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CULTURAL EXCHANGES IN A CHANGING WORLD

PRACTICES OF TRANSLATION

IN EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY ENGLAND

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The Crisis of Representation

Although there are several recent studies on early modern practices of translation in England and a number of studies on both eighteenth-century literary translations of ancient works and on the relationship between the novel and cultural translation [ARAVAMUDAN 2005; MCMURRAN 2009; GILLESPIE 2011],¹ there is no proper study concerning those practices of translation in England in the 'long' eighteenth century that consider spurious translations. Apart from some vital remarks on eighteenth-century theories of translation [STEINER 1975; BAKER & SALDANHA 2008; VENUTI 2008; MCMURRAN 2009], no critical study focuses solely on eighteenth-century practices of translation, although it was in the eighteenth century that translation and copyright laws underwent major changes.

In the 'long' eighteenth-century history of English literature, there was a great deal of translation from French and Oriental sources, which clearly indicates a market for fiction, and the need to satisfy it, of which booksellers were very aware. In the process of translation, editions of various translated works underwent modifications and editors used the narrative material for their own purposes, adapting the language, topoi, and the cultural practices described to fit their particular theme. The appropriation and domestication of the content of the text disconnected the translation from the historical and

¹ I shall mention some notable critical works on translation and the spread of literature during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, which, unfortunately, do not address the issue of translation as having played a crucial part in the formation of the genre of literary frauds or in the spread of plagiarism [MCMURRAN, 2009; GILLESPIE & HOPKINS; BAKER & SALDANHA].

literary orientations of the source text. The quarrel between the Ancients and the Moderns stemmed from the fact that knowledge and taste were no longer dictated by tradition. A crisis of authority was on its way, bringing about all the other subsequent crises: a crisis in authenticity, a crisis of representation, and eventually, a sincerity crisis which encompassed the others. The crisis of representation affected the European literary stage of that period and resulted in the publication of various books of an imposturous nature.

In order to expose these transformations and grasp the cultural and historical specificity of eighteenth-century England, I hope to fill this gap in the analysis of eighteenth-century culture by focusing on those particular translation practices which became the main cultural exchange currency between France and England in the eighteenth century with a focus on 'literary artifacts', spurious translations and doubtful attributions. Various publications were generally transmitted into Anglophone literary culture through the French-language route in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, and I will mainly enlarge upon the fraudulent elements engaged in this effort, by means of imitation, translation, and adaptation.

The title pages of most of the publications bore the inscription "Translated from" and it was usually an oriental language from which the text pretended to have been translated into French, and then into English.² In the words of Mary Helen McMurrin, "France was a crucial hub for European translation in this era, well situated geographically to mediate works from other European countries, and a cultural centre of translation because of the predominance of the French language. Writings of all kinds were translated into French, and thence into other vernaculars, a phenomenon promoted by an active French-language press outside France" [MCMURRAN 2008 : 150].

There are some significant aspects that should be mentioned in relation to the question of translation in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. In the first place, these "sources françaises" were sometimes mentioned in order to legitimate an English publication and to conceal the fact that the translation from the French had never been accomplished, the printed work being a mere fabrication of the author. In the second place, there was basically no Arabic original text to translate from. Translations from an Oriental language via the French route gave literary fraud a perfect ground for passing off its literary productions as genuine works with an already established European reputation.

² See, for instance, *Arabian Nights*, COLLINS, MARANA 1741, DEFOE and others.

Then, even if the works were translated from a French source text, the translator added to it his own interpretation of the text and thus, he distorted the original with the purpose of adjusting it to the literary and cultural norms of the period of time he lived in. It appears that the issue of 'translation' that was always blamed by the 'editors' for not allowing the 'original' message of the source text to get to the English public was, in fact, the main 'virtue' that stimulated the reader's interest to discover their own individual perception of the world uttered by a foreign observer. Besides, most of the texts in English that pretended to have been translated from Arabic were actually translations from the French language, or directly written in English after having imitated or inserted in the text some translated passages from another work.³

Another noteworthy aspect focuses on translation as a means of spreading knowledge among the people and of enriching the English language. Accordingly, despite censorship and other means to control printing, 'translation' facilitated the circulation of texts of dubious authorship and authenticity.

Being a less faithful relative of translation, adaptation was a form of translation which used a source text, but departed from it while embracing "numerous vague notions such as appropriation, domestication, imitation, rewriting, and so on [...] the history of adaptation is parasitic on historical concepts of translation" [BAKER & SALDANHA 3]. The concept of imitation, on the other hand, was freely used by translators or writers in order to justify some paragraphs "borrowed" from classical writers. McMurrin argues that "Imitation acknowledged the authority of the classics, but it also encouraged the translator to become an author in his own right: one developed one's own style by emulating them" [MCMURRAN 2008, 152].

Baker and Saldanha reveal that in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the epoch of the *belles infidèles*, adaptation flourished and France was the main centre of its production and distribution. It has been commonly accepted in eighteenth-century literary studies that translators from French

³ Oliver Goldsmith translated and added to his *Citizen of the World* entire passages he had taken from Marquis D'Argens' *Lettres Chinoises* without knowing that most of these extracts had been "borrowed" by D'Argens from Du Halde's description of China. See MCMURRAN 2009 [5]. Also, Arthur Friedman accused Goldsmith of having inserted into *The Citizen of the World* passages taken from Steele's *The Englishman* [294-296]. In addition, Oliver Goldsmith plagiarised various paragraphs from the English version of François-Ignace d'Espiard de la Borde's *The Spirit of the Nations* (London, 1753), according to GRIFFIN [59-63].

into English represented “unfaithful intermediaries for English literary works” [153], despite many translations that resulted in the production of useful and profitable works. There was a very thin border between an adapted work and one based on the imitation of previous works. The texts translated or those which pretended to be translations into English reveal the fact that prevailing modes of thought change according to the cultural requirements of any given age.

The Tradition of the Surveillance Chronicle

One instance of such controversial practice of translation is *Letters Writ by a Turkish Spy at Paris*, commonly attributed to Giovanni Paolo Marana. Letter writing, *ars dictaminis*, became an essential device of rhetoric in the medieval period, as a consequence of the growth of the population and commerce expansion. From the late seventeenth century well into the eighteenth, epistolary writing became so popular that other literary genres, such as travel accounts, satires, and autobiographies took inspiration from and followed the model of this literary device. Besides, in order to avoid censorship, writers in Europe eagerly developed this literary technique, which enabled them to criticise and satirise the Catholic Church in the disguise of a foreigner.⁴ Later on, non-fiction writing took over the characteristics of the epistolary form and came out in the shape of either philosophical or historical writings.

In the seventeenth century, an account of personal remarks, political views, and historical as well as political observations was provided by Giovanni Paolo Marana's *Esploratore Turco* (1684), the first epistolary fiction which located an Oriental in Europe, namely the Turk Mahmut in Paris. Literary scholarship devoted little attention to Marana's *Turkish Spy* and the enormous influence it had not only on the development of the epistolary genre and the surveillance chronicle in Europe, but also on the emergence of the literary faker impersonated by a foreign spy. As Richard H. Popkin remarks, *Letters Writ by a Turkish Spy* is one of the most popular books that “was widely published during the Enlightenment” [409, n.3] and one of the “little-used sources (by present-day scholars)” [409]. By the same token, Virginia Aksan remarks that “In Europe's collective intellectual history the *Turkish Spy* represents an important signpost in the process of the reorientation of European thought [...]” [211]. Marana initiated the genre of

⁴ See Marana's *Turkish spy*, Psalmanazar's false Formosan, Goldsmith's Chinese philosopher, and others.

the surveillance chronicle, which played a significant part in the expansion of the novel. He also greatly contributed to the spread of the epistolary genre in Europe while, at the same time, he created the perfect literary landscape for the multiplication, imitation, and the re-invention of this work.

Marana's *Letters Writ to a Turkish Spy* generated a tradition which abounded in the foreign observer type of letter writing available in English from French translations mainly. Moreover, it was not only the first volume that influenced this rich tradition of the genre, but the subsequent books to the *Letters Writ to a Turkish Spy*, irrespective of their authenticity and disputed authorship contributed to the proliferation of epistolary fiction, oriental tales, and the rise of the novel. Marana initiated the tradition of fraudulent literary translation into the English language. Few critics of narratives that revolve around the character of a foreign traveller who satirised his contemporaries mention Marana's *Letters Writ by a Turkish Spy* as the creator of the genre of the foreign observer-or spy-type of writing.

This "bizarre ouvrage" [BRAY 145], as Bernard Bray has characterised it, initially consisted of a single volume which generated the publication of further volumes⁵ and imitations, some falsely attributed to Marana, while other less or very well-known authors continued this tradition of the invented foreign spy type of writing. For example, in 1718 Daniel Defoe wrote *A Continuation of Letters Written by a Turkish Spy at Paris*, where he employs Mohamet or Mahmut, the foreign observer. Montesquieu's *Persian Letters* (1721) were generated by Marana's volume [PARDAILHE-GALABRUN 206, n. 5; AKSAN 201; BRAY 145-146], although Marana is not the only source and the outcome of Montesquieu's endeavor is an original perspective⁶ on

⁵ There are eight volumes of the *Letters Writ by a Turkish Spy* in English (and six in French), whose attribution is still a debatable question in contemporary literary criticism. It is commonly assumed that only the first volumes was authored by G.P. Marana, the other seven volumes being under questionable authorship, although Bolton Corney proves that Marana wrote the first three volumes, in the absence of evidence with regard to the others [CORNEY 262].

⁶ For other sources that might have inspired Montesquieu's *Lettres Persanes*, see VAN ROOSBROECK and GAUDIER & HEIRWEGH. In general, it has been commonly accepted that Montesquieu inspired from various epistolary sources that were written before him, but the originality he attached to his work cannot be contested. The transformation of the epistolary genre that happened from Marana to Montesquieu is obvious and the genre suffered modifications according to the historical change of paradigm and the evolution of literature. One of the differences between Marana's letters and Montesquieu's work was pointed out by Van Roosbroeck in 1925: "Whereas Marana was in the main contended with narrating historical events,

the foreign observer type of letter. George Lyttelton's *Letters from a Persian in England, to his Friend at Ispahan* (1735) comes from the same tradition initiated by Marana, and Oliver Goldsmith's *The Citizen of the World* (1760-1761) is certainly drawn from the same tradition.

Giovanni Paolo Marana's collection of letters⁷ which was first published in one volume in Italian (*L'esploratore turco*, 1684), then in French (*L'Espion du Grand Seigneur*, 1684) and in 1687 translated into English. Literary criticism usually overlooks Marana as the one writer who launched the tradition of the foreign observer type of writing in Europe. Arthur J. Weitzman complains about the fact that *The Turkish Letters* had been neglected by literary criticism and considers the work of great "importance and charm" [vii]. In his own words, "the popularization of Enlightenment ideals has never been so fully realized as in Giovanni P. Marana's *Letters Writ by a Turkish Spy*" [vii]. Another work has been attributed to Marana,⁸ *Lettre d'un Sicilien à un de ses amis*, published in 1692, although Gaudier and Heirwegh reject this assertion [47] and Annik Pardailhe-Galabrun questions this attribution [205-206].

Early publications fathered by Marana include Gatien de Courtitz's *The French Spy* (1700); Ned Ward's *The London Spy* (1698-1700); Charles Gildon's *The Golden Spy* (1709); and Captain Bland's *The Northern Atalantis: or York Spy* (1713). In Montesquieu's *Lettres Persanes* (1721) two fictional Persian visitors narrate their experiences in Paris. The trilogy written by the Marquis d'Argens—the *Lettres juives* (1736-38), followed by the *Lettres cabalistiques* and the *Lettres chinoises* (1740)—was influenced by both Marana and Montesquieu and influenced, in its turn, Oliver Goldsmith's *Citizen of the World*.⁹ By the time Oliver Goldsmith published his own pseudo-oriental travelogue, *The Citizen of the World* (1762), the English version of *Lettres chinoises* had already appeared as *Chinese Letters* (1741) and *The Chinese Spy* (1752). In 1747 Madame de Graffigny published *Lettres d'une Péruvienne* and in 1789 José Cadalso wrote *Cartas marruecas*. Other travelogues of the same nature are

Montesquieu laid the stress exclusively on intellectual criticism, on his valuation of contemporary Western ideas and prejudices" [433].

⁷ Other sources use the name John Paul Marana, Jean Paul Marana, or Gian Paolo Marana. Marana himself signs as Jean Paul Marane [CORNEY 262].

⁸ Gaudier and Heirwegh mention Father Valentin Dufour, who attributed the *Lettre d'un Sicilien à un de ses amis* to Marana in 1883, when he wrote the introduction and the notes to the edition published at Paris. The authors also state that Arlette Farge considered that Marana authored this work [47].

⁹ For further details on Goldsmith's French borrowings, see CRANE & SMITH and DAVIDSON.

The German Spy (1738), whose authorship is questioned and Eliza Haywood's *The Invisible Spy* (1755), to mention only the most relevant titles.

Letters Writ by a Turkish Spy at Paris: *Authorship in Disguise*

The original 30-letter work that appeared in Italian in 1684, *L'esploratore turco* turned into "a French 102-letter multivolume *L'Espion turc* by 1687" [ARAVAMUDAN 2005, 55-56]. By the end of 1696, the English version of *The Turkish Spy*¹⁰ consisted of eight volumes containing 632 letters, "a large miscellaneous compendium in multiple editions that speculated on 'present wars, transactions, and intrigues of Christian courts, states, and kingdoms'" [56]. The letters were generally addressed to the Venerable Mufti, to the Kaimacham, to Dgnet Oglou, to Vizir Azem, other Turkish officials in Constantinople and the Sultan's agent in Vienna, an orthodox Jew and deal with the political affairs of Cardinal Richelieu, the greatness of the Spanish monarchy, various political and religious conspiracies, the wars between France and Spain, and other similar events, apart from focusing on personal opinions and matters.

According to an article published in *Notes and Queries* (1849-1850), the issue of authorship was not so much a problem as the issue over who translated into English "the clever work" written by Marana. The author of the article signs his name as Edward F. Rimbault and cites a letter found in Dr. Charlett's correspondence which introduces William Bradshaw as the author of all the volumes on the Turkish Spy, except for the first one:

[...] the first [i.e volume] which, you remember, was printed a considerable time before the rest, and not much taken notice of till the second volume came out. The first volume was originally wrote in Italian, translated into French, and made English; and all the rest after carried on by this Bradshaw, as I am undoubtedly informed: so that I think him well worth inquiring after while in Oxford. Dr. Midgely had only the name and conveyance to the press, beside what books he

¹⁰ Here is the full title of the English version of Marana's work: *Letters Writ by a Turkish Spy, Who Lived Five and Forty Years Undiscovered at Paris: Giving an Impartial Account to the Divan at Constantinople, of the most remarkable Transactions of Europe: And discovering several Intrigues and Secrets of the Christian Courts (especially of that of France). Continued from the Year 1637, to the Year 1682. Written originally in Arabick, translated into Italian, from thence into English, and now published with a large Historical Preface and Index to Illustrate the Whole, by the Translator of the First Volume.*

helped Bradshaw to, which, by his poverty, he could not procure himself.

In the margin of this letter Ballard¹¹ has added, "Sir Roger Manley, author of the *Turkish Spy*" [RIMBAULT 334]. The author of the article adds that Baker¹² of St. John's College, Cambridge, had noted down on the cover of his copy of *Athenae Oxoniensis*, which was bequeathed to the Public Library at Cambridge, "'Turkish Spy,' begun by Mr. Manley, continued by Dr. Midgley with the assistance of others" [334].

In 1840, Bolton Corney¹³ wrote an extensive and well-documented article on the authorship of the *Turkish Spy*, which he published in *The Gentleman's Magazine* (Vol. 14, 1840). Corney mentions the publication of the first volume of the *Espion du Grand Seigneur* at Paris, *chez Claude Barbin*, in 1684. The first edition¹⁴ was shortly followed by a second one at Amsterdam,¹⁵ in the same year. The Amsterdam edition differs to a great extent from the editions at London and Cologne,¹⁶ in that it contains a dedication to Louis XIV, which is missing from the other editions [CORNEY 260-261]. As the dedication to this

¹¹ The reference is probably to George Ballard (1706-1755), who was an English biographer and antiquary and authored *Memoirs of Several Ladies of Great Britain who have been Celebrated for their Writing or Skill in the Learned Languages, Arts, and Sciences* (1752).

¹² I assume he refers to Thomas Baker of St. John's College (1656-1740) who published *A Succinct and Impartiall account of St John's House and St John's College, with some Occasional and Incidental account of the affairs of the University, and of such private Colleges, as held Communications or Intercourse with the old College or House: collected principally by a Member of the College. Anno 1707.*

¹³ Bolton Corney illustrated Isaac D'Israeli's *Curiosities of Literature* (1838). The cover of the book presents him as Honorary Professor of Criticism in the *République des Lettres*, and Member of the *Society of English Bibliophiles*.

¹⁴ According to McBurney, "The 'Extrait du Privilège du Roy' in the French version specified that Marana's copyright should last for six consecutive years from the date of the first publication" [917].

¹⁵ The Amsterdam edition was printed for H. Wetstein and H. Des Bordes. Bolton Corney gives the full title of the Amsterdam edition: *L'Espion di Grand Seigneur, et ses relations secretes envoyées au Divan de Constantinople; et découvertes à Paris pendant le Regne de Louis le Grand. Traduites de l'Arabe en Italien par le Sieur Jean-Paul Marana, et de l'Italien en François par ***. Ces relations contiennent les evenemens le [sic] plus considerables de la Chrestienté et de la France, depuis l'année 1637, jusques en l'année 1682.* A Amsterdam, chez H. Wetstein et H. Des Bordes, 1684 [261].

¹⁶ McBurney writes down Cologne between inverted commas as a dubious place of publication and describes it in the following terms: "an early eighteenth-century Laputa of clandestine publishers with as many possible identities as those of the Spy himself" [916].

edition puts forward, the book is intended as an “offrande” to the extraordinary reign of Louis XIV [261].¹⁷ In March 1684, Pierre Bayle stated that the French edition printed in Amsterdam “a été contrefaite à Amsterdam du consentement du Libraire de Paris qui l’a le premier imprimée” [MCBURNEY 917; HALLAM 318]. Bayle attributed the work to Marana and specified that it would be composed of “plusieurs petits volumes” [MCBURNEY 917; HALLAM 318].¹⁸

Rosalind Ballaster argues that the popularity of the *Turkish Spy* might be explained by “the compendious, encyclopedic nature of the volumes which provide a form of popular European history for its readers, interspersed with some Cartesian meditation and held together by a conceit of a life held in disguise, which is largely uneventful and can be swiftly summarized” [2005b]. What genre was more uneventful and easily summarised than the novel? The critic indirectly includes the *Turkish Spy* in the category of the novel, by pointing out to its popularity, its focus on the ordinary and the unsophisticated. The title of any fiction written at the end of the seventeenth century and throughout the eighteenth century was in itself a summary of the plot of the book. Ballaster's characterisation of the *Turkish Spy* triggers some of the classical definitions attributed to the novel.¹⁹ Ballaster also mentions the fact that the volumes of letters not given much attention,

¹⁷ Paul Hazard notes that Marana had some political problems in Geneva and sought refuge at the court of Louis XIV [15]. It appears Marana's writings were not politically disinterested, although in the *Turkish Spy* he very little satirises his contemporaries, and if he does so, it is only by chance. The *Biographie Universelle* reveals several less valuable works by Marana, among which one is worth mentioning, *Entretiens d'un Philosophe avec un Solitaire, sur plusieurs matières de morale et d'érudition* (1696) [556], a work also cited by Hazard [15]. The work is significant in that it could offer more data on the life and works of Marana and Hallam, who cites this work as well declares in *The Gentleman's Magazine* (Vo. 169, 1841) that “If this [i.e.work] could be found, it might give us more insight into his [i.e. Marana's] turn of mind” [151].

¹⁸ Hallam observes that Marana's work does not appear in the index to the *Journal des Sçavans*, nor is it mentioned in the Bibliothèque Universelle.

¹⁹ One of these definitions comes from *The Encyclopedia of the Novel*: “Novellas typically involve a smaller range of characters than novels (focusing on a small group or, more likely, an individual), snatches of an existence rather than a full survey, and a swift and indirect revelation of character rather than full and detailed development” [1998]. Another definition was included by Samuel Johnson in his 1755 *Dictionary of the English Language*. He called the novel “a small tale, generally of love”, a definition which is closer to the novella in dimension and the romance in substance. Davis focused on the fraudulent aspect taken on by the novel: “a factual fiction which denied its fictionality” [DAVIS 36].

despite their immense popularity during the eighteenth century: “Whoever wrote the letters, they had an abiding popularity through the eighteenth century and had gone into fifteen complete editions by 1801, after which point (and the decline in the vogue for epistolary spy narrative which the *Turkish Spy* inaugurated) they disappear from literary history” [2005a, 208].

In a similar way, Arthur J. Weitzman underlines the influence of Marana’s work on Enlightenment thought. Weitzman even tends to diminish the role of such Enlightenment thinkers as Locke, Bayle, and Fontenelle, stating that Marana’s work became so popular that it overshadowed their philosophical works: “Although we have the works of Locke, the proceedings of the Royal Society in England, the writings of Bayle and Fontenelle in France, the popularization of Enlightenment ideals has never been so fully realized as in Giovanni P. Marana's *Letters writ by a Turkish Spy*” [vii].

His and Ballaster's comments highlight the idea that early in the eighteenth century the issue of who wrote a certain work was not a matter of significance as long as it entertained and instructed the reader. The reader was more sensitive to popular stories than to philosophical ideas, which might explain why the intellectuals of the age promoted spurious tales for the improvement of learning and knowledge.

Letters Writ by a Turkish Spy at Paris in Translation

The first French edition of the *Letters Writ by a Turkish Spy at Paris* appeared between 1684 and 1686 under the title *L’Espion du Grand Seigneur*. The first translation into English of this edition was published in London in 1687 as *Letters Writ by a Turkish Spy*. It is still a matter of debate as to whom the translation should be attributed. The most amazing thing connected to the various translations of the volumes is that during 1696-1697, all the English translations were translated back into French as *L’Espion dans les Cours des Princes Chrétiens* in four volumes. Another translation mentioned by Weitzman is the spurious one that was published at Cologne in six volumes in the years 1715-1716 [WEITZMAN 232].

In the first volume of the first French edition, which was translated into English, Giovanni Paolo Marana pretended to have found the manuscripts of memoirs²⁰ written by the Arab Mahmut in the Arabic language and thus proceeded to their translation into Italian in order to present to Louis XIV

²⁰ In the original text published by Bolton Corney, Mahmut mentions “les relations de cet Arabe qui me sont tombées entre les mains” [CORNEY 261].

first. Bolton Corney asserts that the copy of the first edition of the second volume is to be found in the British Museum and contains a new dedication to Louis XIV, which was not attached to either the London or the Cologne editions. He transcribes this dedication as “it contains important particulars” [CORNEY 261]. This dedication in French mentions the existence of a third volume of letters which came out in 1686: “That the volume was examined and licensed in that year admits of no doubt, - witness a memorandum by M. Charpentier, and the certificate of Marana” [262]. D’Israeli brings Charpentier’s information on Marana as clear evidence of the fact that Marana was the real author of the volume of letters.

Charpentier produced Marana’s hand-writing, a piece of paper signed by Marana who consented to Charpentier’s censorship of some passages in his book (D’ISRAELI 96-97). This evidence stands proof to the fact that Marana authored the first three volumes of the *Turkish Spy*, published between 1684 and 1686, which contradicts the statements of other scholars [RIMBAULT 334; MCBURNEY ; ARAVAMUDAN 2005 : 55], who believed that it was only the first volume that Marana had produced. The *Stationers’ Register* of September 1692 mentions the name of John Leake, the printer and official copyholder, as issuing “a book of copy [...] entitled *Letters writ by a Turkish Spy* [...] In eight volumes in twelves. Written originally in Arabick. Translated into Italian, and from thence into English. Lyncensed Robt Midgley” [MCBURNEY 919]. It is not specified whether there is a version translated into French before being rendered into English and there is no mention to the translator of the volume into Italian.

Bolton Corney deplores the scarcity of information about Marana’s life and works. Corney mentions Le Long as one among the critics who wrote about Marana in his 1719 literary account. He recounts that “when the posthumous miscellany of M. Charpentier appeared in 1724, the note on Marana, as author of the *Espion Turc*, was received as a *curiosity of literature*” [262].

Alternatively, the preface reveals that Marana quickly improved his knowledge of the Arabic language in order to be able to translate the manuscript, after he had carefully compared the events described in the manuscript with the historical facts of the age [MARANA 1741 : iii]. Marana concluded that the letters enclose “the most considerable Intrigues of the Court of *France*, and the most Remarkable Transactions of *Christendom*, which have been sent to several Officers of the *Ottoman Court*” [iii]. The description attributed to the content of the letters praises the author’s balanced discourse, his lack of animosity, and his precise historical data. In fact, he is appreciated for the general knowledge he bestows upon his readers in order to make them understand the events of their own age. To

this, the Italian author adds: “And I have drawn his Picture, because thou may’st understand better what I give thee of him” [iv]. It is obvious that from this statement we can infer that the translation of the text from the original Arabic (if there was a text in Arabic) is not exactly a translation, but a partial re-writing of the source text (if such a text ever existed).

The preface encourages the reader to read the letters without worrying that they might deceive him. The reader is also assured that the original work was closely examined and no trace of deception or concealment of the truth was found. The reference is to Saint Augustine’s words placed at the beginning of the work:

As these Relations have been read with Attention and diligently examined, we may be assured of an exact History, abounding in considerable Events. [...] If he [i.e the Reader] will not acknowledge the *Translator's Pains*, let him at least receive the Labours of a dead Man with Civility, one that never dreamed his *Memorials* would be Printed, and that served his Master faithfully [vii].

There is a standard statement occurring in a similar form in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century English works coming out of translations or having a claim to having emerged from translations. We read it is inserted in the preface to the first volume of the *Letters Writ by a Turkish Spy*: “And if the Translation be not elegant as the *Arabic*, do not accuse the Author, seeing it is not possible to reach the Force and Beauty of the Original” [viii]. If the reader declares himself not pleased with this volume of letters, he is comforted by the translator with the promise that more letters are on their printing way to the reading public. The letters “will be found full of great *Actions*, profitable *Instructions*, and good *Morals*” [viii]. This is the type of knowledge proposed by the printing world to the common reader: a specific type of knowledge based on historical events, what and how to learn from these events, and the moral issues that can be inferred from the consequences of these events.

In the second volume of the *Letters Writ by a Turkish Spy*²¹ the letter addressed to the reader is significant for tracing the history of the editions that came out after the first one. From the preface we can gather that the first English version of the letters enjoyed huge popularity among readers of various backgrounds. The editor explains why a second edition in English came out so late after the first translation, despite the warm reception of the first volume and the best translation which the English translator of the first English edition had done. One of the reasons was the lack of a second

²¹ The edition I have used here is the fifth one, published in 1702.

French edition. Another was that the printing and bookselling relationships between Britain and Italy were far scarcer than the ones between Britain, on the one hand, and France and Holland, on the other. The English printing world, we are also told, was not acquainted with the Italians keeping themselves busy with printing and selling the Italian version of the *Turkish Letters*, apparently translated from the Arabic.

It appears that no scholar agrees upon the same date of publication of any of the volumes of the *Turkish Spy*.²² All the critical references find different volumes as having been written by Marana and various other writers as having authored the remaining volumes. Aravamudan speaks of “a delirious transmission and circulation” [ARAVAMUDAN 2005: 58] of the various manuscripts and translated texts: “The text itself is resolutely placed in a destabilizing web of found manuscripts, translation, and secret information from various elsewhere” [58].

The source of criticism that Aravamudan describes as “the most convincing” is a study of Marana written by Jean-Pierre Gaudier and Jean-Jacques Heirwegh in 1981.²³ The authors assess that from 1684 till 1783 Marana’s “roman épistolaire” [GAUDIER & HEIRWEGH 25] was not ignored by either intellectuals or common readers. They stress the importance of Marana’s work in the context of the Enlightenment and the influence it had on later writers,²⁴ while complaining about the lack of a detailed critical analysis of the work. The article written by Gaudier and Heirwegh is, indeed, one of the most comprehensive on Marana, including references on his life, his bibliographers, a statistical evidence of all the editions published in Europe between 1686 and 1770, his influence on other authors, as well as various questions regarding censorship and copyright issues. While comparing the versions that appeared in England in 1687 and in Cologne in the interval 1696-99, the editors noticed that their dimensions differed and the letters were arranged in varying order, which means that there were both a short and a long version of the work [33]. “Erasmé Kinkius, Cologne” published in 1696 the French translation of the first 245 letters gathered in two volumes

²² For the best chronological history of the publication of all the French and English volumes, see McBurney 917-21.

²³ Gaudier & Heirwegh, a source mentioned by ARAVAMUDAN 2005 [73, n. 21]. The authors offer an invaluable appendix which contains the original editions in Italian, French, Dutch, and English in a chronological order.

²⁴ Jean Meslier is supposed to have been influenced to a great extent by Marana in his atheist view of religion. However, Meslier rejected deism as well, which was promoted by Marana’s work. For further details on this debate see GAUDIER & HEIRWEGH and WARREN.

[McBurney 920]. In his Preface Kinkius claims that the Cologne translation is an exact reproduction of the English version.²⁵ Kinkius overtly admits to the employment of the English translation, yet he inserts several conventions in the text in order to avoid accusation of piracy. As McBurney notices, Kinkius changed the title of the source text from *L'espion du Grand-Seigneur* to *L'espion dans les cours des princes chrétiens* for the first two volumes, and *Suite de l'espion dans les cours ... traduit de l'anglois* [MCBURNEY 920]. Also, the editor imposed some deliberate distortions on the text and some change in the order of the letters, while the names of Marana's correspondents were anagrammatised or reduced to civil and ecclesiastical titles [921]. Kinkius published only the first four volumes, while the fifth and the sixth came out in print in Amsterdam with the signature of a certain George Gallet. McBurney assumes that Gallet and Kinkius might be one and the same person and concludes that despite Kinkius's accusations against a pirated edition in France, the only editions in French that existed after 1700 are the ones published in Cologne [921].

According to J. Tucker, "While there was only one edition of the thin volume enclosing the thirty letters of the original Italian, the English and French texts—mostly in six or eight volume sets—each had at least a score of editions" [GAUDIER & HEIRWEGH 33]. The anti-Protestant passages in the English text were subject to censorship and Tucker points out that the 1753 English edition excluded those passages that reflected Henry IV's hostile comments in regard to the Huguenots [35]. After comparing the English version of 1687 with the chaotic version published in Cologne and having reversed the order of the letters, Tucker concludes: "Only a question of getting around charges of copyright infringement may be involved" [35]. Tucker's argument revolves round the issue of language: if all the volumes except the first one were not written in French or in Italian, then Marana is certainly not the author of these remaining volumes, which means that they were produced in England. Despite this conclusion, Daniel Defoe is the only English author that was clearly involved in the continuation of the letters—although, as we shall see in the second subchapter, this is still a matter for debate. William McBurney reaches an opposite conclusion regarding the attribution of the remaining volumes and Weitzman very clearly points out McBurney's argument, which eventually does not stand up to critical scrutiny: "He argues that perhaps Saltmarsh was a pseudonym for Hindmarsh, the bookseller, and that Marana did write a manuscript which was brought to

²⁵ McBurney gives the exact words used by Kinkius in the Preface to the 1696 edition: the Cologne translation is based upon the English with "toute la fidélité possible" [920].

England and translated by the translator of the first volume, probably the hack writer William Bradshaw" [WEITZMAN x].

McBurney did not produce any manuscript to support this view, whatsoever, and he "overlooked the fact that in the Saltmarsh letter printed in the second volume it is clearly stated that an Italian published edition existed and was exceedingly popular" [x-xi]. The fact is, however, that no Italian edition that Saltmarsh indicated has ever existed, which proves once more that the English bookseller fabricated any piece of evidence that would legitimate the work published and encouraged the reader to invest both financially and personally in such a publication. According to Weitzman, the English booksellers created "an elaborate ruse [...] to give credence to his publication" [xi]. Hence, the assumption that preface, the letter written by Saltmarsh and the events described in them were completely invented in order to legitimise the authenticity of the publication. These extra-narrative ingredients that later became familiar devices characteristic of eighteenth-century novels in general express a typical conflict between reality and the appearance of it, the physical form of a book and its narrative content.

The dedication *To the Reader* attached to this second English edition points out that Daniel Saltmarsh, the English gentleman who travelled to Italy, came across the Italian translation and brought it to England. The editor remarks that "We little dreamt, that the Florentines had been so busy in Printing, and so successful in Selling the continued Translation of these Arabian Epistles; till it was the Fortune of an English gentleman to travel in those parts last Summer, and discover the happy News" [MARANA 1702, *To the Reader*]. In this preface there is a slight hint at the possibility that the reader might find inadvertencies in this second volume, a difference in style from the first volume, which he attributes "[...] to the Difference of the Languages from whence they are Translated; it being impossible to observe an equal Idiom, in following Two such different Languages, as French and Italian: The One dancing in soft Measures, delicate Cadencies and smooth Periods; the Other, advancing in lofty Strains, keeping a Roman Pace, full of Masculine and Sententions Gravity" [*To the Reader*].

There are at least two possible interpretations regarding this observation: it either attempts to conceal the fact that the writer of this second volume is not the same as the one who produced the first volume, or it is simply an excuse *avant la lettre* for possible mistakes and omissions that the reader might spot in the book. Far from new, the device was used by almost all writers of fiction, especially those who fabricated their travel accounts, such

as George Psalmanazar, or the editions translated from other languages into English (the *Arabian Nights*, for instance).²⁶ In the Preface to the 1757 edition of the *Arabian Nights*, William Collins, author of *Oriental Eclogues*, explains that the English craved for Oriental stories. He admits to some possible translation errors and asks the reader to bear with him and understand that an English translator cannot always express all the particularities of Oriental manners: "There is an elegancy and wildness of thought which recommends all their compositions; and our genius's are as much too cold for the entertainment of such sentiments, as our climate is for their fruits and spices. If any of these beauties are to be found in the following *Eclogues*, I hope my reader will consider them as an argument of their being original" [COLLINS vi].

The Preface to the 1786 edition of *An Arabian Tale, from an unpublished manuscript: with notes critical and explanatory, or The History of Caliph Vathek with notes* introduces the same excuse related to a possible mistranscription of the original story "collected in the East by a man of letters," motivating that there is no perfect correspondence between Arabic and English, as there is hardly any in terms of manners, so the editor asks for the reader's indulgence, because "How far the copy may be a just representation, it becomes not him to determine". A similar explanation is given by Daniel Defoe, who, in the preface to the *Continuation of Letters Written by a Turkish Spy at Paris*, holds that an accurate translation from the Arabic would be an impossible task. He notices that to render all the manners and the specific style in which the letters were written was "as difficult as 'tis for a Painter to represent the Passions, or a carver to make his Figures speak" [DEFOE iv].

The Preface to the second English volume of the *Turkish Spy* attempts to convince the reader that any mistake and inappropriate translation are due without exception to the style "peculiar to the Arabians." Prefaces to other editions suggest similar motives concerning the English translation. As we have noticed, the first volume requires that the reader should acknowledge the "Translator's pains" [MARANA 1770, *To the Reader* : 1], since the English translation will never be able to reach the concise language of the original: "And if the translation be not elegant as the Arabic, do not accuse the Author, seeing it is not possible to reach the force and beauty of the original" [1]. It is obvious that the English versions do not differ widely from the

²⁶ The main problems arise from the generally inaccurate translations which question the issue of originality as long as some passages from a translation do not appear in the original work.

French ones, except for making some modifications to, or removing those parts that were pro-French, or anti-Protestant [HOWELLS 154].

Apparently, almost all the narratives that were published in English and were strongly influenced by the Oriental tales were translated from French. This is a relevant aspect in the European history of ideas and culture and it highlights the importance of missionaries, writers, and professionals “in providing information about the great empires of the East in the eighteenth century *and* a complicated factor in evaluating the British understanding and reception of those territories” [BALLASTER 2005a : 7]. The controversy about the authorship of this work still remains and the numerous volumes and editions that came out in Dutch, English, French, and Italian further feed these debates. Aravamudan observes the transnational and translational aspect of the work,²⁷ which has crossed so many geographical and historical boundaries that no one knows whether an original source text exists. It is no surprise, then, that Aravamudan speculates on the fact that the form of the familiar letter employed by Marana in his *Turkish Spy* “anticipates the periodical essay and the novelistic chapter” [ARAVAMUDAN 2005 : 59].

The somehow naïve attempts by Marana to write an epistolary history of Europe in relation to the history of the Orient was further taken on and worked on by Montesquieu, for instance, who compares and contrasts the two sides of the world in a philosophical vocabulary. It has been assumed that the essays collected by Addison and Steele in the *Spectator* were generated by Marana’s work. The volumes were an important source of inspiration for many subsequent writers of either novels or periodical essays. It is amazing, though, how such works of ambiguous authorship and suspicious origin succeeded in having been so successfully received by the public and sold so well. Aravamudan insists that Marana’s work is the best model for the future development of fiction in a transnational and translational world:

The ironical fact remains that a work that began with an Italian-language original morphed into a French project and ended up as a prominent English-language venture (with the likelihood that the later volumes were retranslated from English back into French. What better model could be provided of the multi-directional passage of fiction—whether novel or romance, satire or epistle—across the Continent and through a mechanism of

²⁷ The work exhibits a valuable mixture of seventeenth-century political events with accounts of the ancient history of Assyrian, Persian, and Roman history, to which are added the descriptions of the political and religious events from France, Italy, Germany, Spain, and Africa.

transmission that involved exchanges between a putative observer who had experienced Ottoman cosmopolitanism and also French (and implicitly English) provincialism? [59].

Martha Pike Conant recognises the English import of oriental tales via the French route [vii]. In the eighteenth century the most popular books that were reprinted and translated from French into English or from English into French were those that used oriental tales in order to teach the reader by moral examples.²⁸ The English disguise of the Arab allows him to join the new and different cultural network that willingly adopt him and play the role of a moral guardian who instructs his readers by means of examples. English culture had already assimilated Mahmut by the time the third volume was published. Mahmut thus becomes “our *Arabian*” who, “having met with so kind entertainment in this *Nation* since he put on the *English Dress*, is resolved to continue his *Garb*, and visit you as often as *Convenience* will permit” [MARANA 1748, *To the Reader* : iii].

The preface to this volume reflects the rumours that began to spread all about the literary world concerning the authorship of the *Turkish Spy* as well as the real identity of the Arab Mahmut. The English reader is kindly scolded in regard to the doubts he casts on Mahmut, who had brought with him to England all sorts of *chinoiserie*—as metonym of the Orient—so as to please the English nation. In other words, it is not polite to be suspicious about Mahmut’s origins as long as his intention is “to gratify the various Expectations of People” by offering them genuine products of the East. Consider the editor’s remarks on the reception of Mahmut by the English audience: “It will be Pity to affront this honest *Stranger*, by raising Scandals on him, as if he were a Counterfeit, and I know not what. This will appear inhospitable and unworthy of the English Candor and Generosity” [iii].

Actually, the problem lies in the concern of the English to avoid offending their foreign guest not for the sake of the guest, but for the sake of preserving their national icons. From what we can infer from the passage,

²⁸ I shall mention the most popular ones in the eighteenth-century: *The Arabian Nights’ Entertainments* (from 1704 to 1792), Lord Lyttelton’s *Letters from a Persian* (1735), Elizabeth Haywood’s *The Adventures of Eovaai, Princess of Ijaveo* (1736), Horace Walpole’s *Letter from Xo Ho, a Chinese Philosopher at London, To His Friend Lien Chi at Peking* (1757), Samuel Johnson’s *The History of Rasselas, Prince of Abissinia* (1759), Oliver Goldsmith’s *The Citizen of the World* (1762), Frances Sheridan’s *The History of Nourjahad* (1767), Clara Reeve’s *History of Charoba, Queen of Aegypt* (1785), and William Beckford’s *Vathek, An Arabian Tale* (originally written in French, 1786).

the real deceiver is the English nation, whose intention is to save appearances, not Mahmut, by all means.

All the prefaces that introduce the reader to the *Letters writ by a Turkish Spy* indicate the contextual background against which they were written as well as the interests of the editors and booksellers at that particular point in time. The publication of the first English edition of the *Letters writ by a Turkish Spy* was undoubtedly an important undertaking, if one considers the success that the book had enjoyed in Italy and France [MCBURNEY; WARREN; ARAVAMUDAN 2005]. However, Howells holds that there is no such work bearing the full French or English title, as the title “has long been applied to a conglomerate of texts, though recent scholarship has done a good deal to sort them out” [HOWELL 153]. A similar confusion created by various editions written in different European languages and published by various houses is encountered in the case of the European versions of the *Arabian Nights*. In the early eighteenth century, Antoine Galland (1646-1715) discovered the Oriental tales in Syria, as he stated in The Epistle Dedicatory to each edition, and made them known to the French public by creatively translating them into a twelve-volume French edition under the name of *Les Mille et une Nuits, contes arabes traduits en françois* (1704). The French title reveals both the sources used and the practice exploited in the tales: an adjustment or rewriting of the original version, in line with the late seventeenth- and early-eighteenth-centuries habit of adaptation and imitation. Galland’s publication was the first in a series of future versions that preserved little from the original Arabic, adding to it some other stories, usually personal creations influenced by the oral tradition in literature.

The *Letters writ to a Turkish Spy*, “a late seventeenth-century prelude to the oriental tale of our period” [CONANT xxii], remains a valuable work both for seventeenth- and eighteenth-century readers and for literary studies across Europe. It is not only for its oriental texture, but also for its hybrid form that the work should not be neglected. Gaudier and Heirwegh include it “parmi les instruments les plus efficaces du développement des Lumières” [GAUDIER & HEIRWEGH 46]. There are many devices that contributed to the success of the book. Verbs in the imperative insist on the fact that there are more volumes and editions to be printed: “Expect the whole Series of them, as fast as they can conveniently be published.” The preface, in fact, acts as a strong advertisement employing the best words to carry the reader away into buying and immersing himself in the book. Editors and booksellers had more than mere financial interests at that time. Acting as promoters of knowledge, editors made sure that they offered material “instructive and delightful” [1] at the same time, while “the manner of finding it was strange

and surprising" [1]. "Strange and surprising" becomes a recurrent phrase after 1700: Daniel Defoe included it in the title to *Robinson Crusoe*²⁹ and Psalmanazar used the same attributes in his *Universal History* to refer to the historical changes of the age [131].

This article has aimed to include those specific conventions used in a specific literary work that entered English culture via French literature at the end of the seventeenth century. Marana's work shared an engagement with borrowing, imitation, false translation, and inauthentic adaptation that resulted in literary imposture, plagiarism, and pseudo-representations. Marana unconsciously became the initiator of the tradition of false and inexact translations issued at various spurious publishing houses and the creator of fictional oriental manuscripts found in the most hidden and desolate places. All the editors justify their choice of text and their re-writing of some of the stories by appealing to the necessities of the age in relation to their own beliefs.

Nevertheless, *Letters writ to a Turkish Spy* was a crucial work in the context of its publication and, as a popular work, it rapidly fell in the hands of readers from all social classes. Thus, the initial principles of the Enlightenment were better popularised and they had an extra chance to become successful and be quickly adopted by the purchasers of the work. Not only did Montesquieu's *Lettres Persanes* find its "humble beginnings" [VAN ROOSBROECK 432] in Marana's work, but Marana's invention of the foreign pseudo-letter genre (or "the surveillance chronicle," [ARAVAMUDAN]) created a tradition that lasted for at least one hundred years. The so-called Oriental spy became less biased in analysing the contemporary European stage and, as Van Roosbroeck observes, these pseudo-oriental observers "claimed so much to be Persians, Siamese or Indians that they almost acquired their detached view as upon a civilization not their own" [433].

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