranslation does not always involve reproducing already popular models, however. For some authors, it has an important capacity to introduce innovation or to allow the exploration of themes in new and creative ways. In these cases, the anonymity pseudotranslation can offer the author may be less important than its scope for experimentation or creativity.

Horace Walpole's *Castle of Otranto* (1764), which claimed to be a translation by one 'William Marshal' of a manuscript found in Naples and dating back centuries, has since come to be thought of as the first example of a brand-new genre in English literature – the Gothic novel. Walpole soon revealed his authorship, but the work initially entered the English literary system in disguise (Toury 2005, 15 n. 4).

Other authors employ pseudotranslation as a device to explore specific themes. Thomas Beebee and Ikuho Amano (2010) have analysed its use in the work of the Japanese modernist writer Akutagawa Ryūnosuke. With the story 'Death of a Disciple', Akutagawa claimed to be publishing part of a sixteenth-century Japanese translation of the late medieval *Legenda aurea*. In his postface, he declared that the literal nature of the translation suggested it was most likely produced by a Jesuit priest (Beebee and Amano 2010, 22). While the *Legenda* certainly existed, and was immensely popular throughout Europe for centuries, the found translation into Japanese did not – the story was Akutagawa's own work – yet Beebee and Amano go on to show that he most likely drew on several other European sources for inspiration (23). Beebee and Amano conclude that in this story, and in another entitled 'The Faint Smiles of the Gods', recounting a vision experienced by a Jesuit missionary to Japan, Akutagawa uses the device of pseudotranslation

to explore themes of religious and cultural identity, transculturation, and Japan's relationship to the West.

Du Pont (2005) analyses Robert Graves fictional 'autobiographies' of the Roman Emperor Claudius as pseudotranslations. Unlike many of the cases outlined in the previous sections, Graves never hid the fact that he was the author of these two texts (*I, Claudius* and *Claudius the God and his Wife Messalina*, both published in 1934), but they are written in the first person and the narrative conceit is that they are translations of autobiographical works originally written in Greek by the Emperor himself. Certain stylistic elements, along with a story about the recent discovery of the 'autobiography' uphold the illusion that the work is a translation, but at the same time, Graves's openness about his authorship, as well as his author's note accompanying the works, make this an ambiguous 'double approach' (Du Pont 2005, 336). Pseudotranslation here is primarily in the interests of literary effect. In texts such as these, readers 'collude' with the author (Bassnett 1998, 26-27) by going along with the charade of translation, all the while being aware of the text's true authorship. Interestingly, Graves also succeeded in introducing innovation with these novels, as they spawned a new genre of pseudotranslated historical biographies of Roman emperors (Du Pont 2005, 343).

Another pseudotranslation of a 'rediscovered' text from classical times is *Chansons de Bilitis*, by the French poet Pierre Louÿs (Venuti 1998, 34-46). He presented the work, published in 1894, as a translation from Ancient Greek into French of the poetry of a courtesan named Bilitis, for whom he wrote an extensive oeuvre and invented an archaeological back-story. The poems were highly sensual and many explored lesbian desire; Venuti notes that they can be seen as an expression of Louÿs's own sexuality and that of his male readers. The popularity of the collection 'was helped along by the vogue of Greek revivalism in fin de siècle erotic literature' (Apter 2006, 215-16). In addition to allowing the author to experiment with a new persona and explore a different aspect of sexuality, the pseudo-scholarly paratext Louÿs wrote to accompany the poems allowed him to comment critically – through parody – on 'the prevailing concept of scholarship' of his time (Venuti 1998, 39).

### The ethics of pseudotranslation

The wide variety of pseudotranslation cases explored in the translation studies literature in recent decades is testament to the versatility of pseudotranslation and the enduring fascination it continues to exercise on both writers and scholars. But as some of the examples above show, the ethics of pseudotranslation can be murky. Emily Apter (2006) has commented critically on both Louÿs's *Chansons de Bilitis* and US poet Kenneth Rexroth's pseudotranslations of erotic 'Japanese' poetry by an invented young female poet Marichiko. Rexroth even went so far as to include some of the poems he wrote as Marichiko in anthologies of Japanese poetry. The poems fitted into a current of *japonisme* in Western literature in the mid twentieth century. Just as Louÿs's pseudotranslations embodied the male author's own concerns and desires as well as those of his French readership, one can speculate that Rexroth might have adopted a female Japanese persona 'opportunistically as cover for the expropriation of feminine literary voice' (Apter 2006, 218).

Cultural appropriation is a very real concern in pseudotranslation. By disguising his or her voice as that of a member of another culture, the pseudotranslator is inevitably speaking *for* members of that group. This can be particularly problematic if that culture is underrepresented in public discourse in the target culture and thus has very little voice of its own. One runs the risk of propagating stereotypes, exoticising the other, or simply drowning out authentic voices from that foreign literary system. It has been pointed out that sometimes a literary system

might be more open to pseudotranslations than to genuine ones. It could be argued that this is the case with crime fiction in the Anglophone market today – for example, while the system is somewhat open to translations of the work of Italian writers, much more commercially successful are novels *set* in Italy but written by foreigners (O’Sullivan 2004/05, Maher 2013).

Tahir Gürçağlar (2014) has examined a diary novel from 1935 entitled *The Wind Turns Over the Bosphorus: The Diary of a Simple Turk*. Presented as a translation from Turkish, it was in fact the work of a Swedish woman named Hanna Hindbeck. The narrow-minded attitudes and limited horizons of the narrator of the ‘diary’ presented a negative image of Turkish men to the Swedish, German and French readers exposed to it, an image Tahir Gürçağlar believes had long-lasting effects (524). It seems likely the Swedish author capitalised upon contemporary interest in Turkey and chose the device of the pseudotranslated diary to lend her representation of the country extra credibility.

However, pseudotranslation does not necessarily come about because of a straightforward individual decision by the text’s author to disguise his or her authorship. In the case of science fiction and fantasy in Hungary in the late twentieth century, book distributors, who held sway over publishers, made the decision to present a work as a pseudotranslation. Hungarian writers of this kind of genre fiction, who were credited as translators rather than as authors, did not have sufficient power to have much of a voice in the matter (Sohár 1999, 244).

The case of Westerns in Franco’s Spain was cited above as an example of culture planning by a regime – that genre’s position within the Spanish literary system of the time was bolstered by legislative and policy decisions on the part of the country’s rulers (Camus Camus 2010). Another, more extreme, instance of culture planning was the case of the Kazakh folk singer Džambul Džabayev (also transliterated as Jambyl Jabayev) in the USSR. This case is particularly significant from an ethical point of view since it involved appropriating an artist’s public persona for propagandistic purposes. Toury describes the operation as ‘mere disguise systematically turned into flat forgery’ (1995, 44). The patriotic poetry that appeared in Džabayev’s name was most likely written by team of Russian writers on commission from the Soviet regime, and appeared under the Kazakh’s authorship because it was conducive to the impression of a united union for the author of these odes to the ‘great leader’ to hail from one of the national republics rather than the centre of power.

### Historical perspectives on pseudotranslation

In the twenty-first century pseudotranslation might seem a rather marginal activity, either a thing of the past, now superseded by copyright law and notions of intellectual property, or simply a playful literary device. However, it is important to note that notions of authorship, originality, and even translation are not universal, and distinctions between translations, pseudotranslations and originals have not been static across history.

A text may, for example, have not a *single* source text at its origin, but be derived from a kind of composite of multiple source texts within a style or genre, and include translated fragments as well as other kinds of writing. Rambelli captures this when he characterises pseudotranslation as ‘a relationship of imitation which does not link a target text to a specific source text but rather to an ideal one, possibly abstracted from a group of texts identifying a particular genre’ (2008, 209). This, Bassnett argues, is the case with Thomas Malory’s *Le Morte d’Arthur* (1485), one of the most famous retellings of the legend of King Arthur. Malory drew on prior English, Welsh and French versions of the story, and his own publication entailed a mixture of translating, retelling, abridging and inventing; as Bassnett puts it, ‘the original is not a single text but a body of material in several languages’ (1998, 30).

The same is often claimed of another famous pseudotranslation, James Macpherson's 1760 collection of the poems of Ossian (Bassnett 1998). This cycle of poems, which purportedly had Ossian as its author and which Macpherson claimed to have collected and translated from ancient sources in Gaelic, was an enormous literary success throughout Europe and was in turn translated from Macpherson's English into several more languages. After hundreds of years of speculation and research, no single original has been unearthed, but it is likely that Macpherson drew on ballads, oral tales and ancient manuscripts in his reworking.

Andrea Rizzi (2008), too, cautions that the distinction between translation and pseudotranslation is not always a neat one, and can be dependent on the understanding of translation that is prevalent in a particular historical context. He found that Boiardo's fifteenth-century *Historia imperiale* was considered a translation for some three hundred years, before it was reclassified as a pseudotranslation following a change in notions of translation in the target culture. Parts of the text are translated and others clearly are not, but Rizzi uses both peritextual and epitextual material (such as catalogues, reviews and other references to the work) produced both at the time of its publication and in the following centuries, to pinpoint this change in classification. He warns against an excessively rigid, exclusive and 'unhistorical' dichotomy between translation and non-translation (p. 161) and advises scholars undertaking paratextual analysis to be aware that a text's reception as translation or pseudotranslation may shift over time.

The confusion and intrigue can work the other way around, too. Eva Hung (1999) has examined a case in China in which an apparently lost translation of a sacred Buddhist text had long been thought to be fake. Some parts of the commentary on the translation had survived, but for centuries scholars believed the translation was a spurious one commissioned in the seventh century by Empress Wu as a means of legitimising her reign – a kind of pseudotranslation, in other words. In fact, however, the Wu-era commentary was on a widely recognised prior translation and no 'fake' translation had ever existed. Despite the evidence produced by twentieth-century scholars, however, belief in the older theory of the fake translation persists. Hung (1999, 15) warns against unquestioningly accepting contemporary or near-contemporary assessments of ancient texts, as this may leave us susceptible to the influence of dominant cultural, social and political norms of the time, and these might not provide an objective perspective.

Whatever their authorship status, ethical complexities, or historical contextualisation, pseudotranslations are immensely revealing to scholars of translation studies because they provide insights into what readers in a particular time and place expect from translations. The following section examines some of the ways in which pseudotranslators seek to make their texts resemble the real thing.

### **Presentation, paratext and style**

Pseudotranslations often contain features that are common in genuine translations from that source language or culture. These might be linguistic features, or aspects of the paratexts accompanying the work. Paratextual material supporting the illusion of translation can include not only the fictional author's name and 'biography', and perhaps even a picture, as was the case with *Papa Hamlet*, whose dust jacket included an image of the supposed author (Toury 1984, 82), but also information about the 'source' text's publication history or discovery, not to mention notes or prefaces from the 'translator' or 'publisher', or introductions by scholarly authorities. All of these serve to reinforce the impression of authenticity.

Kupsch-Losereit provides an extensive list of paratextual and metatextual features that eighteenth-century French pseudotranslators frequently drew upon to make their works meet the expectations attached to genuine translations. These include comments on errors or other linguistic details of the ‘source’ text, or on the customs or cultural values it expresses. She also finds that French pseudotranslations of the period, such as Montesquieu’s *Lettres persanes* (1721) and *Le Temple de Gnide* (1725), reflected the preferred translation style of the era, commonly known as *belles infidèles*, albeit in an ironic and satirical way that allowed the author to comment – from hiding, as it were – on censorship and the limits it places on creativity (Kupsch-Losereit 2014, 195-96).

To further help a text ‘pass’ as a translation, authors sometimes employ stylistic features that are ‘characteristic of the source language or its conventional representation in the target culture’ (Du Pont 2005, 331). Examples of techniques evoking an illusion of translation include using turns of phrase typically associated with a particular kind of translation (Toury cites the example of *The Book of Mormon*, which includes more than 2000 occurrences of the Biblical-sounding ‘it came to pass’ (2005, 13-14)), or sprinkling a text with loan words from the ‘source’ language or with ‘signals of “translationese”’ (Rambelli 2008, 209), such as calques or other traces of foreignness. A number of contemporary Anglophone crime writers who set their work in Italy draw on these techniques (Maher 2013). Although they are quite open about their authorship, meaning the texts are perhaps not pseudotranslations in the strictest sense of the word, they make frequent use of Italian greetings and terms of address, and some even explain untranslatable concepts for the reader’s benefit, and use expressions that sound like literal translations from Italian, all of which can be seen to add to the texts’ apparent authenticity as representations of Italian life (Maher 2013, 148-150). Cover design, too, can help reinforce readers’ association between a work and its purported foreign origin (Tahir Gürçağlar 2010, 178, O’Sullivan 2004/05, 65), as can frequent in-text references to the foreign setting (Tahir Gürçağlar 2010, 178). However, authors who set their fiction in a foreign country do not always have detailed first-hand knowledge of their chosen setting or access to information that might make its depiction believable were the book to fall into the hands of a native of that country. For example, in Giorgio Scerbanenco’s Arthur Jelling series of detective stories, published in Italy in the early 1940s but set in Boston, names of places and people frequently reveal the author’s limited familiarity with the English language and American setting. These include implausible choices like “Ramdome” and “Steve” as surnames, “Darey Broock” [*sic*] as a place name, “Saint Lollis Pity” as the name of a boarding house, and the improbable “Wanders” as a brand of rifle, to cite just a few examples from the series.

## Future directions

The insights that pseudotranslations give into how the target culture views and characterises translation from a particular language or genre mean they are important objects of study for translation scholars, allowing us to reflect on what constitutes translation. The concept of pseudotranslation has been used in theoretical and philosophical explorations of the nature of translation and the role of the translator: Anthony Pym (2011) draws on it in building his argument about the distinction between the roles of author and translator (what he terms ‘the translator as non-author’). The existence of a phenomenon whereby people present a text as written in another language, by somebody other than themselves, in and of itself tells us something fundamental about why and how we produce and read (real) translations.

The pseudotranslation case studies published thus far range widely in genre, historical period, social context, and source and target languages. There is, however, more work to be

done (and, no doubt, many more pseudotranslations still to be unveiled). As the discipline begins to extend its attention to popular literature and paraliterature, there will be more to learn about the role of pseudotranslation in the international (and intercultural) circulation of genres and ideas. The role of market forces and the power dynamics between individual pseudotranslators and entities such as publishing houses also warrants further investigation. The ethics of pseudotranslation is another area that would benefit from continued exploration, as would its capacity to act as a kind of cultural translation, explaining a foreign culture to a domestic audience (Tahir Gürçağlar 2014, 523-26). Naturally, notions of exoticisation, orientalism and cultural appropriation must also come into any such discussion. Historical studies of the phenomenon will continue to refine our understanding of the concept, and of the way notions like translation and authorship change over time, along with what is (or is not) considered a translation. Curiosities like pseudotranslation should not be the sole preserve of translation studies scholars, however; these so-called ‘borderline’ varieties of translation are also important to literary history, although they are often neglected in the study of national literary traditions (Kálmán 1993, 71-72, Toury 1995, 52). The study of pseudotranslation’s deliberate use in major acts of culture planning (Toury 1995, 43) also warrants further research, as does the reception of pseudotranslations, including the way audience response changes when the ruse is unveiled.

The role pseudotranslation can play in overturning or reinforcing the position of certain kinds of text within a literary system, exploiting cultural prestige or author anonymity, evading censorship, or introducing innovation, not to mention the insights it affords into the role and characteristics of genuine translations, means these areas for future study – and more – are certain to further our understanding of the nature of translation itself.

## Further reading

Toury, Gideon. 1995. *Descriptive Translation Studies and Beyond*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

This seminal work in the field of translation studies includes an influential ‘excursus’ on the topic of pseudotranslation (pp. 40-52). Toury discusses some case studies and argues for the relevance the phenomenon has for the discipline.

Sohár, Anikó. 1999. *The Cultural Transfer of Science Fiction and Fantasy in Hungary 1989-1995*.

Frankfurt: Peter Lang.

Focusing on the role of both genuine translations and pseudotranslations in the establishment and consolidation of these two popular genres in Hungary after the end of the Communist regime, this book-length analysis is a key contribution to research on the place of pseudotranslation in the circulation of genre fiction.

Du Pont, Olaf. 2005. “Robert Graves’s Claudian novels: a case of pseudotranslation.” *Target* 17 (2):327-347.

This helpful contribution to the literature on the topic provides a clear and insightful outline of the various motivations behind authors’ use of pseudotranslation and of the techniques they use to give readers the impression a text has been translated.

Tahir Gürçağlar, Şehnaz. 2010. “Scouting the borders of translation: pseudotranslation, concealed translations and authorship in twentieth-century Turkey.” *Translation Studies* 3 (2):172-187.

One of several important studies the author has published on the topic of pseudotranslation, this article uses a variety of case studies from Turkish writing, including literary fiction and crime fiction, to explore the ways views of translation, authorship, and plagiarism changed in that culture during the twentieth century.

Rizzi, Andrea. 2008. “When a text is both a pseudotranslation and a translation: the enlightening case of Matteo Maria Boiardo (1441-1494).” In *Beyond Descriptive Translation Studies*:

*Investigations in Homage to Gideon Toury*, edited by Anthony Pym, Miriam Shlesinger and Daniel Simeoni, 153-162. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

A case study of a fifteenth-century text whose classification as a translation or as a pseudotranslation has changed over time. The article provides a useful working definition that allows scholars to draw upon peritexts and epitexts to assess how texts were viewed both at the time of publication and in subsequent historical periods.

## Related topics

Censorship and Translation Policy; Comics, the Graphic Novel, & Fan Fiction; Detective Fiction; The Ethics of Literary Translation; Stylistics.

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