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Credible Impostures: Translation and Prose Fiction in the Long Eighteenth Century

Yousef, Aia Hussein

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CREDIBLE IMPOSTURES:

TRANSLATION AND PROSE FICTION IN THE LONG EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

Aia Hussein Yousef

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation explores the relation between translation and prose fiction in the long eighteenth century. I make multiple claims, but my primary one is straightforward: I argue that a concept of the credible fiction comes into sharper focus in the eighteenth century in large part because of writers who turn to contemporaneous translation discourse for ideas about producing an "imitation" of the world in their fictions. In historicizing the term "imitation," I draw attention to both the distinctive ways that translators and imitators during this period theorized their practice and how these ideas and techniques were absorbed and further developed by writers of fiction who were, themselves, interested in producing something like copies of the world around them in their texts.

The title of my dissertation, *Credible Impostures: Translation and Prose Fiction in the Long Eighteenth Century*, also refers to the significance of the word "imposture" to my study. In one way or another, all of the fictions under examination in this dissertation draw from the centuries-old Western Christian discourse on "Mahometanism." While Western representations of Islam are part of a broad and shifting semantic field that extends over centuries, they become overwhelmingly associated with the concept of imposture beginning in the seventeenth century. Part of my study, then, relies on the argument that fictions staged in or that draw from representations associated with some part of the Islamic world emerge as crucial ground for the conjunction of several ideas that are vital to this study: ideas related to credibility, simulation, and credulity.

My first chapter turns to translation's theorization in the long eighteenth century, and the following three chapters situate the literary works of Daniel Defoe, Montesquieu, Penelope Aubin, James Ridley, Frances Sheridan, Horace Walpole, Clara Reeve, and others in a historical

context that demonstrates the crucial overlap of ideas about translation and fiction during this period. Through close readings of these "fictions of translation"—both pseudotranslations and fictions that I argue thematize translation—I propose a reexamination of the role that ideas and practices of translation play in the development of the credible fiction.

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INTRODUCTION

TRANSLATION AND PROSE FICTION IN THE LONG EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

In the sixth and longest tale of James Ridley's fiction *The Tales of the Genii: or, The Delightful Lessons of Horam, the Son of Asmar* (1764), which was playfully introduced to readers as a translation from Persian by one "Charles Morell," the hero finds himself alone in the middle of a forest. Misnar has just taken leave of his new friends who are in the strange situation of having been transformed into toads thanks to an enchantment at the hands of the genius, Ulin. Having only just recovered his natural form himself, he feels obliged to help his friends and sets out in search of the evil genius. Before his journey really has a chance to begin, however, he happens upon a group of four men attacking a woman in the forest. The men flee as soon as they catch sight of Misnar, leaving behind the grateful but distressed figure. Misnar listens patiently as the woman recounts a harrowing tale of tragedy and escape from the palace of the very same genius that has brought so much misfortune to Misnar and his friends. Upon learning that Misnar is eager to discover the location of the palace, the woman offers to show him the path that she used to escape, confident that it will lead him back undetected. A grateful Misnar follows her lead and, soon after they set out, he strikes her with his scimitar, watching her fall to the ground. Before readers have a chance to process the unexpected and seemingly horrifying turn of events, the text clearly indicates that the distressed woman was really the evil genius herself in disguise. The robbers, the attack, and the harrowing tale all turn out to be nothing more than the elements of an elaborate ruse designed to ensnare the protagonist. And just in case readers fail to grasp the difference between what is real and what is only its convincing counterfeit, the scene ends with a lengthy exposition detailing exactly how Misnar was able to puncture through the intricate illusion, as credible as it appeared.

I begin with this scene from the aptly titled "The Inchanters, or Misnar the Sultan of India," itself part of a text that hid behind a disclosed pretense of its own, for its moments in which illusion rubs up against its exposure, the moments when the *seemingly real* is unmasked for the fiction that it is. It has become now a familiar argument that the period of the eighteenth century in Britain is when realism and fictionality fully consolidate as conceptual categories. This is the period of the novel's "rise," after all, a genre associated with both its credibility and its unreality. That ideas about imitation, credibility, and illusoriness were also the focus of non-novelistic fictional forms that explicitly draw from the tradition of translation during this period is a less familiar argument. This dissertation, in fact, ponders these precise relations: the relations between translation and prose fiction, imitation and illusion, credibility and imposture, and their relevance to the increasing preoccupation in the long eighteenth century with representing the world in fiction.[1] There are multiple claims but the primary one is straightforward: I argue that a concept of the credible fiction comes into sharper focus in the eighteenth century in large part because of writers who turn to contemporaneous translation discourse for ideas about producing an "imitation" of the world in their fictions.

James Ridley is by no means an exception. Writers from the proto-realist author Daniel Defoe to the architect of the gothic novel Horace Walpole explicitly draw from the tradition of translation both in their most recognizable and in their less often studied fictions. *Robinson Crusoe* (1719) and *The Castle of Otranto* (1764) are two of the most dissected works in scholarship, and yet little attention has been given to the former's explicit connection to Defoe's earlier pseudotranslation, *A Continuation of Letters Written by a Turkish Spy at Paris* (1718),

[1] The texts I examine in this dissertation were written and/or published between the late seventeenth and late eighteenth centuries, a period of time that corresponds to what is generally referred to as the long eighteenth century. While I mostly drop the "long" prefix in my discussions, and use the less cumbersome form, "eighteenth century," the focus of my dissertation is, in fact, this longer period.

and the latter's initial introduction as a translation from medieval Italian—to say nothing of Walpole's tongue-in-cheek pseudotranslation *Hieroglyphic Tales* (1785). In fact, this dissertation could also be framed as a study in the strange but indisputable rise of pseudotranslations during this period: defined as "fictitious translations," pseudotranslations are "texts that are regarded as translations in the target culture although they lack a corresponding source text in any foreign culture."[2] Celebrated pseudotranslations have existed as early as the twelfth century, with Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia Regum Britanniae* (1136) serving as a representative example,[3] as well as the purported translation from Arabic, Miguel de Cervantes' *Don Quixote* (1605/1615).[4] Not only a study in the rise of pseudotranslations during this period, however, this dissertation also examines their relation to the increasingly dominant aesthetic of producing more lifelike fictions. That is, if we consider contemporary conceptions of translation and imitation in relation to the increasing drive to produce realistic fictions, it becomes possible to explicate how the representation of the world in fiction could take multiple, and even strange, forms during the eighteenth century.[5]

In asserting that there are multiple ways to represent the world in fiction, my claim is not that improbable or unrealistic fictions could be said to be about life in the sense that they contain descriptions of the wealth of mental and emotional experiences that are still part of it (although this may be the case). In other words, this is not an argument that tales that are staged in foreign

[2] See Şehnaz Tahir Gürçağlar, "Pseudotranslation on the Margin of Fact and Fiction," in *A Companion to Translation Studies*, ed. Sandra Bermann and Catherine Porter (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2014), 516. Gürçağlar takes the term "fictitious translation" from Anton Popovič, *Dictionary for the Analysis of Literary Translation* (Edmonton: University of Alberta, 1976).
[3] Ibid., 518.
[4] In fact, while published in the early seventeenth century, *Don Quixote* anticipates many of the themes explored in this dissertation: the relation between translating and original writing, the nature of fiction, and the concept of imposture (between the publication of the first and second parts of the antiromance, the Moriscos were expelled though many remained in disguise).
[5] By "imitation" here, I mean to refer to the centuries-old practice of copying other texts.

settings, or remote gothic castles, are still lifelike but just not in the sense that they function as good-faith transcriptions of its observable minutiae or even larger structures. Rather, I aim to illuminate the varied ways in which "imitation" as a concept and practice was understood during this period. In historicizing the term, I draw attention to the distinctive—and sometimes odd—ways that translators and imitators during this period theorized their practice and how these ideas and techniques were absorbed and further developed by writers of fiction who were themselves interested in producing something like copies of the world around them in their texts. Some of the authors I examine, like Defoe, really did attempt to produce good-faith imitations according to these contemporary ideas; others, like Ridley and Walpole, played with and against these ideas, but their contributions and interrogations are only intelligible when they are firmly placed within this historical context.

As I discuss in greater detail in Chapter 1, translators increasingly turn to the Pythagorean notion of the transmigration of souls to describe their practice beginning in the late seventeenth century.[6] Practitioners reorganize the landscape of their practice to focus less on the familiar tension between word and sense and more on metaphors of rebirth and renewal. Translators increasingly articulate a new aesthetic aim of capturing the source text and author's "soul," "spirit" and/or "genius" in their translations rather than rendering word-for-word. Paradoxically, however, the illusion of a revived author for a new age and language is coupled with an emphasis on the illusoriness of the translation act. That is, translators describe their work as both the original revived *and* the original's copy, a framing that explicitly adjoins ideas about imitation with disclosed simulation. As noted, the particular nuances of these developments, and their importance for my argument, will be discussed in greater detail later, but for now it is important

[6] I discuss the relevant scholarship in Chapter 1, but a representative example is Theo Hermans, "Images of Translation: Metaphor and Imagery in the Renaissance Discourse on Translation," in *The Manipulation of Literature: Studies in Literary Translation*, ed. Hermans (London: Croom Helm, 1985) 103-35.

to emphasize two general points: firstly, echoes of this paradoxical framing are observable in arguments about the precise boundaries of fictionality, as most prominently argued by Catherine Gallagher.[7] It is not coincidental that an increasing weight on the simultaneously credible and illusory qualities of a "copy" should characterize both modalities of writing. And, secondly, in stressing this commonality, this dissertation joins the growing number of studies that assert a significant overlap between studies of translation and fiction during this period.

I should clearly note at the outset, however, that I am not arguing that developments in one discourse are causally related to developments in the other. Rather, discourses of both translation and fiction illustrate a shift toward the construction and elevation of what I am calling the credible imposture: believable imitations of a source that at once promote and draw attention to what John Hookham Frere, in reviewing a translation in the early nineteenth century, terms their "illusion of originality."[8] While Frere faults the translator in his review for shattering this illusion, consistent with Lawrence Venuti's claim that the period's overall translation aesthetic was marked by a strategy of masked domestication sustained by "an illusionistic effect of transparency,"[9] others explicitly foreground the speculative nature of their practice, as I will demonstrate.[10] That writers of fiction during this period were also engaged in deceptions of their own as part of a wider attempt to appeal to the public demand for "true" stories—with Defoe's insistence that *Crusoe* was a factual account serving as a perfect example—is a generally

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[7] See Catherine Gallagher, "The Rise of Fictionality," in *The Novel*, vol. 1, ed. Franco Moretti (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), 336-63.
[8] John Hookman Frere, review of Thomas Mitchell's *Translations of Aristophanes*, *Quarterly Review* 23 (1820): 481.
[9] See Lawrence Venuti, "Canon," in *The Translator's Invisibility: A History of Translation* (New York: Routledge, 2008), 43-98. Quotation from 57. Venuti also cites Frere on 77.
[10] Even Frere, in laying bare the techniques that help to sustain the illusion of a revived original—such as excluding foreign words, for instance, that only serve to remind the reader that they are reading a translation—sheds a light on some of the strategies of deception that were employed by translators, which, paradoxically, only serve to draw attention to the deception itself.

accepted observation.[11] What has been missing, however, is a discussion of how fiction writers turn to translation to theorize the nature and quality of their simultaneously believable but admittedly fictional writing even in texts like *Crusoe*.[12] As already noted, it is my primary claim that it is precisely the mutual exchange of ideas between translation and fiction that helps a conceptual apparatus for the credible fiction to fully consolidate for readers during this period.

While the implication of my claim that discourses of translation and fiction coevolve to a significant degree in the eighteenth century will be clear by now, what might be less clear is the importance to my argument of what gets fashioned as an "oriental" style of writing during this period.[13] While this will also be further nuanced in the first chapter, it is vital to stress here a couple of interrelated general observations: the translations of Giovanni Pablo Marana's *L'espion turc* (1684) into English, and Antoine Galland's translation of *Alf Layla wa Layla* into *Les mille et une nuits* (1704-17), usher in a popular mode of writing from the late seventeenth to about the mid-eighteenth century that scholars register as the oriental fiction tradition. This tradition was comprised of a medley of actual translations, pseudotranslations, imitations, adaptations, and so forth, set in some part of the "oriental" world, which becomes a kind of shorthand for any part of the non-Western European/Christian world. To cite one example that will illustrate the breadth of this imagining, Penelope Aubin's *The Noble Slaves* (1722)

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[11] See Gallagher, "The Rise of Fictionality," James Grantham Turner, "'Romance' and the Novel in Restoration England," *Review of English Studies* 63.258 (2012): 58-85, and Sarah Tindal Kareem, "Fact and Fiction," in *Eighteenth-Century Fiction and the Reinvention of Wonder* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 62-9.

[12] See Kareem, "Rethinking the Real with *Robinson Crusoe* and David Hume," in *Eighteenth-Century Fiction and the Reinvention of Wonder*, 75-108, for her discussion of this novel and its simultaneous assertion and interrogation of its referentiality. Kareem makes no mention of contemporary theories of translation, however.

[13] It is unfortunate that the term "oriental" used to describe this style of mostly British and French writing produced during the eighteenth century contains negative and racist connotations. It is customary to refer to this body of literature as "oriental tales" or "oriental fiction," even as the term itself is antiquated, and, as I shortly discuss, it refers to large swaths of the globe that include all parts of Asia, Africa, etc.

documents an adventure that has its characters situated in Mexico, a nameless island where the inhabitants are described as both Indian and Japanese (although they speak Chinese), Algiers, and others. The general point to stress here is that this mode of writing becomes fruitful ground for fictional representations of cross-cultural and cross-linguistic encounters, supporting my contention that it becomes a kind of natural bridge linking ideas about translation to those of fiction. That is to say James Ridley's fiction is by no means exceptional in this regard either.

A further observation that requires a note here relates to my intentional use of the word "imposture," which is a nod to the significance of a particular strand of oriental fiction that emerges as crucial ground for the conjunction of several ideas that are vital to this study. All of the fictions under examination in this dissertation—oriental and otherwise—in one way or another draw from the centuries-old Western Christian discourse on "Mahometanism" and the purported impostor "Mahomet." As Matthew Dimmock stresses, for early modern Western readers "there was no Islam or Muslims, only Mahomet and Mahometans."[14] While representations of the faith and its alleged inventor are part of a broad and shifting semantic field that extends over centuries, they become overwhelmingly associated with the concept of imposture beginning in the seventeenth century.[15] It is for this reason, I argue, that fictions staged in or that draw from representations associated with some part of the Islamic world become

[14] Matthew Dimmock, *Mythologies of the Prophet Muhammad in Early Modern English Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 1.

[15] For instance, writers depict the figure of Mahomet as both a "grand witch of the world" who "by his juglings and divinations hath seduced a great part of the world to an idolatrous worship," and the inventor of a counterfeit religion "made up of Judaism, the several heresies of the Christians then in the East, and the old pagan rites of the Arabs, with an indulgence of all sensual delights" that "did too well answer his design in drawing men of all sorts to the embracing of it." According to the OED, "jugling" or juggling in contemporary usage meant to practice trickery or deception. Quotations from Thomas Ady, *A candle in the dark showing the divine cause of the distractions of the whole nation of England and of the Christian world* (London, 1655) 43-4, and Humphrey Prideaux, *The True Nature of Imposture Fully Displayed in the Life of Mahomet, With a Discourse Annexed, for the Vindication of Christianity from This Charge* (London, 1697), 13. Also cited in Dimmock, 173, and Ros Ballaster, *Fabulous Orients: Fictions of the East in England, 1662-1785* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 49. For more on the association of the figure of Mahomet and imposture, see Dimmock, 170-82, and Ballaster, 49-52.

particularly well suited for circulating ideas related to credibility, simulation, and credulity. As I hope to demonstrate, several fiction writers turn to this particular discourse because it complements and augments standard ideas about imitation, and helps explicate the intersection of these ideas with ongoing concerns about belief when it comes to reading prose narratives.

For the remainder of this Introduction, I more fully situate my argument, and its multiple implications, in relation to the scholarly debates with which it is in conversation, beginning first with relevant discussions concerning realism and fictionality. While most of these studies concern the rise and development of the novel, I build on arguments that aim to widen their scope to include other forms of fiction that make similar gestures to those of the early novel. I then go on to give an overview of the important studies that set a precedent for emphasizing the importance of translation for developments in fiction during this period. While these studies also prioritize the novel over other forms of fiction in their discussions, I hope to demonstrate both how developments in translation during this period revitalize the tradition of prose fiction, broadly conceived, and how a central aspect of this dynamic has to do with representing the world in fiction. I conclude with a chapter outline.

REALISMS

It has long been recognized that the eighteenth century in Britain is crucial for developments in prose fiction. No other period has attracted as much scholarly attention when it comes to arguments about changes in the way fiction is written and read. While fiction's turn toward credibility has been a central feature of these studies, it has been the novel form that has garnered most of the attention. More often that not, other fictional forms emerge as counterpoints in these studies, to offset the more believable and more realistic early novel. For these reasons a natural starting-point for a discussion of the literary landscape of the eighteenth century is

actually the mid-twentieth century. Specifically, the publication of a work of literary scholarship that still looms over any study that claims the early novel and credible fiction as part of its focus, a work arguably responsible for the still-entrenched assumptions that shape our study of fiction during this period: Ian Watt's 1957 study *The Rise of the Novel: Studies in Defoe, Richardson, and Fielding*.[16]

Watt's cursory mention of translation in his book will be examined in more depth in the subsequent section. For now, it is enough to make the general point that the impulse to connect the rise of the novel to the socioeconomic transformations of early eighteenth-century England, among other things, forecloses any mention of circulating conceptions of the practice of copying and imitating other texts. Watt's argument, in a nutshell, is the following: the more dominant use of "formal realism," which sharpens and intensifies in a historical period that places emphasis on the individual (associated with the empirical philosophy of John Locke and David Hume, the rise of modern industrial capitalism, and Protestantism, mostly) serves as the "lowest common denominator" of the novel genre (*RN,* 61-2, 34). The practice of formal realism enables the novel to deliver "a more immediate imitation of individual experience set in its temporal and spatial environment" and to satisfy readers' wishes "for a close correspondence between life and art" (*RN,* 32, 33). Authors of other literary forms, who rely too heavily on the "imitation" of other works rather than seek "fidelity to human experience," produce works out of touch with everyday life (*RN,* 13). Their characters are "general human types" rather than "particular people in particular circumstances" characteristic of the novel (*RN,* 15). Watt offers Aphra Behn as an example of such an author who, while she might make claims to factuality in the prefatory

[16] Ian Watt, *The Rise of The Novel: Studies in Defoe, Richardson, and Fielding* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1962). Hereafter cited in text as *RN*.

material to her literary works, produces work that carries "foreign, archaic or literary connotations which exclude[s] any suggestion of real and contemporary life" (*RN,* 19).

It would be an understatement to say that Watt's study profoundly shaped—and continues to shape—literary scholarship. Despite the innumerable revisions, outright contestations, and attempts to sidestep his work over the decades, *The Rise of the Novel* consolidates three assumptions that still collectively maintain a stronghold over studies of fiction during this period. All, to varying degrees, obscure the role of translation. The first is the most obvious but it is worth spelling out: while the novel may be "the most translatable of genres" (*RN*, 30), as Watt puts it, its rise and development takes place outside the theorizations and dynamics of translation. In fact, the novel comes to be understood as intimately linked to a single vernacular and the consolidation of a particular national consciousness. I should note that Watt's emphasis is less explicitly on the nation as a distinct organizing category, and more on particularity ("particular people in particular circumstances"), but it's not difficult to see a connection between the two. What constitutes "the real" to Watt is the familiar: one of the things that prevents Behn from producing works legitimately about "real and contemporary life," for instance, is her use of foreign connotations.

It is Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities* where the affinity between the novel form and national identity receives its fullest articulation.[17] It has become customary in the last several decades to gloss "the real" as "the nation" to the degree that many critics will classify a fiction as more fabulous than realistic if a writer stages all or even only part of the plot in foreign spaces. Embedded in this first assumption is the related idea of the inextricability of the novel

[17] See Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (1983; London: Verso, 2006). See also *Nation and Narration*, ed. Homi K. Bhabha (London: Routledge, 1990) and Franco Moretti, *Atlas of the European Novel, 1800-1900* (London: Verso, 1998).

form and modernity, an idea Watt also articulates,[18] and which Anderson further reinforces in his study.[19] Linking the novel to the nation, and the novel (and nation) to modernity, is such ingrained practice that some scholars still assume that a literary tradition "arrives," as it were, reaches the final stages of "development," once it produces its own "national" novel.[20] Similarly to their approach to a fiction's preoccupation with the foreign, scholars more often than not interpret any sign of an engagement with or an adaptation of the traditional literary forms of the past as evidence that it is more a literary anachronism than a sign of modernity. That is, the idea that literary forms of the past can be recycled and repurposed for representing the present receives little to no consideration.

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[18] Watt writes that "the novel arose in the modern period, a period whose general intellectual orientation was most decisively separated from its classical and mediaeval heritage by its rejection—or at least its attempted rejection—of universals" (12). As I will discuss shortly, Mary Helen McMurran's *The Spread of Novels: Translation and Prose Fiction in the Eighteenth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), is arguably the most prominent and sustained study of translation and developments in fiction during this period. The assertion that the assumptions driving Watt's study, particularly his "modernity thesis," occlude the role of translation in theorizations of the novel is the central point of McMurran's first chapter of *The Spread of Novels*. She writes of Watt: his "modernity thesis helps retail the novel as a universal brand, acting as the corollary to the modern novel's national particularity," which contributes to a theorization of the novel that "relegates translation to a secondary aftereffect in the novel's emergence" (36). For more, see "Translation and the Modern Novel," in *The Spread of Novels*, 27-43.

[19] Building upon Walter Benjamin's idea of "simultaneity" in "homogenous, empty time," Anderson argues that "every essential modern conception is based on a conception of 'meanwhile'"—including, of course, both the formation of a national community and the novel form. He asserts that the novel was one of the forms that provided the "technical means" for representing a national community because it is a "device" capable of presenting a modern conception of simultaneity (24, n. 34). The novel's presentation of simultaneity permits the reader to imagine a community filled with individuals he or she may never meet but whose existence in the same "clocked, calendrical time" they never doubt (25-6).

[20] This orientation towards literary studies informs the study of several non-Western literary traditions, an orientation that often overlooks the significance of indigenous literary forms or analyzes them according to Western literary standards. For examples of this as it relates to the Arabic and Persian literary traditions, see Roger Allen, "Rewriting Literary History: The Case of the Arabic Novel," *Journal of Arabic Literature* 38.4 (2007): 247-60, Kamran Rastegar, *Literary Modernity Between the Middle East and Europe: Textual Transactions in Nineteenth-Century English, Arabic, and Persian Literatures* (New York: Routledge, 2007), and Dwight F. Reynolds, "The Fallacy of Western Origins," in *Interpreting the Self: Autobiography in the Arabic Literary Tradition*, ed. Reynolds (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 17-35.

The second assumption underlying Watt's study that still exerts an influence, albeit a minor one now, is that a clear distinction exists between the novel and the other prose forms of this period (often collectively referred to as "romance" forms). Lennard J. Davis forcefully conveys this assertion in his note that the romance form "is not usefully seen as a forebear of, a relative of, or an influence on the novel"; rather, "a profound rupture, a discursive chasm between these two forms" characterizes the development of fiction during the eighteenth-century period.[21] Franco Moretti, while operating within a very different paradigm for literary study, also relies on the assumption that discrete subgenres exist during this period, appearing and disappearing with little interaction between them.[22] Studies such as these tend to group together writers like Defoe, Samuel Richardson, and Henry Fielding and separate them from writers like Behn and Eliza Haywood, who are forced to move along a different trajectory in their literary histories. This argument largely hinges on the belief that what unconditionally separates these two groups of writers is the use of formal realism by those who are classified as early novelists. This belief links the second assumption to the third and final one that still shapes studies of eighteenth-century fiction to a considerable degree even now: it is the assumption that romance forms are categorically improbable and unrealistic. To write a romance, this argument goes, is always to write a fabulous and unrealistic narrative, filled with stilted types passed down through convention, and plots completely divorced from the actual world. Put another way, they are not imitations, but idealizations, of the actual world.

Numerous critics have interrogated these assumptions. Michael McKeon offers perhaps the most recognizable interrogation of the second assumption, an interrogation that begins with a

[21] Lennard J. Davis, *Factual Fictions: The Origins of the English Novel* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983), 25.
[22] See Franco Moretti, *Graphs, Maps, Trees: Abstract Models for Literary History* (London: Verso, 2005).

simple, yet significant, observation overlooked in Watt's study: romance conventions persist in the novel form.[23] Nancy Armstrong also makes a case for a "mutually defining relationship" between the romance and novel forms, particularly the gothic and realist novels.[24] And Margaret Anne Doody, taking the argument to its most extreme form, argues that the novel is actually one and the same with romance.[25] I should note that I am less concerned with questions of genre as such in this study—it is not particularly important to me, for instance, to make claims for what counts as a novel and what as a romance.[26] While I refer to works according to their conventional designations, and while I do not mean for them to carry aesthetic or generic judgments, I am more interested in demonstrating how fiction, conceived in its broadest sense, experimented with ideas about imitation during this period. To be sure, that some of these categories of fiction appear discrete at all is only from our modern vantage point: Clara Reeve is one of many eighteenth-century writers to draw attention to the slipperiness between the romance and novel forms, for instance, noting that they "have lately been confounded together and frequently mistaken for each other."[27]

Scholars who do explicitly address the question of realism when it comes to other forms of eighteenth-century fiction, and whose studies form a general foundation for this one include James Grantham Turner and Srinivas Aravamudan. Turner makes the important argument that both the novel and romance forms register a shift toward new standards of verisimilitude in

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[23] See Michael McKeon, *The Origins of the English Novel, 1600-1740* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002).
[24] Nancy Armstrong, *How Novels Think: The Limits of British Individualism from 1719-1900* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 3.
[25] See Margaret Anne Doody, *The True Story of the Novel* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University press, 1996).
[26] In fact, it is worth mentioning that the words for *novel* and *romance* in French, Spanish, and Italian are the same.
[27] Clara Reeve, *The Progress of Romance and The History of Charoba, Queen of Egypt*, vol. 1 (London, 1785), 110.

fiction; taking seriously the truth claims of romances produced during this period, Turner asserts that they form a separate category from old romances.[28] Aravamudan indirectly amplifies Turner's claim to suggest that the oriental mode actually serves as a productive means for writers to pluralize expressions of what eventually gets registered as literary realism. Often dismissed as a site of exoticism completely divorced from the referential, the oriental mode instead emerges as a mechanism through which writers developed realisms that interrogated national referentiality.[29] Both scholars insist that the realism formulated by Watt, and even by Erich Auerbach, whose study of the representation of reality in fiction is expansive enough to include multiple forms of fiction,[30] does not represent the ultimate and exclusive aim of eighteenth-century writers of fiction. As Turner proposes, "there is no Realism, only realisms" in fiction, to say nothing of the noted observation that conventions of realism are constantly changing.[31]

The notion that there are *realisms* in eighteenth-century fiction is a fundamental aspect of my argument. My claim, in fact, is that the period's realisms are fundamentally shaped by contemporary translation discourse. I claim at the same time, however, that these overlooked forms of imitation in prose narrative also help sharpen a concept of fiction for readers. These experimental forms of imitation, that is, crystallize fiction's quality as a discourse that is neither factual nor deceptive in a serious sense, but simply imaginary, even as it increasingly comes to feel "real." As noted, it is Gallagher who introduces the argument that this is the period when fictionality sharpens for readers, when fiction as a "discursive mode in its own right" emerges as

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[28] See Turner, "'Romance' and the Novel in Restoration England."
[29] See Srinivas Aravamudan, *Enlightenment Orientalism: Resisting the Rise of the Novel* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012).
[30] See Erich Auerbach, *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature*, trans. Willard R. Trask (1946; Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003).
[31] Turner, 85. On changing conventions of realism, see William Warner, "The Rise of the Novel in the Eye of Literary History," in *Licensing Entertainment: The Elevation of Novel Reading in Britain, 1684-1750* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 1-44, particularly 32-6, and Alain Robbe-Grillet, "Du réalisme à la réalité," in *Pour un nouveau roman* (Paris: Minuit, 1961), 135-44.

distinct from fact on the one hand and forgery on the other.[32] This is helped in large part through the increase in the number of "believable stories that did not solicit belief" during this period which, for Gallagher, exclusively takes the shape of the increasingly realistic novel.[33] The realist novel, in fact, emerges as the genre that both "discovered" fictionality and "obscured" it, according to Gallagher, by prioritizing an aesthetic of credibility over unbelievable plots or characters.[34] But, as I will discuss in greater detail in the subsequent chapter, others have persuasively argued that the realist novel is not the only form to play with ideas about believability and illusion. Moreover, others have persuasively noted that eighteenth-century writers speak of credible fictions as not necessarily marked by their plausibility in some would-be objective sense so much as by their capacity to create immersive worlds that *feel* real, however unlikely. It is precisely this quality of simulation that I argue finds part of its origin in translation discourse.

TRANSLATION AND FICTION

I should note clearly at this point that I am not suggesting that the modes of imitation practiced in translation radiate out to influence those of fiction. Such an argument would require the existence of two distinct fields—those of translation and of fiction—with the lines separating them clear and established. But no such definitive lines exist according to contemporary histories

[32] Gallagher writes that the concept of "fiction seems to have been discovered as a discursive mode in its own right as readers developed the ability to tell it apart from both fact and…deception" (338). To be clear, Gallagher's implication that a concept of fiction as it is understood today did not exist before the eighteenth century is not quite what I am saying; I do not mean to suggest that readers had no understanding of fictionality before this period. My argument is based on the assumption, however, which Gallagher herself also asserts, that the increase in the number of *credible* or *realistic* fictions—fictions that look a lot like fact—renders fictionality more prominent—that is, it sharpens as a concept. This has as much to do with developments in the category of fact as it does with developments in fiction during the period. For more on this, see Kareem, "Fact and Fiction," in *Eighteenth-Century Fiction and the Reinvention of Wonder*, 62-9.
[33] Gallagher, 340.
[34] Ibid., 337.

of fiction and recent scholarship on the subject. This is not to say, of course, that absolutely no conceptual apparatus exists in the period for distinguishing between a translation and an original composition. Tobias Smollet's translation of *Don Quixote* in 1755, for instance, in no way displaces Cervantes from his position of original author for eighteenth-century readers. They would hardly have confused what counts as the original and what as its copy. It is to say, however, that the fields of translation and fiction are intricately bound together during this period: readers might credit Cervantes as the original author of the famous antiromance but, as already noted, even he stages Part Two onwards as the result of a hurried translation by someone his narrator hires in a Toledo marketplace.[35] Hardly an idiosyncrasy of the text, this moment describes a widespread belief in the period leading up to the eighteenth century: in fiction, the line separating translating from original writing is blurred.[36]

Despite this, scholars like Watt and others make little room in their studies for translation. Watt, for instance, makes no significant mention of it other than to make "almost a throwaway" statement, as Mary Helen McMurran puts it.[37] He notes that "the novel is the most translatable of the genres" because "the function of language is more largely referential" in the novel and because it "works by exhaustive presentation rather than by elegant concentration" (30). The novel is "no more than a transcription of real life," in other words, and such a transcription is possible wherever and in whatever language "real life" occurs (30). Translation emerges as an auxiliary process in Watt's study, an ahistorical concept and practice that requires no serious examination of its shifting methods and techniques. Even McKeon and Armstrong, who premise

[35] Miguel de Cervantes, *The History and Adventures of the Renowned Don Quixote*, trans. Tobias Smollett (New York: The Modern Library, 2001), 99.
[36] The scene in the Toledo marketplace in *Don Quixote* forms McMurran's opening and central example demonstrating her point that the line separating translating from original writing is blurred. See McMurran, 1-2.
[37] Ibid., 33.

their arguments on a relation between the novel and romance forms—a prose form with a generally accepted history in translation—sidestep translation as it relates to the consolidation of the novel. The more translational premodern romance may evolve in dialogue with the novel, but these scholars consider its backward- and outward-looking features to be immaterial when it comes to its relationship with the novel, which remains firmly positioned within a national paradigm.

This is not the case with other scholars, although conceptions and practices of translation and imitation during the period often take a backseat to arguments about trans- or multinationalism. Doody, for instance, argues that the novel (which, as noted, she identifies with romance) originates in ancient Greece and Rome, which she describes as a "multiracial, multilingual, mixed Mediterranean."[38] Without looking as far back as the classical period, William Warner similarly argues for the translinguistic and transnational character of the novel before it was "nationalized" in the nineteenth century; according to him, the stress placed on the "Englishness" of the novel—understood as associated with empiricism, Protestant individualism, and moral seriousness—requires the minimization of both the amatory fiction of Behn and Haywood and the popular romances and novels of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century France.[39] And, of course, Mikhail Bakhtin's theory of the novel, which offers a very different critical paradigm, also does not situate its rise within a single nation and language; for him, "multi-languaged consciousness" serves as one of the defining characteristics of the novel, a

[38] Doody,18.
[39] See Warner, 19-32.

"consciousness" nascent in polyglot antiquity and the multi-languaged "Orient" but which culminates in the modern period in a fully developed heteroglossic and dialogic novel form.[40]

In other studies of fiction during this period, however, translation, in one form or another, does emerge as a linchpin. Ros Ballaster and Aravamudan note the significance of particular translations in the eighteenth century, particularly to the oriental fiction tradition but also to the larger fictional landscape.[41] Popular translations like Marana's *L'espion turc*, and Galland's *Les mille et une nuits*, popularized a discrete literary mode that played a central role in shaping the developing aesthetics of the early novel according to these scholars.[42] Rebecca Johnson, Richard Maxwell, and Katie Trumpener also examine East-West literary interaction, similarly arguing for the importance of translations of *Alf Layla wa Layla* to the rise of the novel.[43] And Gillian Dow offers an overview of studies that examine translation and the novel from the mid-1970s to 2014, stressing the importance of both Anglo-French exchanges and the work of eighteenth-century women writers to the field.[44] As these scholars argue, this period was marked by an influx of actual translations, admitted and surreptitious adaptations and imitations, unknowing back-translations, and everything in between. But while these studies help reinforce the importance of translation to the novel, they do not offer sustained analyses of the conceptions and practices of

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[40] See Mikhail Bakhtin, "Epic and Novel," 3-40, and "From the Prehistory of Novelistic Discourse, 41-83," in *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist, ed. Holquist, (1981; Austin: University of Texas Press, 2011). Quotation from 11.

[41] See Ballaster's *Fabulous Orients* and Aravamudan's *Enlightenment Orientalism.*

[42] Ballaster posits a more dynamic relation between the two forms, suggesting that they evolved alongside and with each other: topicality, seriality, and self-conscious fictionality, for instance, all come from oriental fiction, according to Ballaster (22). Aravamudan, by contrast, argues that the novel emerges as an alternative form to that of oriental tales. He writes: "Novelistic culture gained in strength and identity by setting itself off as domestic authenticity against Enlightenment Orientalism [a phrase coined by Aravamudan to refer to the "nebulous form of transcultural fiction" that operated outside and even upended established assumptions during this period (4)], and against other forms of romance and prose fiction" (8).

[43] See Rebecca Johnson, Richard Maxwell, and Katie Trumpener, "The Arabian Nights, Arab-European Literary Influence, and the Lineages of the Novel," *Modern Language Quarterly* 68.2 (2007): 243-79.

[44] See Gillian Dow, "Translation, Cross-Channel Exchanges and the Novel in the Long Eighteenth Century," *Literature Compass* 11.11 (2014): 691-702.

translation during this period as it relates to developments in fiction. This, despite the fact that Ballaster for instance singles out the concept of transmigration as a crucial metaphor for understanding the rise and popularity of the oriental tale and its related forms; she also asserts that self-conscious fictionality characterizes the oriental fiction tradition.[45] Dow makes a similar point: most scholars, she says, understand that translation plays a role in developments of the novel during this period, but "very few are able to pin-point exactly *how*."[46]

It is McMurran's 2010 study *The Spread of Novels* that offers the most sustained discussion of the overlapping histories of translation and fiction in the eighteenth century to date, one that does seriously examine practices of translation as they relate to developments in fiction. Her study positions the novel's rise and development as largely a cross-Channel product, prioritizing the translation of novels from English to French, and vice versa, to argue that the novel form actually emerges "as an effect of its changing mode of transmissibility, from a nation-blind transfer to a transnationalized exchange."[47] McMurran marks the waning of a premodern translative literary tradition that blurs the line between translating and originality and the subsequent rise of a modern literary tradition that bypasses translation to emphasize the link between a nation's language, culture, and literature as a crucial juncture for the development of prose fiction. She is careful not to characterize the transition as a complete rupture, however. According to her, aftereffects of premodern translation practices shape the form of eighteenth-century sentimental novels.[48] While my argument takes a closer look at framings of translation as

[45] See Ros Ballaster, "Narrative Transmigrations: The Oriental Tale and the Novel in Eighteenth-Century Britain," in *A Companion to the Eighteenth-Century English Novel and Culture,* ed. Paula R. Backscheider and Catherine Ingrassia (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), 75-96.
[46] Dow, 694. Emphasis in original.
[47] McMurran, 20.
[48] McMurran singles out the premodern translation practices of *amplificatio* (related to the tropes of *energeia* or vividness, and *prosopopoeia*, or the introduction of direct speech) and *brevitas*, for example, to argue that they shape the form of eighteenth-century sentimental novels. Translators sanctioned such

a form of metempsychosis and transfusion during the eighteenth century, and the distinct practices that ensue as a result, McMurran's study helps establish a precedent for seriously examining how ideas and practices of translation can leave an indelible mark on developments in fiction.[49]

While many of these studies that bring together translation and fiction are relatively recent, histories of fiction written as early as the late seventeenth century echo many of the arguments, a fact often ironically noted by scholars who seek to challenge the nation-novel paradigm particularly.[50] These histories locate both the novel and romance forms in a shared lineage of fiction that stretches as far back as the early civilizations.[51] The belief that literary production coursed *through* the channels of translation, in other words, was widespread before the modern era, a belief perhaps strengthened by the etymology of the term *roman*: an abbreviation of *traiter en roman* or *mise en roman*, the term itself indicated a text's translation

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practices because they enabled them to "better concentrate the sentiments" which, in turn, would elicit the sympathetic attachment of their readers, a technique which merged with "the formation of novelistic codes of feeling" even as the practices of translation and prose fiction writing consolidated into discrete fields (75).

[49] A similar emphasis on the intersection of the fields of translation and the novel form is the subject of Rebecca Johnson's dissertation, *A History of the Novel in Translation: Cosmopolitan Tales in English and Arabic, 1719-1859*, Dissertation, Yale University, 2010, which looks at the formation of the novel genre in English and Arabic. While McMurran argues that premodern translative activity exhibits "nation-blind transfer," Johnson takes issue with this characterization and suggests that, while it would be anachronistic to apply later categories of national languages and literatures to fictions during this period, an idea of "foreignness" was still operative along the axes of "religious, ethnic, linguistic, and even proto-racialized" categories (118). Johnson stresses this point to strengthen her major argument that translation's preoccupation with difference, even during a period as early as the eighteenth century, "coalesced with ideas of narrative sympathy to form the thematic and structural foundation" of the early novel, making it "a space of translated sympathies," or a space of perpetual indeterminacy (27).

[50] See Aravamudan, 35-41, for a discussion of Pierre-Daniel Huet's *Lettre-traité sur l'origine des romans* (1670), and McMurran, 36-43, for a discussion of several histories of fiction including that by Huet, Reeve, James Beattie, and others.

[51] Echoing many of her contemporaries who see an intensifying difference between the novel and romance forms (even as they are "confounded together and frequently mistaken for each other"), Reeve nonetheless posits a shared lineage between the two forms in the first volume of *Progress of Romance*, noting that the novel "sprung out" of the "ruins" of romance (110, 8).

into the Romance languages from Latin.[52] The inherited premodern concepts of *translatio imperii* and *translatio studii*, furthermore, positioned the transmission of text across regions and languages as fundamental to literature's enterprise, a form of transmission conceived as coursing along with the rise and fall of empire.[53] By the eighteenth century, histories of fiction begin to move away from this premodern conception of literature, but still bear traces of a notion of literary production intertwined with the movement of texts across nations and languages. Even as late as 1810, Anna Laetitia Barbauld writes in "On the Origin and Progress of Novel-Writing" that "it is surprising how many stories" trace their origin to the "East"—what she describes as "the country of invention."[54] Barbauld is only repeating what had become familiar adages of the period: Pierre-Daniel Huet and Hugh Blair, for instance, each note the translational lineage of fiction in their respective histories.[55] Even Reeve looks to regions outside of her principal nation and language for the origin of fiction at the same time that she begins to gesture toward a more nation-centric conception of literature.[56]

At the same time that these eighteenth-century writers point to fiction's international lineage, they also gesture toward strategies of imitation that bear a striking resemblance to those taking shape within the tradition of translation. Richard Hurd, for instance, draws attention to something like an inevitable intertwining of imitation and invention in "Dissertation on Poetical Imitation" (1751), noting that the "familiar images" of imitation "step in and intercept [the

[52] McMurran, 37.
[53] Ibid., 7, 37-8.
[54] Anna Laetitia Barbauld, "On the Origin and Progress of Novel-Writing," in *The British Novelists*, vol. 1 (London, 1820), 3.
[55] See Pierre-Daniel Huet, *Lettre-traité sur l'origine des romans*, ed. Fabienne Gégou (1670; Paris: Nizet, 1971), and Hugh Blair, "Fictitious History," in *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles-Lettres*, vol. 3, 5th ed. (1783; London, 1793), 74-83.
[56] Reeve cites the stories that an early nation tells of its most distinguished heroes as an origin of romance at the same time that she notes that the Crusades and the arrival of "Saracens" in Spain also serve as possible historical sources of the form. See Reeve, vol. 1, ix, and 13-4.

poet's] observation" when he turns to "invention;" even in those situations where the experienced poet prevents those images of imitation from filtering his observations, Hurd insists that he "still inclines to view it only on that side and in those *lights*, in which he has been accustomed to study it."[57] Reeve offers crucial insight for what Hurd may mean by "those *lights*:" speaking of fiction's increasingly realistic quality, she writes that the "the perfection" of this new aesthetic aim "is to represent every scene, in so easy and natural a manner, and to make them appear so probable, as to deceive us into a persuasion (at least while we are reading) that all is real."[58] That is, the "reality effect" of the increasingly realistic fiction is created not only by including details reflective of everyday life,[59] but also by the writer's presentation of the fiction as though it weren't a fiction at all. Rather the fiction is presented as a kind of disclosed simulation—precisely the same movement characterizing ideas and practices of translation during the period as I discuss in the next chapter.

These writings, that is, demonstrate how ideas related to the concept of imitation constitute a kind of connective tissue between the practice of translating and imitating texts and their authors, and the practice of producing copies and imitations of the world in narrative. Surprisingly, the concept of imitation during the long eighteenth century has received little examination in scholarship. If anything, many scholars continue to view it as transparent despite

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[57] Richard Hurd, "Dissertation on Poetical Imitation," in *Horatii Flacci Epistolae and Pisones, et Augustum,* vol. 2 (Dublin: 1768), 157; emphasis in original. Hurd has in mind here the copying of "sentiments" or even "words" of other authors in what is supposed to be original writing, but his insistence that even the most experienced writer may still "view it only on that side and in those *lights*, in which he has been accustomed to study it" suggests that even methods of imitation from the tradition of translation may "step in and intercept" when it comes to the writing of fiction (157-8). McMurran also makes the brief note that Hurd superimposes a discussion of mimesis onto the imitation of authors on 17, n. 47, but focuses her discussion on what she argues is a shift from a premodern translative literary tradition to a more modern one that emphasizes the links between a nation's literature, culture, and language.

[58] Reeve, vol. 1, 111.

[59] It is Roland Barthes who argues that details reflective of everyday life—what he calls "notations" related to description—are what help a narrative feel "real." See "The Reality Effect," in *The Rustle of Language*, trans. Richard Howard (1984; Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), 141-8.

its participation in a broad and shifting semantic field during the period in question that includes ideas related to tensions between imitation and creation as part of the translation enterprise, notions of plural selfhood framed through the concept of metempsychosis, and the construction of believable worlds that simulate, rather than imitate, the real one. For writers of multiple prose forms, new standards of imitation challenged their sense of producing representations of the world in narrative and, as a result, helped the idea of the credible fiction come into sharper focus for eighteenth-century readers. This dissertation explores these experimental fictions, their various forms, contributions, and implications.

CHAPTER OUTLINE

My first chapter turns to translation's theorization in the long eighteenth century. Translation, I argue, becomes increasingly conceptualized as a tension between imitation and creation, as a strategy of both revival and re-invention. To translate during the eighteenth century, that is, becomes not only a means of reproducing an original but also a strategy for producing a disclosed simulation of it—something that is framed as simultaneously believable and illusory. Following this, I locate shifting conceptions about the process of translating and imitating texts within the similarly shifting discourse of fiction, arguing that these ideas help a concept of fiction—as more fully distinct from fact or forgery—come into sharper focus. I build on notions like Deidre Lynch's "performative efficacy," John Bender's attention to the "apparitional quality" of realism, and Sarah Tindal Kareem's linking of the period's theorization of wonder to fictionality, to add to the argument that eighteenth-century credible fictions gesture toward a realism that stakes its authority in its credibility rather than its probability.[60] In

[60] Deidre Lynch, "Gothic Fiction," in *The Cambridge Companion to Fiction in the Romantic Period*, ed. Richard Maxwell and Katie Trumpener (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 61, John Bender, "The Novel as Modern Myth," in *Ends of Enlightenment* (Stanford: Stanford University Press,

translation terms, it is less about a copy's faithfulness to its source than it is about its capacity to create an illusion of the source's revival, even as it greatly deviates from it. Finally, after establishing a description and model for translations's theorization and operation during this period, I offer an overview of primarily pseudotranslations within the oriental fiction tradition to argue that they serve as productive sites for examining the conjunction of all of these ideas. I further suggest that the concept of imposture, and its association with Western representations of "Mahometanism" during this period, makes fictions staged in some of the Islamic world particularly useful for exploring ideas related to credibility, simulation, and credulity.

After establishing this crucial context, I offer close readings of representative texts in the following three chapters. Chapter 2 turns to two popular instances of the genre of "fictional letters by an eastern informant" to argue that strands of oriental fiction absorb contemporary ideas about imitation as re-creation against a transcultural backdrop and, in doing so, begin to gesture toward a concept of the credible fiction for eighteenth-century readers. I offer readings of two pseudotranslations, Defoe's *A Continuation of Letters Written by a Turkish Spy at Paris* and Montesquieu's *Lettres persanes* (1721), to shed light on their use of translation strategies in their fictions that were nevertheless framed as providing an accurate representation of the world. I then demonstrate how the themes and structures that characterize these texts went on to fundamentally shape novels like Defoe's *Crusoe* and *Roxana: The Fortunate Mistress* (1724). The chapter ends with a brief overview of the anonymously published *The Impostors Detected, or, The Life of a Portuguese* (1760), a little-known text that similarly brings together ideas about translation, Mahometanism, and fiction in ways that show their reach outside of the novel form.

2012), 104, and Kareem, "Introduction: Wonder and the Rise of Fiction," in *Eighteenth-Century Fiction and the Reinvention of Wonder*, 1-34. The notion that eighteenth-century realism is grounded more in these qualities than in mimesis is drawn from Kareem.

Chapter 3 is unlike the others in that the fictions I examine, with the exception of one, do not technically meet the definition of a pseudotranslation, although they do thematize ideas related to the practice of translation. These fictions, rather, written between the 1720s and 1760s, help demonstrate the shifting role of ideas related to imitation over the course of the century and demonstrate how these "fictions of translation" serve as a kind of bridge to the increasingly realistic fiction. The chapter begins with an overview of Penelope Aubin's "true histories" which, I argue, gesture toward the concept of the credible fiction through the sustained use of character transformations that subtly disclose to readers the prevalence of fabrications that pass for real. Unsurprisingly, many of these transformations take place against an Islamicized backdrop, further demonstrating how ideas about credibility, illusion, and the Islamic world become inextricably bound in fictions during this period. The second half of the chapter turns to three oriental fictions written in the midcentury: Mary Wortley Montagu's "The Sultan's Tale" (1749?),[61] James Ridley's *The Tales of the Genii* (1764), a scene from which opens this Introduction, and Frances Sheridan's *The History of Nourjahad* (1767). I show how these fictions employ strategies of translation and help a discourse of fictionality come into sharper focus through their preoccupation with the simultaneously believable and illusory scene and spectacle.

My final chapter slightly departs from the primary emphasis on oriental fiction to turn to the early gothic works of Walpole and Clara Reeve to examine how each draws from the eighteenth-century discourse of translation in their respective calls for a new form of fiction. I stress the slightness of this departure because part of my claim is that, while these fictions inaugurate a discrete literary mode, they also feature either Islamicized characters or backdrops

[61] It is unclear when Montagu wrote this manuscript story fragment, although the consensus is that it was most likely after 1749. See Mary Wortley Montagu, "The Sultan's Tale," in *Romance Writings*, ed. Isobel Grundy (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), 16, 25 n. 2.

suggesting an overlap between the oriental and gothic modes that is rarely emphasized in scholarship. In particular, I show how it is that Walpole and Reeve's drawing from translation discourse helps explain this seeming continuity between the modes, particularly how their use and deployment of translation concepts like "spirit" and "genius," and even their explicit conflation of imitating texts with imitating the world, help give shape to their slightly distinct ideas about the marvelous-probable fiction. It is generally accepted that by the time Walpole published *Otranto*, and Clara Reeve, *The Old English Baron* (1777), a concept of fiction distinct from either fact or deception was already established. Part of this chapter's purpose, then, is to show how the overlap of ideas between translation and fiction continue to evolve toward the end of the century. Fictionality, rather than credibility, becomes of central concern to Walpole, a quality that he paradoxically links to accurate historical representation, capturing national spirit, and imitating beloved authors. Reeve, while departing from Walpole's emphasis on the marvelous, nonetheless acknowledges its centrality in producing copies with "spirit." These early gothic fiction writers, that is, demonstrate how ideas related to translation continue to influence the development of the credible fiction over the course of the century, even as the notion of credibility is stretched to new limits.

CHAPTER 1

RE-AUTHORING TEXTS, RE-CREATING THE WORLD

John Dryden is arguably the most recognizable and representative figure to theorize on the art and practice of translation in the long eighteenth century, his writings serving to distill the distinguishing features of the tradition. In one such piece, a preface affixed to *Sylvae* in 1685, he offers the following description of the practice:

> Translation is a kind of drawing after the life; where every one will acknowledge there is a double sort of likeness, a good one and a bad. 'Tis one thing to draw the outlines true, the features like, the proportions exact, the colouring itself perhaps tolerable; and another thing to make all these graceful by the posture, the shadowings, and chiefly by the spirit which animates the whole…I dare assure them that a good poet is no more like himself in a dull translation, than his carcass would be to his living body.[62]

The split between form and "spirit" that Dryden identifies is partly a reformulation of a centuries-old truism, Horace's call for the translator not to render word-for-word ("*Nec verbo verbum curabis reddere fidus interpres*").[63] But Dryden elaborates on the familiar tension between word and sense to suggest that merely rendering the latter is also not quite enough. The "good" translation must also express "the good poet" to the degree that it appears "animate[d]" by a captured "spirit," likened to the original author's resurrected "living body." Dryden elides two forms of spirit in his call for its prioritization over the observable word, that is, an elision that informs a dominant understanding of translation during this period: a "good" translator must render both the spirit of a source text and that of its author.

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[62] John Dryden, Preface to *Sylvae: Or, The Second Part of Poetical Miscellanies* (London, 1702), n.p. Throughout the dissertation, quotations from primary sources have remained unchanged (aside from removing unnecessary capitalizations).

[63] Horace, *Ars poetica*, 133-4. In keeping with Horace's prescription, the line loosely translated is: "The faithful translator should take care not to translate word-for-word." All translations are mine unless otherwise indicated.

Fifteen years later, in his preface to *Fables Ancient and Modern*, Dryden sharpens these ideas into a description of translation as a form of metempsychosis,[64] and vice versa,[65] to stress the unique relationship that can exist between an original author and his translator:

> Milton was the poetical son of Spenser, and Mr. Waller of Fairfax, for we have our lineal descents and clans as well as other families. Spenser more than once insinuates that the soul of Chaucer was transfus'd into his body, and that he was begotten by him two hundred years after his decease. Milton has acknowledg'd to me that Spenser was his original, and many besides myself have heard our famous Waller own that he deriv'd the harmony of his numbers from the Godfrey of Bulloign, which was turn'd into English by Mr. Fairfax.[66]

Despite being similarly laden with quasi-mystical terms that suggest rebirth and renewal, Dryden's formulation does not anticipate Walter Benjamin's later notion of pure language; for

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[64] See John Dryden, Preface to *Fables Ancient and Modern, translated into verse from Homer, Ovid, Boccace, and Chaucer, with original poems* (London, 1700), n.p. While Richard Terry, in *Poetry and the Making of the English Literary Past, 1660-1781* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), argues that Dryden's metaphor for describing literary tradition—not quite translation—was that of metempsychosis (156), he does note that translators during the period also routinely conflate translation with the idea of the transmigration of souls (163).

[65] See David Hopkins, "Translation, Metempsychosis, and the Flux of Nature: "Of the Pythagorean Philosophy"," in *Dryden and the World of Neoclassicism*, ed. Wolfgang Görtschacher and Holger Klein (Tübingen: Stauffenburg Verlag Brigitte Narr, 2001). Hopkins draws attention to the similarities in vocabulary and phrasing in Dryden's preface to *Fables* and his translation of the extended passage from Book XV of Ovid's *Metamorphosis*, "Of the Pythagorean Philosophy," included in *Fables* (147). Johnson, who also cites Terry and Hopkins, also notes that Dryden describes the transference of souls in his translation of Ovid as itself a kind of translation (*A History of the Novel in Translation*, 143-5). The translation in question from Dryden, *Fables*, is the following:

> Thus are their Figures never at a stand,
> But chang'd by Nature's innovating Hand;
> All Things are alter'd, nothing is destroy'd,
> The shifted Scene, for some new Show employ'd.
>
> Then to be born, is to begin to be
> Some other Thing we were not formerly:
> And what we call to Die, is not t' appear,
> Or be the Thing that formerly we were.
> Those very Elements which we partake,
> Alive, when Dead some other Body make:
> *Translated grow*, have Sense, or can Discourse,
> But death on deathless Substance has no force. (517-8, my emphasis)

For more on Dryden and translation, see also Paul Davis, "Dryden and the Bounds of Liberty," in *Translation and the Poet's Life: The Ethics of Translating in English Culture, 1646-1726* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 127-233.

[66] Dryden, Preface to *Fables,* n.p.

Dryden, it is the spiritual kinship between particular authors, rather than languages, that enables the transfer of the original's spirit.[67] Dryden represents the translator, moreover, as not merely sharing some affinity with the original author but himself a translator-cum-author figure whose own begetting courses along something like a necromantic poetic genealogy. That is, it is almost as if it is the original author, himself, who re-authors his works for a new place and age, revived within the body of a translator in a metaphorical enactment of the Pythagorean notion of the transmigration of souls.

Dryden says as much in a dedication affixed to *The Works of Virgil*, published three years before that of *Fables* in 1697: he had "endeavored" in this translation "to make Virgil speak such English as [Virgil] would himself have spoken, if he had been born in England, and in this present age."[68] Dryden presents the translation, despite its clearly discernible difference from its source in language and form, as something like the natural, and sanctioned, re-creation of its original. It is as if it had been translated into the source of itself. Immediately following these grandiose claims, however, Dryden makes the important admission that he has "not succeeded in this attempt, according to [his] desire." This is not quite so much Virgil, in other words, as it is his attempted likeness. Moreover, despite Dryden's note that Chaucer was "transfus'd" into the "body" of Spenser, and that Milton considered Spenser his "original," as he writes in the preface to *Fables* excerpted above, the translator is no mere conduit in Dryden's account. It may be as though the original author has re-authored his works for a new place and age, that he has found a new way to manifest his essence, so to speak, as though it has a kind of contingency, but it is not without the active contribution of a kindred translator. On the one hand, then, there is the idea

[67] See Walter Benjamin, "The Task of the Translator," in *Selected Writings, Volume 1, 1913-1926* (1923), trans. Harry Zohn, ed. Marcus Bullock and Michael W. Jennings (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1996), 253-63.
[68] John Dryden, Dedication to the *Aenis* in *The Works of Virgil* (London, 1697), n.p.

that the translation is its source revived, while, on the other, there is the acknowledgment that it is written with the help of a new author who may also admit to unsuccessfully capturing his source. That is, Dryden not only promotes the illusion that his and others' translations *are* the revived originals, but he also points to the illusive nature of their performance. Their translations are simultaneously presented as the original *and* the original's copy. As intimated in the opening, Dryden's writings are hardly idiosyncratic despite their quasi-mystical framing and equivocation. Rather, they afford an accurate glimpse into the eighteenth-century tradition of translation where such metaphors of metempsychosis and hesitation about the translation process dominate descriptions of the practice.

I begin this chapter with an overview of translation's theorization during this period as a tension between imitation and creation, as a strategy of both revival and re-invention. While some form of this tension has always marked the translation act, it becomes pronounced to a degree, and framed with distinctive metaphors, that result in an eighteenth-century tradition that is markedly different from periods before and after. Following this, I draw attention to conceptual overlaps between the discourses of translation and fiction. Far from being coincidental or even incidental, I argue that contemporary ideas about imitation inform both modalities of writing and underscore how the notion of re-creation that takes shape from within translation discourse also characterizes the practice of "imitating" the world in fiction. The simultaneously believable and illusory qualities of a copy become constitutive of both forms of "imitation" (translation as imitation of a source, and the increasingly credible narrative as imitation of the world), helping a concept of the credible fiction come into sharper focus. I then turn in the chapter's last section to a mode of fiction that brings to the fore the productive

exchange and interdependence between translation and fiction during this period, one that becomes a kind of experimental ground for all of these ideas.

RE-AUTHORING TEXTS

In the period between 1620 and 1650 crucial shifts in conceptions of translation in England and France take place that result in a new orientation toward the practice.[69] Before then, theories of translation appear mostly as regurgitations of received ideas from antiquity, owing to the centrality of the practice in the Roman tradition of textual interpretation and commentary, as well as language acquisition and literacy.[70] Horace's call against word-for-word translating might have served as a familiar truism throughout the centuries,[71] but Rita Copeland argues that the tension between word and sense is less central to Roman theories of translation than the tension between replication and differentiation; as in the related practice of imitation, translators aim to "reinvent the source" at the same time that they aim to "match form and substance in a different language."[72] This tension carried through to inform conceptions of translation throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries but, as Theo Hermans argues, a new category of translation emerges in the mid-seventeenth century as a corollary of the new, libertine way of

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[69] See Theo Hermans, "Literary Translation: The Birth of a Concept," in *La traduction dans le développement des littératures: Actes du XIe congrès de l'association internationale de littérature comparée*, ed. José Lambert and André Lefevere (Bern: Peter Lang, 1993), 93. See also Hermans, "Images of Translation," for his own discussion of the rise in the notion of metempsychosis, and other related metaphors, as it relates to the tradition of translation, as well as Thomas R. Steiner, "Precursors to Dryden: English and French Theories of Translation in the Seventeenth Century," *Comparative Literature Studies* 7.1 (1970): 50-81, and Johnson, *A History of the Novel in Translation*, 140-8, for similar discussions, and from which my own discussion draws.

[70] See Rita Copeland, "Roman Theories of Translation: The Fusion of Grammar and Rhetoric," in *Rhetoric, Hermeneutics and Translation in the Middle Ages: Academic Traditions and Vernacular Texts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 9-36. Quotation from 30. See also McMurran, "Double Vision: Instituting Vernacular Translation," in *The Spread of Novels*, 8-14.

[71] Steiner notes that the primary sources for ideas about translation during this period were Horace's already-cited *Ars poetica*, 133-4, as well as Cicero's *De optimo genere oratorum*, v. 14 (54).

[72] See Rita Copeland, "Roman Theories of Translation: The Fusion of Grammar and Rhetoric," in *Rhetoric, Hermeneutics and Translation in the Middle Ages*, 9-36, for a sustained discussion on Roman theories of translation and imitation.

translating in England, and the *belles infidèles* tradition in France: literary translation.[73] Moving yet further away from an idea of translation as strict replication, translators increasingly saw themselves as authors in their own right as well as "bearers of the authorial essence" of the source.[74] Both Hermans and Thomas R. Steiner see George Chapman as the earliest translator to exemplify this shift, whereby "inhabit[ing] the consciousness" of the original author becomes an expressed aim of the practice,[75] a shift later recognized by the Romantic poet John Keats in "On First Looking into Chapman's Homer."

In a prefatory poem published in 1608, Chapman frames a successful act of translation as the result of the "ample transmigration" of the original author's "full soule."[76] Hardly a prescription to ignore the form of a source text, Chapman's poem combines the imperative not to stray too far from the meaning of the original work with a call for translators to attempt "With poesie to open poesie." A good translator, in other words, must

> … aspire
> As well to reach the spirit that was spent
> In [the author's] example, as with arte to pierce
> His Grammar and etymologie of words. (105-8)

The "word-for-word traductions,"[77] or, alternatively, those that take too much "licence," disappoint because they fail to search the "deepe and treasurous hart" of the original author (120, 124, 139). Chapman has the "spirit" of Homer confirm the success of his method in another of

[73] See Hermans, "Literary Translation."
[74] McMurran, 17.
[75] See Hermans, "Literary Translation," 99, and Steiner, 55-62. Quotation from Steiner, 58. While Hermans and Steiner single out Chapman as the first translator during this period to offer a new approach to the practice, Steiner does note that something like a "native tradition" in France begins to emerge in the sixteenth century: Étienne Dolet, Jacques Peletier du Mans, François de Malherbe, Joachim du Bellay, and particularly Nicolas Perrot d'Ablancourt are offered as significant figures of this movement (for more, see 62-8).
[76] George Chapman, "To the Reader," in *Chapman's Homer: The Iliad, the Odyssey, and the Lesser Homerica*, vol. 1, ed. Allardyce Nicoll (New York: Pantheon, 1956), 116-7. Hereafter cited in text by line number.
[77] According to the OED, "a traduction" could refer to a "translation" as well as the idea of "[t]ransmission, esp. of the soul or of original sin, to one's offspring or posterity."

his poems, *Euthymiae Raptus; or the Tears of Peace* (1609), where the ancient Greek author observes to his translator:

> When, meditating of me, a sweet gale
> Brought me upon thee; and thou didst inherit
> My true sense, for the time then, in my spirit;
> And I, invisibly, went prompting thee
> To those fair greens where thou didst English me.[78]

Notwithstanding the joke about ravishing/Englishing, Chapman describes the special relationship between the original author and translator as a process through which the translator absorbs some vital quality of the author ("thou didst inherit / My true sense…in my spirit"). In addition to receiving something of the author's "spirit," the translator remakes the author for a new place and "time" (the "sense" the translator "inherit[s]" is "for the time then" which Chapman "didst English"). The special relationship between author and translator, that is, enables the translator to most fully access the source author and text, thus enabling what is framed as their reincarnation for a new age.[79]

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[78] George Chapman, *The Works of George Chapman: Poems and Minor Translations*, vol. 2 (London, 1875), 112.

[79] This is not to say that Chapman was the first to link the translation process to the Pythagorean notion of the transmigration of souls, of which the most familiar source of ideas about the topic were in Ovid's *Metamorphosis* 15: 143-75 (see this Chapter, n. 65 for more). According to Hermans, before becoming a conventional metaphor of translation for practitioners, the concept of metempsychosis routinely appeared in the sphere of laudatory verse on translation. Ben Jonson, for instance, praises Henry Savile's translation of Tacitus by evoking an image of the ancient Roman's reawakening within the body of his translator in 1591:

> If, my religion safe, I durst embrace
> That stranger doctrine of Pythagoras,
> I should beleeve, the soule of Tacitus
> In thee, most weighty Savile, liv'd to us:
> So hast thou rendred him in all his bounds,
> And all his numbers, both of sense, and sounds.

Jonson, "Epigram XCV: To Sir Henrie Savile," in *Ben Jonson, Vol. 8: The Poem; The Prose Works*, ed. C.H. Herford, Percy Simpson, and Evelyn Simpson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 61 (lines 1-6). According to Hermans, what distinguishes Chapman from writers like Jonson, however, is Chapman's allusion to metaphors of metempsychosis in writings about his *own* work on translation; by taking such metaphors out of the sphere of laudatory verse, Chapman appears to have introduced them into the discourse on translation proper (See "Literary Translation," 99-100, and "Images of Translation," 127).

Chapman's translations of Homer were the only ones published from 1610 to 1660, possibly accounting for the reason contemporary and later translators advanced his emphasis on the transfer of the spirit or soul of the original author into the body of the translator.[80] As writings by several practitioners illustrate, the language of metempsychosis would go on to become a hallmark expression of translation from roughly the mid-seventeenth through the eighteenth centuries: in his preface to *Fables*, for instance, Dryden insists that he only translates those with whom he has a "soul congenial."[81] Nicolas Perrot d'Ablancourt writes across the Channel in *Thucydide* (1662): "[*c*]*e n'est pas tant icy le portrait de Thucydide, que Thucydide luy mesme, qui est passé dans un autre corps, comme par une espece de metempsychose*" ("it is not so much the portrait of Thucydides here, as it is Thucydides himself, who has passed into another body, as by a kind of metempsychosis").[82] In his preface to *The Iliad of Homer* (1715-20), Alexander Pope notes that, while only Homer and Virgil are capable of producing the "most exquisite beauties of poetry," he is "sensible" that they may also be achieved "when a writer is warm, and fully possest of his [Homer's] image."[83] John Denhman went so far as to publish his translation of Virgil's *Aeneid* in 1656 without including his own name on the title page,[84] in what could be seen as an extreme illustration of Wentworth Dillon's note in *An Essay on Translated Verse* (1685) that so intense a "sympathetick bond" unites the original author and translator that a metaphorical possession takes place: their "thoughts," "words," "stiles," and "souls" agree until the translator is no longer the author's "interpreter, but he."[85] In the preface to *Ovid's Epistles*, Dryden singles out yet another peculiar framing of the translation act: when it comes to

[80] See Steiner, 58.
[81] Dryden writes of Chaucer: "I found I had a soul congenial to his, and that I had been conversant in the same studies," n.p.
[82] Nicolas Perrot d'Ablancourt, Preface to *Thucydide* (Paris, 1662), qtd. in Steiner, 67.
[83] Alexander Pope, Preface to *The Iliad of Homer*, vol. 1 (London, 1715-20), n.p.
[84] Lawrence Venuti notes this in *The Translator's Invisibility*, 44.
[85] Wentworth Dillon, *An Essay on Translated Verse* (London, 1685), 7.

translation, he writes, "'tis time to look into our selves, to conform our genius to his [the original author], to give his thought either the same turn, if our tongue will bear it, or, if not, to vary but the dress, not to alter or destroy the substance."[86] While denoting an exceptional capacity for intellectual and creative thought in conventional usage now, Dryden's use of the term *genius* underscores how the concept has been part of a broad and shifting semantic field since antiquity and included associations with notions of "soul" and "spirit."[87] Whether it is glossed as "spirit," "soul," or "genius," that is, some vital quality of the original author is claimed as being transferred to the translator during the translation act.

Corollary to the framing of translation as a form of metempsychosis, in fact, is its contemporary association with transfusion. Based on the Latin *transfundere* meaning "to pour from one vessel into another," the notion of transfusion captured both the transfer of text across languages and the imagined transfer of souls across bodies.[88] Dryden, in fact, twice uses *transfusion* interchangeably with *translation* in his preface to *Fables*, a conflation of terms in line with contemporary usage:[89] the OED confirms that *transfusion* was used synonymously with

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[86] John Dryden, Preface to *Ovid's Epistles, translated by several hands* (London, 1680), n.p.

[87] Jane Chance Nitzsche's study *The Genius Figure in Antiquity and the Middle Ages* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1975) offers an overview of the numerous and wide-ranging forms and associations linked to the concept, which include "a begetting spirit…*animus* (life energy), personality or temperament, a personal god, the rational soul, the *daemon*, good and evil impulses, an angel, a demon, the star or horoscope, reason and concupiscence; it was affiliated with the family, its paterfamilias, the individual, the Emperor, the city, the State, Jupiter, other gods, the World Soul, the stars and planets, demons in hell, the allegorical goddess Natura and Venus, and the Bon Pasteur, Christ" (ix). The conceptual capaciousness of the term *genius*, and its intersection with ideas related to translation, is further explored in Chapters 3 and 4.

[88] Hermans, "Images of Translation," 121.

[89] In fact, the new conceptions of translation to solidify during this period led to a dizzying confusion in terms. In addition to his and others conflation of translation and transfusion, other terms emerged: Dryden distinguishes between imitation, paraphrase, and metaphrase in his preface to *Ovid's Epistles*, for instance, seeing them all as species of translation. Abraham Cowley, on the other hand, in his preface to *The Pindarique Odes* (1656), in *The Works of Abraham Cowley* (London, 1672) registers the growing split between the terms *translation* and *imitation* for some: he doesn't mind that the "grammarians" choose not to refer to his "libertine way of rendring forreign authors" a translation proper, noting that his new way wants "yet a Name," n.p. This is to say nothing of the rise of the neoclassical genre of the

translation from the seventeenth through nineteenth centuries, its initial appearance corresponding with the first recorded human blood transfusion.[90] Others reinforce the association in terms.[91] Contemporary writers even suggest that the imagined transfer of vital substance (spirit, sense, genius) may enable the translator to see things in the original text not apparent to others, readers original and new. A revealing allusion in two laudatory verses on translation underscores the belief in a translator's unique sharpness of vision. Both Aurelian Townshend and John Suckling liken choice translations that manage to capture "spirit" (Townshend) or transform their original author so that he is now "English grown" (Suckling) to optical instruments: these praiseworthy translators "descry / Daily new Starres, and fix them in our skie,"[92] or they "first shew the ways / To Arts or to new Worlds" by functioning as the medium through which an original author, "Like a good prospective," relays "Things distant to us."[93] As the following chapter demonstrates, it is not coincidental that a dominant figure to emerge in

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Imitation, which only further confused the broader issue of terminology. The precise differences between these terms are less important to my study than underscoring how ideas of metempsychosis shaped the discourse of the tradition as a whole. Although I rely on the use of the term *translation* more in my discussion, unless otherwise indicated, I mean to refer to all forms of rendering during this period.

[90] The first recorded human blood transfusion, a xenotransfusion, took place on June 15, 1667. Blood from a sheep was successfully transfused into a 15 or 16-year-old boy. For more on blood transfusion, see Pete Moore, *Blood and Justice: The 17th Century Parisian Doctor Who Made Blood Transfusion History* (Chichester: John Wiley, 2003) 95-101.

[91] Robert Stapylton, in the preface to *Dido and Aeneas: The Fourth Booke of Virgil's Aeneis* (London, 1634?), uses the verb "transfused" to describe the process of translating "wit distilled in one language" into another (n.p.). And, in the first extended treatise on translation written in English, Alexander Fraser Tytler defines a good translation in *Essay on the Principles of Translation* (London, 1797) as "[t]hat, in which the merit of the original world is so completely transfused into another language, as to be distinctly apprehended, and as strongly felt" by those reading in the target language as to those who read in the source (14).

[92] Aurelian Townshend, "To the Right Honourable, the Lord Cary, eldest sonne to the Earle of Monmouth," in *Poems and Masks*, ed. E. K. Chambers (London: Clarendon Press, 1912), 43-4. See also Eileen Reeves, *Evening News: Optics, Astronomy, and Journalism in Early Modern Europe* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014), who also notes Townshend and Suckling's allusion to the telescope in their poems as a means of drawing attention to the belief in the translator's ability to make "what had been remote and indistinct suddenly accessible and deceptively clear" (146).

[93] John Suckling, "To His Much Honoured, the Lord Leppington, upon his translation of Malvezzi his *Romulus* and *Tarquin*," in *The Works of John Suckling: Containing his Poems, Letters, Plays* (London, 1719), 17-8.

pseudotranslations produced during the period was that of the perceptive foreign spy who offers what is represented as a defamiliarized lens through which to view cities and structures common to eighteenth-century English and French readers.

As noted in the Introduction, Venuti suggests that the image of a resurrected original author who rewrites his own work for a new place and age helps to secure a "canonization of fluency" in early modern England, a strategy of masked domestication that is sustained by "an illusionistic effect of transparency"; by presenting their versions in such a way that readers absorb an impression that the original author had himself written in the target language, translators mask the conditions of the translated text.[94] This is not to say that translators and their reviewers weren't aware of the illusionistic impression of translations, some even going so far as to give prescriptions for how to sustain it. As also mentioned in the Introduction, John Hookham Frere, in a review of Thomas Mitchell's version of Aristophanes' *The Acharnians* and *The Knights*, faults Mitchell for adopting a style and using expressions that remind readers of the translated status of his texts, insisting that the creation of an "illusion" is the "object of the translator."[95] He elaborates:

> The language of translation ought, we think, as far as possible, to be a pure, impalpable and invisible element, the medium of thought and feeling, and nothing more; it ought never to attract attention to itself…such phrases as he [Mitchell] has sometimes admitted, '*solus cum solo*,' for instance, '*petits pates*,' &c. have the immediate effect of reminding the reader, that he is reading a translation, and that the illusion of originality, which the spirited or natural turn of a sentence immediately preceding might have excited, is instantly dissipated by it." (481)

Only those translators who manage to maintain "the general spirit of the original author" (483), and who situate their practice "in that vast mass of feeling, passion, interest, action and habit which is common to mankind in all countries and in all ages" (481), are capable of producing a

[94] Venuti, 68, 57.
[95] Frere, 480. Hereafter cited in text by page number.

translation that sustains that "illusion of originality."[96] Translators, in other words, should deliver a convincing portrait of the original author to the target audience, albeit deterritorialized from his original milieu and covertly reterritorialized into a new linguistic and literary tradition under the guise of a false universalism.[97]

While Frere faults Mitchell for shattering the "illusion of originality" that Venuti argues was fundamental to the period's overall translation aesthetic, others explicitly foreground the illusory quality of their translations. Dryden, for instance, to quote again from his preface to *The Works of Virgil*, notes to readers that "*if* he [Virgil] had been born in England, and in this present age," he might re-write his text in such-and-such way (my emphasis). His acknowledgement that he has "not succeeded in this attempt, according to my desire" only further reinforces the conjectural nature of his translation. That is, it is only as if a re-born Virgil has re-written his original text, not an insistence that he has actually done so. This is not to say, of course, that these conceptions were not also based on the idea of a kind of spiritual communion between author and translator, as I have discussed. Translators routinely alluded to a form of intimacy between them and their authors to give strength to the idea that the translation is the original created anew rather then merely a reproduction. Translators often paired images of a revived

[96] In a confusing use of terminology, Frere actually clarifies his preferred form of translation by contrasting it to the work of what he terms "spirited translators" and "faithful translators:" the former uses "associations exclusively belonging to modern manners," whereas the latter "retains scrupulously all the local and personal peculiarities" (482). Despite his unfavorable opinion of "spirited translators," Frere encourages a form of translation that is more in line with capturing the "spirit" of an original, as I discuss above.

[97] The terms deterritorialization and reterritorialization are drawn from Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, "What is Minor Literature?" in *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature* (1975), trans. Dana Polan (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), 16-27. While these concepts are articulated to clarify the conditions that lead to the emergence of what Deleuze and Guattari term "minor literature," and they represent a shift from language that speaks of spirit and revival to that of territory, these concepts still help to shed light on the conditions of the eighteenth-century translated text. See also Venuti, 72-3, where he argues that translators during this period frame their aesthetic particularities as a form of "liberal humanism," embodied in the concept of a generalized "correct taste."

original, however, with a disclosure that the translation was only the translator's best approximation of his source.

Dryden again, in his preface to *Sylvae*, renders explicit this idea of translation that was paradoxically framed as equal-parts resuscitative and speculative: after admitting that he has had to enhance some expressions from the original in his translations owing to differences between languages, he implores the "false criticks" not to assume that these are his own inventions. Rather, "either they [the new expressions] are secretly in the poet, or may be *fairly deduc'd* from him; or at least, if both those considerations should fail, that my own is of a piece with his, and that if he were living, and an Englishman, they are such as he wou'd *probably* have written" (my emphasis). Dryden's simultaneous insistence that the new expressions are either "secretly in the poet" and are his best approximation of what might be latent in the original recall the translator's perceived telescopic vision at the same time that it underscores the speculative nature of the translator's practice. That is, while Dryden suggests that the new expressions come directly from the author himself because he is "of a piece with" him, he simultaneously downgrades their status in embedded clauses where he can only make claims for a quality that becomes increasingly important in this period: their probability.

Part of this may be owing to humility, but it likely also stems from a translator's sense of his own authorial status. Not just anyone, in other words, can make the kind of fair deductions and probable assumptions that Dryden affirms, nor are these suppositions made passively. While Denham's name does not appear on the title page of his translation of Virgil's *Aenis*, he stresses in the preface to the same translation his active involvement in the translation process: in the "pouring out of one language into another, [poesie] will all evaporate; and if a new spirit be not

added in the transfusion, there will remain nothing but a *caput mortuum*."[98] It is not just that the translator must capture the spirit of his original; a "new spirit" must also be "added" in the "transfusion." The translator, that is, serves as a kind of host for a parasitic original author, represented as providing substantive contributions crucial to their revival. Anne Dacier puts it in even starker terms, asserting that translation is itself creation, and not a mere "*imitation servile, où la fleur de l'esprit et l'imagination n'ont point de part*" ("servile imitation, where the flower of spirit and imagination play no part at all").[99] As Tytler notes, the "ordinary translator sinks under the energy of his original," whereas the skilled translator "frequently rises above it."[100] It is an act that not only requires a tremendous amount of labor as Dillon notes,[101] but one that is also framed as the translator's special charge of responsibility: it is the "duty of a poetical translator," Tytler writes, "never to suffer his original to fall," to even "add to the idea of the original what may appear to give greater force or illustration."[102] It turns out that to translate one's original, that is, is simultaneously to turn to invention.

As an effect of this tension between imitation and creation, mimesis becomes less important as a standard through which to judge the success of a copy. Translators do not aim to faithfully reproduce the content and form of their originals in a new language, that is, but rather,

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[98] John Denham, Preface to *The Destruction of Troy Upon the Second Book of Virgil's Aeneis* (London, 1656), n.p. A *caput mortuum* literally translates to "skull," but it means something more like "worthless remains."

[99] Anne Dacier, Preface to *L'Iliade d'Homere,* in *Les oeuvres d'Homere, traduites du grec par mad. Dacier*, vol. 1 (1711; A Leide, 1766), 47.

[100] Tytler, 47.

[101] Dillon writes to his fellow translators:

> Take pains the genuine meaning to explore,
> There sweat, there strain, tug the laborious oar:
> Search ev'ry comment, that your care can find,
> Some here, some there, may hit the poet's mind. (12)

[102] Tytler, 81, 38.

they aim to simulate them. To imitate an original, here, is to try and convincingly pass as *it*.[103] As Dryden asserts, translators should not translate Virgil in the same way that they translate Ovid, as "maintaining the character of an author, which distinguishes him from all others" is part of the task of a translator; but in maintaining an author's character, Dryden encourages his fellow translators to "very boldly" make the kind of modification that "no Dutch commentator will forgive," thus explicitly advocating for a kind of translation that situates its practice somewhere between imitation and creation.[104] Dacier similarly underscores the creativity necessary for translation by comparing its ideal process to a transfer across different mediums: "*il n'en est pas de la traduction, comme de la copie d'un tableau, où le copiste s'assujettit à suivre les traits, les couleurs, les proportions, les contours, les attitudes de l'original qu'il imite*" ("translation is not like the copy of a picture, where the copier subjects himself to following the lines, the colors, the proportions, the contours, and the attitudes of the original he imitates"). Rather, she asserts, a translator is more like a sculptor who works from a picture, or a painter who works from a piece of statuary, someone who is "*transport[é] par cet enthousiasme étranger*" ("transported by that

[103] To be clear, this is not quite the same thing as suggesting that these copies function as simulacra as defined by the late twentieth-century French sociologist Jean Baudrillard; translators during this period do suggest that they copy an *actual* source even as they stretch the notion to include activities that fall under the auspices of invention. Baudrillard writes of simulacra in *Simulacra and Simulation* (1981), trans. Sheila Faria Glaser (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1994): "It is no longer a question of imitation, nor duplication, nor even parody. It is a question of substituting the signs of the real for the real" (2).

[104] Dryden, Preface to *Sylvae*, n.p. By "Dutch commentator," Dryden presumably means to call attention to the highly realistic style that was associated with the Dutch aesthetic during and after this period—those whom Dryden represents as limiting themselves to observable forms—to serve as a point of contrast to his own approach. Although published much later, George Eliot captures this association in *Adam Bede* (1859; New York: New American Library, 1961), in her linking of "Dutch paintings" with attention to observable detail that she asserts endows them with a "precious quality of truthfulness" (185). It is also interesting to note that, despite Eliot's emphasis on the Dutch aesthetic, the opening line of *Adam Bede* actually recalls the oriental fiction tradition, thus arguably demonstrating its association with the imitation of the world in narrative—here, a past world (a phenomenon further explored in Chapter 4): "With a single drop of ink for a mirror, the Egyptian sorcerer undertakes to reveal to any chance comer far-reaching visions of the past. This is what I undertake to do for you, reader. With this drop of ink at the end of my pen, I will show you the roomy workshop of Mr. Jonathan Burge, carpenter and builder, in the village of Hayslope, as it appeared on the eighteenth of June, in year of our Lord 1799" (3).

foreign enthusiasm") and makes "*une chose toute nouvelle d'un sujet déjà connu*" ("a totally new thing of an already known subject").[105]

As already intimated, to make a new thing out of something familiar is glossed during this period as a kind of disclosed simulation. By framing translation as a process through which a translator revives his author through metempsychosis, the translator represents his copy as something more than a reproduction and less than the original. Instead, translation emerges as a re-creation of its original, a copy endowed with an illusory quality that makes it appear as if—but only as if—it were the original itself.

RE-CREATING THE WORLD

The notion of re-creation, rather than reproduction, is not unique to eighteenth-century translation discourse but also emerges in the distinct, yet related, discourse on fiction. The slew of writing that surfaced in the period on everything from speculation on the origins of fiction to explanations of the differences between the romance and the emerging novel also touched upon the nature of fiction's increasingly realistic quality. Reeve, for instance, elaborates on fiction's turn toward the "real" in *The Progress of Romance* (1785), gesturing toward something that is not quite—or, at least, not exclusively—mimesis: in fiction, particularly what Reeve classifies as the novel, she notes that there is increasingly "a familiar relation to such things, as pass every day before our eyes, such as may happen to our friends, or to ourselves."[106] The novel's focus, that is, is less the improbable, or even impossible, events characteristic of ancient romances and tales and more the kind of stories that are akin to neighborhood chatter. In translation terms, the novel appears to render a faithful copy of everyday life. But Reeve also points to something beyond, or not quite, mimesis in her description: "the perfection" of this new aesthetic aim, she

[105] Dacier, 47-8, 49.
[106] Reeve, 111. Hereafter cited in text as *PR*.

notes, "is to represent every scene, in so easy and natural a manner, and to make them appear so probable, as to deceive us into a persuasion (at least while we are reading) that all is real" (*PR*, 111). That is, she suggests that a fiction's realistic quality has to do in its presentation as if it were itself the source material (the "real"), an undertaking that fictions by Reeve and others demonstrate is not necessarily attached to the presence of realistic detail.

Of course, what constitutes a representation of the "real" and what doesn't, what is a "novel" and what isn't, and fiction's relation to fact was a matter of intense debate during the period, as I discuss throughout the dissertation.[107] Reeve, however, is central to these discussions because she distinguishes between a narrative's inclusion of probable events and its credibility or believability, pointing to them as discrete qualities of fiction. I should be clear that Reeve is not saying that the author should make fraudulently referential claims for her fictional work. If anything, Reeve makes the crucial gesture toward what Gallagher argues is the conceptual consolidation of fictionality during this period, the discovery of fiction as a "discursive mode in its own right" that is distinct from either fact or forgery.[108] As Reeve asserts, the deception, as she phrases it, is only meant to last "while we are reading" and not beyond that temporally bound experience. What Reeve *is* saying, however, is that there is a subtle distinction between probability and credibility when it comes to fiction's turn toward the "real" even as she

[107] As already stated, Reeve herself notes the conflation of the romance and novel forms in *The Progress of Romance*, despite the one "treat[ing] of fabulous persons and things" and the other meant to serve as "a picture of real life and manners," (110-11). See further Turner, "'Romance' and the Novel in Restoration England," for a crucial overview of the shifting standards of verisimilitude in eighteenth-century romances that confounds any hard and fast distinction between the novel and romance. See also Warner, "The Rise of the Novel in the Eye of Literary History," in *Licensing Entertainment*, 1-44, particularly 32-6, for a brief discussion of contesting ideas about what counted as "realistic" in the novel form, and McKeon, *The Origins of the English Novel,* for a discussion about the slipperiness between the novel and romance forms. For McKeon, "how to tell the truth in narrative" results in an "epistemological crisis" that only the novel form registers even as it absorbs romance conventions (20).
[108] Gallagher, 338.

confounds these terms herself,[109] a conflation that is largely owing to the conceptual capaciousness of the term *probability* during this period.

Based on the Latin *probabilis* meaning "worthy of approbation or approval," the concept of probability would come to refer to a number of ideas by the early eighteenth century,[110] including the notion of *vraisemblance*.[111] This helps explain the use of the term *probability* to refer to ideas more closely associated with a narrative's capacity to create an immersive world within its pages rather than its faithfulness in depicting people and events that likely exist or occur in the actual world. While explicitly referencing what he claims is the *Arabian Nights'* "moral probability," for instance, John Hawkesworth makes a case for what is more accurately described as a text's capacity to convince its reader of the integrity and even "reality" of the world depicted, however fabulous. Despite its blatant nonobservance of "the most known and obvious truths," Hawkesworth insists that "the action of the story proceeds with regularity, the

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[109] For instance, in the preface to her gothic fiction *The Old English Baron*: *A Gothic Story* (London, 1778), vi, she faults Horace Walpole for not keeping "within the utmost *verge* of probability" and for not staying "within certain limits of credibility" in *The Castle of Otranto*, using both terms to refer to a quality of fiction that Walpole fails to grasp in his overuse of supernatural descriptions (emphasis in original).

[110] As Douglas Lane Patey argues in *Probability and Literary Form: Philosophic Theory and Literary Practice in the Augustan Age* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), probability could refer to fidelity to fact appealing to opinion or evidence (external probability), a text's inner consistency (inner probability), fidelity to "psychological truths" (inner or poetic probability), or fidelity to moral truth (moral probability). As such, a probable fiction could denote a narrative's believability, its approval, or its reflection of truth however unbelievable or improbable it may seem. Truth, in turn, could denote external, inner, or moral truth, while the appeal to opinion could denote "educated" or "common" opinion. See 3-4, 77-83. For more on the theory of probability within a mathematical framework during the period of 1640 to 1840, see Lorraine Daston, *Classical Probability in the Enlightenment* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988).

[111] According to the OED, the English variant *verisimilitud*e increased in usage starting in the mid-nineteenth century; before then, and beginning in the seventeenth century, writers more commonly used the notion of probability to express similar ideas, the two words coming to function as synonyms by the century's end. *Vraisemblance* was also itself closely linked to notions of decorum and not necessarily reality as such. See Davis, *Factual Fictions*, 28-33, Turner, "'Romance' and the Novel in Restoration England," 64-74, Patey, *Probability and Literary Form*, 107-8, and Gérard Genette, "Vraisemblance et motivation," *Communications* 11 (1968): 5-9, for more about the association of *vraisemblance* with decorum (*bienséance*).

persons act upon rational principles, and such events take place as may naturally be expected from the interposition of superior intelligence and power."[112] John Upton, in speaking of the *Faerie Queene*, echoes Hawkesworth in his insistence that it is enough "if [a story] hangs well together and is consistent" for it to be considered probable.[113] And, of course, as already noted, Reeve stresses that it is not only the author's aim to write likely stories (stories "such as may happen to our friends, or to ourselves") but also her aim to write believable stories (stories that "deceive us into a persuasion (at least while we are reading) that all is real"). That is, Reeve and others actually underscore in their writings how some glossed an "imitation" of the world in fiction as less a faithful copy of the observable world and more something like its re-creation—something that was suspended between an imitation of *the* world and the creation of a new one.

Another way of putting this is that, while Gallagher is right to argue that the rise of a discourse of fictionality went hand-in-hand with fiction's move toward credibility,[114] eighteenth-century writers speak of credible fictions as not necessarily marked by their probability but, rather, by their capacity to create immersive worlds that *feel* real. That is, as noted in the Introduction, eighteenth-century realism is grounded more in what has been variously referred to as its "performative efficacy," "apparitional quality," or "its capacity to convince" than in mimesis.[115] For Deidre Lynch, it is gothic fiction that introduces the idea that "a fiction's authority" does not necessarily derive from "its mimetic accuracy, plausibility, or didactic force," but also from its performative efficacy, a quality of fiction that trains readers to recognize

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[112] John Hawkesworth, *The Adventurer*, vol. 1 (Dublin, 1760), 17-8.
[113] John Upton, Preface to *Spenser's Fairie Queene* (London, 1758), xxv, qtd. in Patey, 143. Patey also cites both Hawkesworth on the same page to underscore his point about the mutability of the concept of probability.
[114] Gallagher writes: "the less overt it [fictionality] seemed, the more it had to emerge into conceptual prominence" (340).
[115] See Lynch, 61; Bender,104; and Kareem, 4, respectively, for the quotations. As noted in n. 60 of the Introduction, the notion that eighteenth-century realism is grounded more in these qualities than in mimesis is drawn from Kareem.

"fiction *as* fiction" through grounding its authority in a "consensual illusion."[116] Noting more of a correspondence between the realist novel and gothic fiction, John Bender argues that gothic fiction writers actually help reveal realism's "apparitional quality," or its capacity "to give us the impression of real things" in their gothic works.[117] Lynch and Bender's turn to the gothic is fitting as Reeve, of course, authored the second romance-novel hybrid to be styled as "a gothic story," a form she argues is a kind of credible fiction (see further Chapter 4). By laying bare the mechanics that help to create, to borrow Frere's phrase, that "illusion of originality," even fictions that contain clearly fabulous and improbable plots help to foreground the operation of criteria of credibility.

Building on both Lynch and Bender, Sarah Tindal Kareem argues that the oscillation between credulity and skepticism—what she registers as "wonder"—solicited by and thematized within fictions produced as early as the beginning of the eighteenth century also demonstrates the "as if" quality of realistic representations that helps to constitute fictionality.[118] Kareem bases her argument on the assumption that "the reader's ironic credulity and the text's fictionality are mutually constitutive" rather than the latter enabling the former.[119] While eighteenth-century "true histories" make referential claims, for instance, Kareem argues that they also encourage readers to adopt an attitude of ironic credulity, thus helping to bring a concept of fiction into

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[116] Lynch, 61, 62.
[117] Bender, 104.
[118] See Kareem's "Introduction: Wonder and the Rise of Fiction," in *Eighteenth-Century Fiction and the Reinvention of Wonder*, 1-34. Kareem's central claim is that "eighteenth-century fiction solicits wonder at and about the real, that is, at and about everyday experience" (1). For more on Kareem's discussion about "as ifness," notably the idea that the world of the fictional text is characterized by an "as if" quality, which is partly based on Wolfgang Iser's argument in "Feigning in Fiction," in *Identity of the Literary Text*, ed. Mario J. Valdes and Owen Miller (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1985), 204-28, see 62-9, and 77.
[119] See Felix Martinez-Bonati, *Fictive Discourse and the Structures of Literature: A Phenomenological Approach*, trans. Philip W. Silver (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1981), 35, where he argues that fictionality enabled an attitude of ironic credulity.

sharper focus. As Kareem stresses, these narratives gesture toward a realism that stakes its authority in its capacity to immerse readers in a world *like* our world rather than in one that imitates particular phenomena in it, a form of realism that prioritizes the role of credibility over probability.[120] To be *like* the world in this sense is also to be a disclosed re-creation of it, a likeness that is presented as if—but only as if—it were the original itself. Like the eighteenth-century translation, that is, an imitation of the world in fiction is figured as something between a copy and its own distinct creation, something that is both *like* and admittedly *not* its source. If anything, it solicits that knowing deception/persuasion that "all is real" that Reeve identifies in *The Progress of Romance*, and what Samuel Taylor Coleridge, at the very end of the long eightheenth century, would gloss as the "willing suspension of disbelief" in *Biographia Literaria* (1817).[121]

The resonance between the overall structure of this form of realism and that of contemporary translation is likely not coincidental. It is not just that both forms of imitation are theorized as disclosed simulations of a source (whether an original text or the world), but also that these writers likewise turn to translation in their discussions of depicting the world in fiction. In the Introduction, I noted how Richard Hurd draws attention to an overlap in the strategies of imitation and invention, even in situations where the "experienced" writer attempts to prevent "those images of imitation from filtering his observations." In a similar vein, Samuel Johnson, while not explicitly linking the two practices, nonetheless offers almost identical advice for both:

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[120] Kareem writes: "Likeness here refers not to fiction's mimetic qualities (its imitation of particular phenomena in the world) but to its creation, within its pages, of another world; to be *like* the world, in this sense, is also to be distinct from it" (64). For Kareem, the roots for this concept of fiction lie in the eighteenth-century discourse of wonder that draws from seventeenth-century scientific and Protestant writing (See "Introduction: Wonder and the Rise of Fiction," in *Eighteenth-Century Fiction and the Reinvention of Wonder*).

[121] Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria*, ed. Adam Roberts (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014), 208.

while imitating "nature," is "justly considered as the greatest excellency of art," Johnson recommends that writers still "distinguish those parts of nature, which are most proper for imitation," prioritizing decorum over fidelity.[122] He offers almost the same prescription for translation: translators should shake off the "constraint" of the literal method and keep in mind the "modes of life and habits of thought" of their target audience.[123] Even Walter Scott draws from the discourse of translation in an essay on Henry Fielding: substituting the original author's "spirit" for that of the nation, Scott argues that it is the "genius" of England, which Fielding embodies, that enables him to write his novels.[124] Thomas Percy further underscores this sentiment in his preface to the translation *Hau Kiou Choaan, or, The Pleasing History* (1761), noting that "[a] foreigner will form a truer notion of the genius and spirit of the English, from one page of Fielding, and one or two writers now alive, than from whole volumes of Present States of England [sic], or French letters concerning the English nation."[125]

This is not to say that ideas about imitating texts taking shape within translation discourse went on to structure ideas about imitating the world in fiction in a direct line of influence. As already stressed, the two fields share an overlapping history that makes any distinction between the two far from hard and fast. It is to say, however, that writers explore ideas about imitating the world in fiction, which helps the idea of the credible fiction come into sharper focus, in ways that underscore the relevance of translation, nowhere more so than in the pseudotranslations and related forms that flood the market during this period. Ironically, the imbrication of translation and the increasingly believable fiction finds its fullest expression in a mode known more for its

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[122] Samuel Johnson, *The Rambler*, vol. 1 (1750; London, 1794), 24-5.
[123] ---, *The Lives of the Poets of Great Britain and Ireland* (Dublin, 1804), 568.
[124] Quotation in full: "Of all the works of imagination, to which English *genius* has given origin, the novels of the celebrated Henry Fielding are, perhaps, most decidedly and exclusively her own" (my emphasis). From *The Miscellaneous Prose Works of Sir Walter Scott*, vol. 3 (Boston: Wells and Lilly, 1829), 58.
[125] Thomas Percy, Preface to *Hau Kiou Choaan, or, The Pleasing History* (London, 1761), xvii.

fabulous plots and foreign settings than in realistic depictions of the world in fiction. That is, the bulk of material affirming this imbrication takes the shape of a distinct eighteenth-century literary tradition characterized by the dual concerns of linguistic/cultural exchange and stretching the limits of believability: the oriental fiction tradition.

CREDIBLE IMPOSTURES

Immediately after Shahzaman discovers his wife's infidelity in his kingdom of Samarkand, he finds himself the eyewitness of yet another instance of marital betrayal, this time by his sister-in-law in his brother's kingdom of India and Indochina. With one royal betrayal at the heels of another, Shahzaman and his brother Shahrayar decide to roam the latter's kingdom in search of a more unfortunate individual from whom they can extract comfort by comparison. They encounter a powerful jinn in their search whose female captive has managed to amass a large collection of rings, each one documenting a moment when she "cheated" on her undiscerning supernatural captor. After being made to relinquish their own rings, the two brothers come to the conclusion that all women are dangerous manipulators of reality, the spinners of false and deceitful narratives.[126] As punishment for inherent female duplicity, Shahrayar issues his infamous wed-then-behead decree and thus commences perhaps the most well known version of the frame story of *Alf Layla wa Layla*. The mission of the text's heroine Shahrazad is not only to forestall her own death through spinning an endless tale, punctuated with appropriately timed cliffhangers, but also to address the charge of duplicity that has been

[126] In Muhsin Mahdi's authoritative edition of the fourteenth-century Syrian manuscript, *Alf Layla wa Layla* (*The Thousand and One Nights, From the Earliest Known Sources*), 3 vols., ed. Mahdi (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1994), he registers the discovery of woman's perceived duplicitous nature by the two brothers as "*Inna kaidakunna a'adhīm*" ("Woman's cunning/guile is great," 64). Echoes of this can be heard in "*et ne convenez-vous pas que rien n'est égal à la malice des femmes?*" ("and do you not agree that nothing equals the malice of women?"), which appeared in Antoine Galland's *Les mille et une nuits*, vol. 1 (1704-17; Paris: Furne et Cie Libr. Éditeur, 1837), 21-2.

waged against her entire gender. Of course, the nature of *Alf Layla wa Layla* makes any definitive statement about the text impossible, but central to the most recognizable version of the text's frame story is an inarguable fear of narratives that masquerade as reality.

While it may seem odd to follow the preceding section with a brief discussion of the frame story of *Alf Layla wa Layla*, the brothers' encounter with interpretive hurdles should dispel any reservations that the oriental fiction tradition is irrelevant to the rise and consolidation of the increasingly credible fiction. *The London News* in 1723, in fact, saw fit to serialize Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* and *Sindbad the Sailor* concurrently,[127] and even Coleridge argued that both Defoe's novel and the larger compendium of tales appear to be "founded on the same principle:" he cites, in fact, the "combination and re-combination of familiar objects so as to produce novel and wonderful imagery" as a shared narrative strategy of both.[128] Surprisingly, despite the noted likeness of *Alf Layla wa Layla* to what would become a central text to studies of the novel and realism, the oriental fiction tradition has long been neglected in this kind of scholarship to say nothing of its neglect in scholarship of British literature more generally.[129] The tradition, however, is central to any study that seeks to examine the symbiotic association of the histories of translation and fiction in the eighteenth century, not least because the most influential

[127] See Srinivas Aravamudan, "In the Wake of the Novel: Oriental Tale as National Allegory," *Novel: A Forum on Fiction* 33.1 (1999): 11.
[128] *Coleridge's Miscellaneous Criticism*, ed. Thomas Middleton Raysor (Constable, 1936), 194. 193.
[129] Thanks to Ros Ballaster's *Fabulous Orients*, we now have an exhaustive literary survey of the innumerable oriental fictions that dominated the eighteenth-century print market, fictions that include translations, pseudotranslations, adaptations, and original writings that took as one of their organizing frameworks the imaginative staging in some part of the East. Prior to Ballaster's *Fabulous Orients*, the only literary survey of the tradition had been one published almost a century prior by Martha Pike Conant. See *The Oriental Tale in England in the Eighteenth Century* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1908). As stated in n. 42 of the Introduction, Aravamudan's more recent *Enlightenment Orientalism* also elevates the role of the oriental fiction tradition in the rise of the novel, although Aravamudan's central argument is that the novel form emerges as an alternative to that of oriental tales.

translation of this period, which also popularized what came to be associated with an "oriental" style of writing in England and France, was Galland's translation of *Alf Layla wa Layla*.

It is hard to convey the impact of this literary event. As soon as *Les mille et une nuits* (1704-17) was published, it was immediately followed by a Grub Street English translation (*Arabian Nights' Entertainments*, 1706-21), which was further followed by 80 English editions of the text by 1800,[130] to make no mention of the countless imitations, adaptations, parodies, and original writings that borrow heavily from its recognizable tropes and devices.[131] Its readers were Jonathan Swift, Joseph Addison, Pope, Lawrence Sterne, Hugh Blair, James Beattie, among many others.[132] Mention of the collection of tales surfaces in the poetry of Alfred Tennyson and William Wordsworth, and in the prose of Fielding, Charles Dickens, and even George Eliot, some of them registering moments of fond remembrance, and others moments of parody or even outright disparagement. Despite its influence and popularity, the explosion in oriental-style fiction in the early eighteenth century was not only thanks to Galland's translation. While often overshadowed by the image of Shahrazade spinning her ever-expanding yarn of tales, Marana's *L'espion turc* (1684) also achieved noteworthy status in England and France during this period, fundamentally shaping the oriental fiction tradition that developed across the Channel.

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[130] See Saree Makdisi and Felicity Nussbaum, Introduction to *The Arabian Nights in Historical Context: Between East and West*, ed. Makdisi and Nussbaum (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 3.

[131] Of course, "text" and "translation" are meant here in their loose sense: despite the authoritative status of the fourteenth-century Syrian manuscript edited by Mahdi, the "text" of *Alf Layla wa Layla* is probably more accurately described as a palimpsest with unknowable origins (Makdisi and Nussbaum, 3). Galland's "translation," furthermore, includes what are believed to be original contributions, such as the stories of Aladdin and Ali Baba, as well as stories that were part of other Arabic manuscripts, such as *Sindbad the Sailor*; it is even believed that the conclusion to the frame story of Shahrazad and Shahrayar may have been Galland's own invention (Mahdi, 3: 48). See Mahdi's introduction (vol. 3) for more on the reception of the text in England, as well as a general overview of its reception outside Britain and Europe, well before and after the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

[132] See Peter L. Caracciolo, "Introduction: 'Such a store house of ingenious fiction and of splendid imagery,'" in *The Arabian Nights' in English Literature: Studies in the Reception of 'The Thousand and One Nights' into British culture*, ed. Caracciolo (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1998), 2.

Marana's text, which is believed to have introduced the trope of the letter-writing foreign visitor,[133] also went into numerous editions and was widely imitated in English during this period. The fictional letters that comprise the text are written in the imagined voice of "Mahmut the Arabian," a "Mussulman" spy employed by the Sultan of the Ottoman Empire and stationed in Paris during the ongoing skirmishes between the Ottoman Empire and Europe in the late seventeenth century. The first volume of what came to be a multivolume text is credited with certainty to Marana, an Italian journalist in France who wrote the fictional letters in French, although part of the conceit of the text was that it was a "translation" of letters in Arabic "found" in Paris that came into French by way of Italian; the French original was followed shortly thereafter by a translation into English in 1687.[134] The authorship and status of the remaining volumes still form something of a literary mystery: consensus is that they are believed to have been first written and published in English with disputed authorship, and almost immediately followed by French translations. The first and subsequent volumes collectively form the eight-volume *Letters Writ by a Turkish Spy*, a sequence of some 600 fictional letters that cover the period from 1637 to 1682 in France.[135] The popularity and adaptability of the multivolume text were such that the figure of the eastern informant not only traversed fictions from France to

[133] See Arthur J. Weitzman, Introduction to Giovanni P. Marana's *Letters Writ by a Turkish Spy*, selected and ed. Weitzman (London: Routledge, 1970), viii.
[134] Ibid., ix.
[135] The remaining volumes were claimed to have been found by a Mr. Saltmarsh in Italian, who had them subsequently translated into English, although there is no record that a Mr. Saltmarsh ever existed, and no extant Italian edition of the *Turkish Spy*. Consensus is that it was all "an elaborate ruse" (see Weitzman x-xi). Ballaster suggests that Marana is the author of all eight volumes owing to their "consistency of style, and tone," and that their publication in English was to avoid censorship in France (*Fabulous Orients*, 146).

England, and thereafter from England back to France, so to speak, but it also made its way across the Atlantic to appear in Peter Markoe's *The Algerine Spy* (1787).[136]

While representations of regions outside of Europe certainly continue to surface through to the end of the eighteenth and into the succeeding centuries, the period of the late seventeenth to mid-eighteenth centuries is set apart, not only because of the sheer number of them that are produced during this period, but also because of the kind that emerge. It should go without saying that these representations paint a picture of Western conceptions of other regions and peoples rather than accurately portraying them. Furthermore, while some of the representations during this period certainly anticipate the increasing sense of alterity that more predominantly characterize later narratives, and that for Edward Said marks the beginnings of orientalism,[137] not all of them fall into this category. Aravamudan offers the term "Enlightenment Orientalism" to refer to the "nebulous form of transcultural fiction" that operate outside and even upend established assumptions during this period, a form that, despite being "nine parts invented and one part referential," include several writers of French and English fiction who imagine the East-West encounter in multiple, sometimes even sympathetic, form.[138] The point to stress here is that the realities (political, material, social) that structure European fascination with other regions during this period enable the oriental fiction tradition of the late seventeenth to mid-eighteenth

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[136] See Jacob Crane, "The Long Transatlantic Career of the Turkish Spy," *Atlantic Studies: Literary, Cultural, and Historical Perspectives* 10. 2 (2013): 228-46.
[137] See Edward Said, *Orientalism* (1978; New York: Vintage Books, 1979).
[138] Aravamudan is not the first to revise Said's central thesis, but see his *Enlightenment Orientalism* as a representative example of this trend. Aravamudan offers Henry Stubbe's *The Rise and Progress of Mahometanism* (1671), Simon Tyssot de Patot's *Adventures of Jacques Massé* (1714), John Toland's *Nazarenus* (1718), Henri de Boulainviller's *Vie de Mahomet* (1730), and Edward Gibbon's *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (1776-88) as illustrative examples. Aravamudan also lists Behn, Defoe, Swift, Haywood, Montagu, Oliver Goldsmith, Johnson, Smollett, Sheridan, William Beckford, and "a host of minor writers" as examples of eighteenth-century English writers who were practitioners of Enlightenment Orientalism. French writers include Galland, Marana, Bernard Le Bovierde Fontenelle, François Pétis de la Croix, Montesquieu, Antoine Hamilton, Claude Prosper Jolyot de Crébillon, Antoine François Prévost, Voltaire, and Denis Diderot. See *Enlightenment Orientalism,* 3-5. Quotation from 5.

centuries to be viewed as embodying multiple representations: gestures toward the kind of discourses designed to validate later colonial projects alongside explorations of something resembling intercultural sympathy. I would add that the tradition also becomes a space where shifting conceptions of translation find imaginative expression.

To argue that the oriental fiction tradition partly draws from the tradition of translation is to assert that these fictions collectively confront the question of cross-cultural and cross-linguistic encounter: representations of effortless multilinguality exist alongside those of jarring and disorienting unintelligibility, for instance, the both of which bookend a range of representations that can include mutual attempts at compromised understanding or sheer subordination of one system of signification to another. As one might expect, these narratives are also rife with nods to the dominant images structuring ideas about translation during this period. It is not coincidental, for instance, that transmigration recurs frequently in oriental fiction across its multiple strands:[139] a consciousness is not always shown to be intrinsically hinged to a body and can move from one physical form to another, sometimes even across species, for example. Or, in less fantastical sequences, a character can manipulate their exterior to the extent that they are no longer associated with their former life and assume another identity. As already noted, it is also not coincidental that the figure of the foreign observer emerges within a major strand of oriental fiction, informing both its structure and themes: much like the process through which the translator seeks to embody the "spirit" of an original author in order to re-create a familiar text,

[139] Ballaster makes the case in both *Fabulous Orients*, particularly her chapter "Shape-Shifting: Oriental Tales," 25-58, as well as "Narrative Transmigrations," that the reading process is staged as a form of "transmigration" in oriental fiction. This occurs in four ways: through scenes that depict shape-shifting; through including narrators who inhabit multiple identities; through encouraging the reader to identify with foreign narrators; and, finally, the oriental mode itself is a kind of "shape-shifter," undergoing generic changes as it absorbs elements from other modes. As noted in the Introduction, despite these observations, Ballaster does not examine the actual usage of the word "transmigration" in eighteenth-century theories of translation.

writers of oriental spy narratives recast familiar cities and structures anew by presenting them to readers through the eyes of a "foreigner" with whom they are encouraged to identify.

This is not to suggest that these observable currents in oriental fiction were the exclusive result of contemporary conceptions of translation. Depictions of various forms of shape-shifting (the transformation of human into animal, and vice versa, for instance) pepper *Alf Layla wa Layla*, a collection in circulation long before phrases and terms like "the transmigration of souls" or "metempsychosis" began to appear in theorizations of translation. Rather, it is more likely the case that the exchange between the traditions of oriental fiction and translation may not have been one-way. Increased travel to different parts of the world, and the increasing popularity of travel narratives, made information about different regions and cultures more available and accessible than they had been before.[140] The belief in the transmigration of souls was not only associated with the classical tradition, but also explicitly with non-Islamic religious traditions of the East, increasingly engaged with during this period; Hinduism, Buddhism, and Taoism, to list a few examples, each posit a belief in reincarnation.[141] This association helps contextualize the publication of Addison's essay "Introduction on the Doctrine of Transmigration" together with

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[140] John Hawkesworth's *Account of the Voyages Undertaken by the Order of his Present Majesty for Making Discoveries in the Southern Hemisphere* (1773) was apparently the most borrowed book in the Bristol library in the years 1773-84. See Nigel Leask, *Curiosity and the Aesthetics of Travel Writing, 1770-1840* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 12. Leask cites from Paul Kaufmann, *Borrowings from the Bristol Library, 1773-1784: A Unique Record of Reading Vogues* (Charlottesville: Bibliographical Society of the University of Virginia, 1960). While not on travel narratives per se, Nabil Matar examines other forms of writing, such as contemporary prison depositions, captives' memoirs, and so forth, that document interactions between the English and Muslims from the Ottoman Empire, the Eastern Mediterranean, and North Africa during the early modern period in *Turks, Moors, and Englishmen in the Age of Discovery* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999). See also Ballaster, *Fabulous Orients*, 36-41, for more on the overlap of travel narratives and fiction during this period.

[141] See Chi Ming Yang's "Gross Metempsychosis and Eastern Soul," in *Humans and Others Animals in Eighteenth-Century British Culture: Representation, Hybridity, Ethics*, ed. Frank Palmeri (Hampshire: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2006), 13-30, for an important analysis of the increasing recognition during this period of the proximity of Platonic belief in the transmigration of souls to similar dogmas in eastern religious traditions, and the efforts that were made to "rescue" Pythagoras from unwanted associations with the East. See also Ballaster, *Fabulous Orients*, 28-31, and Johnson, *A History of the Novel in Translation*, 145-8.

Thomas Simon Gueullette's *Chinese Tales; or the Wonderful Adventures of the Mandarin Fum-Hoam* (1725), for instance.[142] The point to stress here is that ideas about the East may partly account for the framing of translation as an act of transmigration or metempsychosis during this period, which in turn provided further impetus to depict these images in tales *about* the East.

Travel narratives, of course, not only introduce readers to different parts of the globe but they also reinforce the association of "wonder" and "curiosity" with being a stranger in a new land.[143] For Stephen Greenblatt, wonder is "an instinctive recognition of difference" that simultaneously draws attention to "the problem of credibility" and "the undeniability" of the experience.[144] Undoubtedly the figure of the foreign observer who travels to lands familiar to eighteenth-century readers and views them with equal-parts marvel and incredulity also draws from this body of literature albeit in a reversal of its overall textual strategy. For Kareem, cultivating this estranged perspective drawn from travel narratives is one strategy for making the ordinary appear wondrous in fiction; as she puts it, "wonder," which is "the principal cognitive-affective state associated with the apprehension of new worlds" is also the "reader's implied state of response when contemplating fictional representations.[145] Already we have seen, however, how translation discourse further reinforces how identification with a foreigner (the original author) could recast a familiar object (the source text) anew. More importantly, we have also

[142] Ballaster makes a similar observation in *Fabulous Orients*, 30.
[143] Greenblatt argues that wonder is central to the initial experience of Europeans to the New World. See Greenblatt, *Marvelous Possessions: The Wonder of the New World* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991). See also Leask, *Curiosity and the Aesthetics of Travel Writing*. Leask argues that curiosity is central to understanding the experience of European travelers to different parts of the world that were framed as "antique lands" between 1770 and 1840, particularly curiosity in two senses of the word as it was used during the period in question: one that recalled commercial desires (the desire to possess an exotic object), and another that was associated with acquiring knowledge about foreign curiosities (4).
[144] Greenblatt, 20.
[145] See Kareem, "Cultivating Wonder," in *Eighteenth-Century Fiction and the Reinvention of Wonder,* 42-54, where she also draws from Greenblatt. Quotation from 112.

seen how it more explicitly provides a model for framing an imitation as both a copy and its original re-created, as something that appears as if—but only as if—it were the original itself.

To suggest that the oriental fiction tradition becomes a site through which to explore strategies of imitation may strike some as absurd, as it certainly struck several eighteenth-century readers, among them Fielding. He includes the *Arabian Nights* as part of a collection of texts that he claims are written by authors "who, without any assistance from nature or history, record persons who never were, or will be, and facts which never did, nor possibly can, happen; whose heroes are of their own creation, and their brains the chaos whence all their materials are selected."[146] To be fair, most writers of eighteenth-century oriental fiction would have probably agreed with him: the point, as already argued, was less to draw from "nature or history" than it was to create fictional worlds that manage to preserve some illusion of reality even as they might contradict, to quote Hawkesworth again, "the most known and obvious truths."[147] For the most part, readers are not encouraged to regard these representations, as Fielding erroneously did, as faithful copies of the observable world. Rather, they are encouraged and trained in these fictions to approach clearly fantastic worlds as something like a copy of our world (entertaining its

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[146] Henry Fielding, *Joseph Andrews* and *Shamela*, ed. Douglas Brooks-Davies (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 163.

[147] It should be pointed out, however, that some writers did argue for the mimetic purchase of texts like the *Arabian Nights*, some going so far as to attribute sociological value to the text however bizarre that may strike the modern reader (as it certainly did Fielding): Galland insists in "Avertissement de la première edition" to *Les mille et une nuits* that the admittedly imaginative collection of tales gives a better description of the customs and manners of the peoples of the East than that which can be found in actual travel narratives: "*Ils doivent plaire encore par les coutumes et les mœurs des Orientaux, par les cérémonies de leur religion, tant païenne que mahométane; et ces choses y sont mieux marquées que dans les auteurs qui en ont écrit, et que dans les relations des voyageurs*" ("They must further please by [their description of] the customs and manners of the Orientals, by the ceremonies of their religion, both pagan and Mahometan; they are better described here than by the authors who have written about it, and by that found in travel narratives," 7.). Similarly insisting on the authenticity of the "Arabian tales," Mary Wortley Montagu writes in a letter to her sister that "those very tales were writ by an author of this country [Turkey] and (excepting the enchantments) are a real representation of manners here." See Montagu, *The Turkish Embassy Letters*, ed. Daniel O'Quinn and Teresa Hefferman (Peterborough: Broadview Press, 2012), 158 (L. 40).

reality) and an original invention (acknowledging its fictionality), worlds that train readers to willingly suspend disbelief. That is, in addition to readerly apprehension of fictional worlds finding a template in the apprehension of new and foreign worlds as Kareem notes, I would also stress that it finds a template in the apprehension, drawn from translation discourse, of a translation/imitation as if it were the original.

This was partly the natural result of a dominant form to emerge within the oriental fiction tradition: while some of the texts in the tradition certainly contained actual translations (Galland's *Les mille et une nuits*, for instance, as well as several others) or were presented as adaptations, most were pseudotranslations. In fact, most of the fictions that I examine are simulations of translations, whether earnest or tongue-in-cheek. The movement, in fact, from hoax to disclosed fabrication is significant. While the conceit of translation may have started off as a convenient means of avoiding censure, it gradually transforms over the course of the eighteenth century into an overt and popular narrative strategy. That is, Defoe and Montesquieu may covertly offer assessments of societal norms and practices under the guise of a "translator," but later writers, like James Ridley, openly draw attention to the contrived status of their "translated" texts, as I discuss in later chapters. Even those earlier texts that earnestly adopt the conceit of translation anticipate the transition through prompts to readers to question the text's truth-claims. Part of my argument, then, is that eighteenth-century pseudotranslations increasingly come to embody in their structure the "as if" quality of actual translations and imitations produced during the period. The conceptual commonalities of translation and pseudotranslation in any given period is not a novel idea: as Gideon Toury writes,

pseudotranslations "testify to what a society has become *conscious of* in how it conceives of translation," laying bare the ideas associated with the practice.[148]

The other part of my argument relies on the assumption that it is the thematization of translation within pseudotranslations and other forms of oriental fiction during this period that enables them to gesture toward the narrative mechanics of the increasingly credible fiction. While they often include fabulous and improbable plots, these fictions also thematize the "as if" quality of convincing simulations, even going so far as to model for readers in some instances how to apprehend the simultaneously believable and untrue. This is nowhere more evident than in the thematic fixation on the credible imposture in a dominant strand of oriental fiction. As noted in the Introduction, rather than covering a representative selection of texts from the different parts of the world that were associated with the idea of the Orient, I limit my study to those that involve representations of the Islamic world. Contrary to traditional conceptions, it is misleading to treat the vast compendium of texts that would come to be registered as oriental fiction as a cohesive and invariable unit; while a considerable degree of conflation did take place of vastly different areas comprising what was associated with the East, particular spaces of this extensive region were associated with certain narrative tropes, often profoundly shaped by their political and geographical affiliation with Britain.[149] Moreover, representations of a single geographical space could shift over time depending on various factors, such as a change in the region's political or economic status.

As Nabil Matar argues, for instance, early modern fears of Muslim invasion embodied in the form of the Ottoman Empire give way over the course of the eighteenth century to ideas and

[148] Gideon Toury, *Descriptive Translation Studies – and beyond* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2012), 54.
[149] Ballaster organizes her *Fabulous Orients*, for instance, in three sections exploring fictions relating to Persia and Turkey, China, and India, noting that "[e]ach section explores the range of fabulous writings relating to each oriental territory in order to illustrate how certain narrative tropes can acquire hegemony in the representation of that space" (21).

policies associated with modern colonialism; this is a shift, that is, from perceiving this part of the world with a mixture of "fear, anxiety, and awe," as Matar terms to it, to one of imperial ambition.[150] As already intimated, more so than with fictions about other regions or faiths, or those that come later during the heyday of empire, fictions staged in some part of the Islamic world in the early part of the eighteenth century take the theme of credible impostures to be one of their central organizing narratives. It's an ironic thematic preoccupation given that it was the non-Islamic regions of the East that were most associated with the belief in transmigration. It is a theme, however, that grows naturally out of other ideas associated with this part of the world since the medieval period, particularly the long history of Western representations of "Mahometanism" as an elaborate and dangerous counterfeit of religion and its founder, "Mahomet," as its deceitful inventor. To be clear, my argument at this juncture is twofold: I am arguing that certain strands of oriental fiction—in this case, those staged in some part of the Islamic world—express both ideas about translation and ideas about the region. It is precisely the complementary nature of these related ideas, in fact, that enables authors of these texts to productively explore the nature of fiction.

As Dimmock argues, the multiple and mutable mythologies that shape the figure of Mahomet, and the faith he is represented as inventing, are drawn primarily from medieval Christian traditions, resulting in a picture that is so distinct from the historical Muhammad that many scholars continue to use the antiquated spelling, and its variants, to denote this "semi-fictional character," as Ballaster puts it.[151] As Dimmock argues, while conceptions of Mahomet and Mahometanism never stabilize into a static form in the premodern Christian imagination, two primary mythologies consolidate in the pre-1450 period: Mahometans as idolatrous Saracens

[150] Matar, 8.
[151] See Dimmock, *Mythologies of the Prophet Muhammad*. Quotation from Ballaster, *Fabulous Orients*, 29 n. 8.

who situate their leader in a polytheistic system that might include Termagent, Apollo, and/or Jupiter, and, secondly, Mahometans as credulous believers that are tricked by a heresiarch. It is the latter mythology of Mahomet as heresiarch that dominates throughout the Middle Ages and into the early modern period (as is depicted in the *Travels* of John Mandeville (1496), for instance), part of an endeavor to discredit what is seen as a counterfeit faith made all the more urgent after the 1453 Ottoman capture of Constantinople and the Ottoman-Hapsburg/Austrian wars.[152] Representations of Mahomet undergo further development in the late sixteenth century thanks to the prominence of the image of the turbaned Turk in print during that period, at which point it becomes more common to depict a "Turkified" or "orientalized" Mahomet rather than a figure more reminiscent of a classical deity as had been the case before.[153] By the time Galland's translation enters the literary sphere in the early eighteenth century, fears of Ottoman invasion give way to fetishization and ideas related to the conquest of the East, and popular narratives about Mahomet (Mahomet as tyrannical, licentious, hedonistic, and so forth) are extracted from the figure himself and projected onto emerging Western representations of the Islamic region as a whole.[154]

The figure of Mahomet becomes overwhelmingly associated with the concept of imposture in seventeenth-century England and France.[155] As Dimmock notes, the term *imposture* was drawn from the late Latin *impostura*, based on the verb meaning "to impose," and came to connote both deception (often associated through means of bewitchment) and imposition (often associated with force or fraud), practices that could occur on an individual or mass scale. In other

[152] See Dimmock, "'Well Rehearsed' in 'Books Old': Early Print and the Life of Mahomet," in *Mythologies of the Prophet Muhammad*, 24-63, particularly 24-6.
[153] See Dimmock, "Old Mahomet's Head: Idols, Papists, and *Mortus Ali* on the English Stage," in *Mythologies of the Prophet Muhammad*, 101-48, particularly 101-11.
[154] Ibid., 210.
[155] See Introduction, n. 15 for examples of writers who associate Mahomet with imposture. See also Dimmock, 170-82, and Ballaster, *Fabulous Orients*, 49-52.

words, an impostor could be one who seduces other individuals, or one who imposes a false religion upon a credulous population, through means of presumed witchcraft or through forms of cunning. The figure of Mahomet comes to function as a kind of shorthand for false and counterfeit belief during this period, notably epitomized by such texts as Voltaire's play *Le Fanatisme, ou Mahomet le prophète* (1736; translated into English by James Miller and John Hoadley in 1744 as *Mahomet the Impostor, A Tragedy*). The figure also routinely surfaces in various Protestant writings about dissident religious groups and Roman Catholicism, Catholic writings about Protestantism, and eventually about organized religion more generally. Writers label Charles I, his son, and Cromwell Mahomets or liken them to Mahometanism,[156] although Charles II's fashioning as a type of Mahomet in 1672 represents an unparalleled development in the history of the mythology. As Dimmock notes, Henry Stubbe's *The Originall & Progress of Mahometanism*, which circulated in manuscript form until its publication in 1911, atypically likened the figure of Mahomet to Charles II in order to underscore a commended commonality: details about varying degrees of tolerance of Jews and Christians under Islamic law were marshaled in order to comment approvingly on Charles II's Declaration of Indulgence, which extended religious liberty to dissidents and Catholics before it was withdrawn in 1673. Unlike most other writings to feature a Mahomet figure, Stubbe's manuscript marshaled the much-maligned prophet in order to subject contemporary Christianity to similar forms of scrutiny and examination, suggesting that it might be just as much of an "imposture" as Mahometanism.[157]

[156] Dimmock notes that Parliamentarian writing during this period, as illustrated by John Milton, *Eikonoklastes* (1649), *The life and reigne of King Charls, or, The pseudo-martyr discovered* (1651), and *The Alcoran of Mahomet* (1649) conflated these figures with Mahomet through the concept of imposture (174).

[157] Dimmock includes Stubbe's manuscript as part of a collection of Unitarian texts, along with John Toland's *Nazarenus or, Jewish, Gentile, and Mahometan Christianity* (1718), and *Mahomet No Imposter* (1720), written under the pseudonym Abdulla Mahumed Omar, that reverse the association of Mahomet

Representations of Mahomet and Mahometanism, that is, not only function as signs for the false and counterfeit belief of others, but also of those closer to home, becoming a way to signal the desire to uncover deception in all its forms.

I argue that, precisely because of the association of imposture with Mahomet in the late seventeenth century, oriental tales that feature an Islamized backdrop or character(s) often revolve around questions of counterfeiting and credibility. By the time Marana's *L'espion turc* and Galland's *Les mille et une nuits* entered the French and English literary scenes of the eighteenth-century, the emphasis on the interpretive ambiguity of the spy in the former, and the preoccupation with false appearances in the frame story of the latter, would have resonated with contemporary representations of the Islamic world. It seems entirely likely, in fact, that the figure of the Ottoman spy also takes its form from seventeenth-century Mahometan discourse, serving as an example of the complementary nature of Mahometan and translation discourses during this period: the spy is made to function as both the embodiment of one kind of "imposture" and also the means of another kind's "exposure," thus aligning the figure with both Mahomet as well as the discerning (and Christian) observer capable of telling the difference between the real and the believable fiction. Unsurprisingly, yet another oriental stock figure that brings together themes of counterfeiting and credibility emerges in fiction during this period: the figure of the duplicitous Roxane. It is Richard Knolles' *The Generall Historie of the Turks* (1603), which includes an account of the first wife of Suleyman I (1494-1566), Roxolana, also known as Hurem Sultan (1502-1558), that scholars believe popularized the figure of Roxane.[158] The figure of Roxolana,

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and imposture in order to argue that aspects of Mahometanism may actually represent a return to what was represented in these texts as an uncorrupted "true" religion. See Dimmock, 182-99, especially 192-7.

[158] Ballaster, *Fabulous Orients*, 61. According to Knolles, Roxolana secures her rise through plots to discredit Suleyman's eldest son and heir in order to recommend the succession of her own sons by the sultan. See Richard Knolles, "The Life of Solyman, the Fovrth and Most Magnificent Emperovr of the Tvrkes," in *The Generall Historie of the Turkes* (London, 1603), 567-639.

or Roxane, would go on to evolve into a metonymic marker of potential duplicity in the various plays, poems, and fictions in which she emerges, coming to serve as the sign for believable fictions that are ultimately proven to be false.[159] Much like the eastern informant, she is the very embodiment of imposture. Fictions that feature such characters or draw from such themes, in other words, routinely juxtapose reality and its convincing simulation, underscoring the urgency of differentiating between them. It is through such juxtapositions that readers are trained, in a sense, to identify a simulation as such.

In the chapters that follow, I argue through close readings of various prose narratives that are staged in some part of the Islamic world, or draw from stock tropes and themes associated with this strand of oriental fiction, that ideas about translation play a role in the conceptual consolidation of fictionality, particularly the idea of the increasingly credible fiction. As already intimated, these fictions are "translations" in a loose sense: some are earnest pseudotranslations, and others are tongue-in-cheek. Some take cross-cultural and cross-linguistic encounter as their central focus, and others contain stories that only allude to such encounters and themes. Regardless of how their authors draw from contemporary translation discourse, and related discourses, their doing so imbues these fictions with structures, characters, and plots that play with ideas of imitation, believability, and imposture. I explore the various forms, contributions, and implications of these fictions of translation, demonstrating how they absorb, illustrate, and interrogate ideas related to the act of representing the real world in narrative.

[159] I discuss Montesquieu's *Lettres persanes* (1721), which includes a Roxane figure, and Defoe's *Roxana: The Fortunate Mistress* 1724) in the next chapter, but other examples include Gauthier de Costes de la Calprenède's *Cassandre* (1642-5), Madeleine de Scudéry's *Ibrahim* (1641), Madeleine-Angélique Poisson de Gomez's *Anecdotes persanes* (1727). See Ballaster, *Fabulous Orients*, 130-5, for a brief analysis of these "French Roxolanas."

CHAPTER 2

THE FAMILIAR WORLD MADE STRANGE

DEFOE AND MONTESQUIEU'S FICTIONAL LETTERS BY AN EASTERN INFORMANT

Early in Robinson Crusoe's travels, before he is stranded on an island that will become his home for a little over twenty-eight years, he finds himself on another island somewhere off the coast of West Africa. In fact, while the initially designated "island of despair" that Crusoe would later rename his "castle" and "country seat" serves as the primary setting for most of his story, his adventures actually span a number of locations between England and South America as he sails through the Atlantic Ocean. What makes this particular nameless island, somewhere between Port Sale and Cape Verde, worth singling out is that it is the setting of an odd spectacle that stumps the eponymous protagonist, leaving him momentarily unable to distinguish if it is "usual" or "strange." As Crusoe and the young boy he meets in Port Sale, Xury, near the shore, he observes:

> two mighty creatures one pursuing the other, (as we took it) with great fury, from the mountains towards the sea; whether it was the male pursuing the female, or whether they were in sport or in rage, we could not tell, any more than we could tell whether it was usual or strange but I believe it was the latter.[160]

Despite his confusion, Crusoe does his best to interpret the scene through relying on contextual signals: he comes to the conclusion that the appearance of the two creatures during the daytime is "strange," rather than "usual," because the people of the island appear alarmed. This brief experience of bewilderment is quickly followed by another instance of momentary disorientation: when one of the animals begins to head towards Crusoe's boat, Crusoe decides to load his gun and shoot, after which he notes that it is "impossible to express the astonishment of these poor creatures [people of the island] at the noise and the fire of my gun; some of them were

[160] Daniel Defoe, *The Life and Strange Surprizing Adventures of Robinson Crusoe* (London: 1719), 33. Hereafter cited in text as *RC*.

even ready to dye for fear, and fell down as dead with the very terror" (*RC*, 34). The sudden emergence of a never-before-seen object that produces "astonishment" follows on the heels of a maybe-strange/maybe-usual scene, the both of these scenes registering moments that beggar belief for the novel's characters.

Importantly, these moments of interpretive confusion all have to do with who is doing the observing, and what exactly is being observed. No mention is made of Xury's reaction to Crusoe's gun, for instance, because the narrative takes for granted that he has already encountered this technology in Port Sale. There is no momentary affront to his comprehension. Likewise, the people of the island, while alarmed at the appearance of the leopards, are not flummoxed by it, are not confused as to whether such a sight should be regarded as "strange" or "usual." In fact, it is their collective response that Crusoe must rely upon in order to come to some provisional reading of his surroundings. Momentary interpretive hurdles are thus offered here as part of the cross-cultural and cross-linguistic encounter consistent with Greenblatt and Kareems's arguments that wonder—wonder as marvel, and wonder as doubt—is "an instinctive recognition of difference." These impediments, in fact, appear to be constituent of such encounters. While the brief experiences recorded on this nameless island amount to only a couple of pages of Daniel Defoe's *The Life and Strange Surprizing Adventures of Robinson Crusoe* (1719), it arguably gestures toward a central thematic preoccupation that the novel revisits time and again throughout the course of Crusoe's adventures: the surprising, often "astonishing" moment when the familiar and the foreign meet, and its concomitant challenge to comprehension. Friday is "amaz'd" and "astonish'd," for instance, when he first witnesses Crusoe use a gun (*RC*, 242, 250), and he is similarly described when Crusoe introduces him to

nautical navigation (*RC*, 271).[161] Crusoe's gun is later deployed yet again, this time to manipulate nearby cannibals into believing Crusoe's island is "enchanted" (*RC*, 288), and the mutineers who later arrive on the island are so confused by the intentionally dizzying antics devised by Crusoe that they similarly come to believe they are on "an inchanted island" (*RC*, 315), to cite other examples.

These moments of astonishment and bewilderment might seem to support the charge that *Robinson Crusoe* "is nothing but a romance"—that is, nothing but a fiction—an accusation that Defoe claimed was as "impotent" as it was "malicious," despite his grudging acknowledgement that parts of the text were invented.[162] As noted in the Introduction, Defoe's insistence that his fiction was no fiction has been generally understood as part of a wider attempt by early-eighteenth century writers to appeal to the public demand for "true" stories before a conceptual apparatus for the credible prose narrative was fully established.[163] This is not to imply, however, that the idea of a credible fiction was not understood before the eighteenth century; the point is rather that this is the period when there is a striking increase in such fictions with the concomitant consolidation of the realist novel. For this reason, despite his insistence that his fiction was a "true history," Defoe's status as a pioneer when it comes to the emergence of the

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[161] Crusoe describes Friday "like one, astonish'd, and amaz'd" upon being introduced to the different aspects of sailing, but Peter Hulme does make the point in *Colonial Encounters: Europe and the Native Caribbean, 1492-1797* (London: Methuen, 1986), that navigation was already an aspect of Caribbean technology by this point (210-11). Nevertheless, Friday is represented in the world of the novel as encountering something never-before-seen, and it is this experience of the unfamiliar that I wish to highlight here.

[162] Charles Gildon, *The Life and Strange Surprising Adventures of Mr. D— De F—, of London, Hosier* (London, 1719), 33. Daniel Defoe writes in the preface to *The Farther Adventures of Robinson Crusoe, Being the Second and Last Part of His Life* (London, 1719): "All the endeavours of envious people to reproach it with being a romance, to search it for errors in geography, inconsistency in the relation, and contradictions in the fact, have proved abortive, and as impotent as malicious. The just application of every incident, the religious and useful inferences drawn from every part, are so many testimonies to the good design of making it publick, and must legitimate all the part that may be call'd invention, or parable in the story" (n.p.).

[163] See Introduction, n. 11.

realist novel is conventional in scholarship.[164] The point I wish to stress again, however, is that the conflation of credible fiction with the realist novel has overshadowed the significance of other eighteenth-century fictional forms that experiment with ideas about imitation. Another way of putting this is that, while all realist novels are credible fictions, not all credible fictions are necessarily realist novels.

Admittedly, it may still seem odd to select *Robinson Crusoe* as a textual example that illustrates the eighteenth-century overlap of translation and fiction, including what comes to be registered as the realist novel. After all, Defoe's most recognizable novel has been so central to studies that assume a formative affinity between the novel and the nation, the novel and empiricism, and the novel and individualism, that to suggest that there is an affinity to translation seems tantamount to sacrilege.[165] Crusoe has become for readers the quintessential modern English subject, the fictional embodiment of English capitalism, English Protestantism, and English imperialism, and the island that he begrudgingly calls home a microcosmic reproduction of eighteenth-century England. And yet, the opening line of the novel makes clear that Crusoe is not technically English at all, or at least not in the sense that many assume: as the opening indicates, his father was a German immigrant, and his given name was "Robinson Kreutznaer." It was, in fact, only "by the usual corruption of words in England" that it became Robinson

[164] Watt's *The Rise of The Novel* is the seminal example. See also Davis, *Factual Fictions*, McKeon, *The Origins of the English Novel*, Homer Obed Brown, *Institutions of the English Novel: From Defoe to Scott* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997), as well as more recent studies like Kareem, *Eighteenth-Century Fiction and the Reinvention of Wonder*, which I discuss in the next section. Notably, *Robinson Crusoe* has also emerged as significant in studies that examine the imbrication of the novel and translation studies, as I discuss shortly.

[165] Of course, there have been numerous studies, mostly from a postcolonial framework, that seek to update these wide and varying assumptions: see Hulme, *Colonial Encounters*, Mike Marais, "Colonialism and the Epistemological Underpinnings of the Early English Novel," *English in Africa* 23.1 (1996): 47-66, Robert Markley, *The Far East and the English Imagination*, 1600-1730 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), and Lydia H. Liu, "Robinson Crusoe's Earthenware Pot," *Critical Inquiry* 25.4 (1999): 728-57, for examples.

Crusoe (*RC*, 1). This is to say nothing of the moments of interpretive blurriness against the backdrop of cross-cultural encounter already noted, or that most of the novel's plot is located on an uninhabited island where Crusoe undergoes such self-bending, and even self-fracturing, transformations such as growing a "large pair of Mahometan whiskers," similar to those he observes on some Turks (*RC*, 177), or becoming "like a man perfectly confus'd and out of myself" upon seeing a footstep in the sand, unable to discern whether it belongs to him or to a stranger (*RC*, 182).[166] On the one hand, the novel has assumed the role of a national allegory, the fictional likeness of a consolidating national consciousness; on the other hand, it is not difficult at all to read parts of it as an allegory of translation, a narrative representation of eighteenth-century linguistic and cultural rendering.

The argument that this novel could be read as an allegory of translation has already been made by a number of scholars: McMurran, for instance, writes that "Robinson Crusoe absorbs multilinguality and translation into its portrait of the Atlantic sphere" forming a microcosm not of eighteenth-century England but of "the Atlantic translation zone." She cites Crusoe's own origin, the plurality of languages represented in the novel that do not strictly flow according to conventional national channels, and Crusoe's return "home," which takes the shapes of further Continental adventures that traverse several borders and languages, as evidence that the novel exposes the myth of an anchored individualism rooted in a single national and linguistic identity.[167] Rebecca Johnson, citing Crusoe's adoption of "Mahometan whiskers" and the anxieties that follow the discovery of the footprint, similarly argues that Crusoe can be read as

[166] This is also to say nothing of Gildon's accusation that the novel proves its author is "as bad an Englishman as a Christian," with the novel's depiction of "honest religious fellows" as not English but "Spanish and Portuguese," and Crusoe's denominational promiscuity, whereby he is made to be "a Protestant in London, and a Papist in Brasil," cited as evidence (viii).

[167] A Spanish sailor, for instance, initially responds to Crusoe in Latin, understands Portuguese, and ultimately chooses to communicate in Friday's mother tongue (*RC*, 279, 287). See McMurran, 139-40.

"inhabiting a zone of cultural translation…where Crusoe threatens to become foreign himself," even to his own eye.[168] Aravamudan, moreover, singles out the actual translation of Ibn Tufayl's twelfth-century Arabic text *Hayy Ibn Yaqzan* as a literary precursor to Defoe's novel with which, he argues, it is partly in conversation.[169] This is on top of the observation made in Chapter 1, also taken from Aravamudan, that *Robinson Crusoe* was serialized alongside *Sindbad the Sailor*, as well as documentation supporting noted similarities between the novel and other oriental fiction made by writers later in the century.[170] These comparisons should come as no surprise: Defoe not only explicitly draws from stock figures associated with the oriental fiction tradition in his later *Roxana: The Fortunate Mistress* (1724), but he also contributes to the tradition himself. When the prospective glass that Crusoe is so fond of using in the novel is focused in this way, it becomes difficult to read this novel through anything but the lens of translation and its related discourses.

The image of Crusoe's prospective glass provides the perfect segue to this chapter's central focus: the overlapping histories of translation and the genre of fictional letters by an eastern informant. It is a genre that Defoe himself contributed to and one in which his novels

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[168] Johnson, *A History of the Novel in Translation*, 95. Johnson's larger point is that Defoe's novel encourages its reader to "read in translation" in order to introduce a form of realism that "does less to establish an empiricist narrative epistemology than to undermine it" (97), an argument that will be revisited later in the chapter.

[169] Ibn Tufayl's twelfth-century text *Hayy Ibn Yaqzān* (Alive, the Son of Vigilant), itself an adaptation of a tale by Ibn Sina (Avicenna), centers upon a feral child who is raised by a gazelle on a isolated island. Through an exclusive reliance on self-taught rational inquiry, Hayy, the text's protagonist, discovers philosophical truths and chooses to return to the island even after he encounters his first fellow human, a castaway named Absal, and is introduced to civilization. Edward Pococke translated Ibn Tufayl's text into Latin in 1671 as *Philosophus autodidactus* (The Self-Taught Philosopher), and the first translation into English from the original Arabic appeared as Simon Ockley's *The Improvement of Human Reason* in 1708. For more, see Srinivas Aravamudan, "East-West Fiction as World Literature: The Hayy Problem Reconfigured," *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 47.2 (2014): 195-231, and Samar Attar, "Serving God or Mammon? Echoes from Hayy Ibn Yaqzan and Sindbad the Sailor in *Robinson Crusoe*," in *The Vital Roots of European Enlightenment: Ibn Tufayl's Influence on Modern Western Thought* (Landham: Lexington Books, 2007), 28-30.

[170] See Chapter 1, n. 127 and n. 128.

draw from in ways that fundamentally shape not only their structure and themes, but also the larger fictional tradition of this period. After a brief overview of the fictional letters by an eastern informant genre, I examine both Defoe's *A Continuation of Letters Written by a Turkish Spy at Paris* (1718) and Montesquieu's *Lettres persanes* (1721) and argue that they each absorb contemporary ideas about imitation as re-creation against a transcultural backdrop. Through doing so, these early oriental fictions help sharpen the concept of the credible fiction for eighteenth-century readers. Concluding the chapter is a brief discussion of the anonymously published *The Impostors Detected, or, The Life of a Portuguese* (1760), a little-known text that similarly brings together all of these ideas, further demonstrating how translation and Mahometan discourses found convergence in the contemporary fiction tradition.

FOREIGNIZED OBSERVERS

In one of several variants of "Mahmut the Arabian" to surface in the oriental fiction tradition, Mahmut in Defoe's *Turkish Spy at Paris* makes the following complaint to an official of his empire: he is stymied by the fact that his access to political and military information is limited to what he "receive[s] from the hands of strangers, and from the publick printed papers" where, "such is the spirit of falsehood" that "they report every thing their own way, and just as they would have it to be," and not, he suggests, as it actually *is*.[171] In a later letter, he elaborates to yet another Ottoman official:

> These Nazarenes [i.e., Christians] are the most addicted to fiction and forgery of any people that ever I met with; it is a received custom among them, that whenever they have to do with any sect or opinion of people, differing from their own, the first thing they go about is, to represent them as monstrous and unnatural, either in person or in principle, or perhaps in both; dressing them up in ridiculous shapes and imposing a thousand stories about them upon the credulity and ignorance of the vulgar." (4. L. 4)

[171] Daniel Defoe, *A Continuation of Letters Written by a Turkish Spy at Paris* (London: W. Taylor, 1718), 1. L. 22. Hereafter cited in text as *TS* (for quotations from prefatory material) or by book and letter number.

Mahmut goes on to note that the French tell many "absurd romantick tales," "imaginary histories," and "innumerable forged stories" of not only the "prophet Mahomet," but also of anyone, including those within the Christian fold, who are found to be "enemies of God and his church" by their "horrible inquisition" (4. L. 4). Defoe's version of Mahmut explicitly pinpoints the primary task of his role as an eastern informant, a task that enables him to get at the heart of the stock figure's function across the various narratives where he appears: it is to cut through moments of interpretive indeterminacy, to distinguish between the true and the only *seemingly* true. It is a task done all in the effort to meet the demands of his role as a late-seventeenth-century Ottoman spy employed by his masters at the "Port" to deliver vital information about France during the then wars between Europe and the Ottoman Empire.

As noted in the preceding chapter, Marana's *L'espion turc* initiates a tradition of writing that culminates in an eight-volume sequence popularly known as *Letters Writ by a Turkish Spy*, spawning a motley assortment of spy fictions that appear not only across the Channel but also across the Atlantic. In addition to Defoe's *Turkish Spy at Paris*, traces of Marana's text appear in *The English Spy* (1691), Ned Ward's *London Spy* (1698-1700), Charles Gildon's *The Golden Spy* (1709), Captain Bland's *The Northern Atalantis: or York Spy* (1713), *The German Spy* (1738), *The Jewish Spy* (1739), and both Eliza Haywood's *A Spy on the Conjurer* (1725) and *The Invisible Spy* (1755)—to name only a few.[172] *L'espion turc* not only serves as the inaugural text for spy fictions during this period but also for a related form that comprises a discrete strand of oriental fiction: the genre of fictional letters by an eastern informant of which Defoe's text is a

[172] Gildon's *The Golden Spy* has a subtitle that also clearly shows its drawing from the *Nights*. Subtitle: *A Political Journal of the British Nights Entertainments of War and Peace, and Love and Politics*. See Weitzman, xvi-xviii, for more on the imitations of *L'espion turc*.

prime example.[173] The "voice" of the letter-writing easterner (spy or otherwise) begins as a parroting of a near eastern traveler in the late seventeenth to early eighteenth centuries, but moves further eastward by the middle of the century.[174] Arthur Weitzman has even suggested that the *Spectator* may owe a debt to Marana's figure of the quiet "observer of society and events,"[175] and a case could certainly be made for Smollett's *The History and Adventures of an Atom* (1769). It is possible, in fact, that the trope of the perceptive observer who gives a comprehensive and incisive portrait of a society and/or people draws from the same set of discourses (translation, Mahometan, and others) that gives shape to the image of the perceptive foreign observer during this period.

In fact, the figure of the foreign observer was invoked in multiple discourses in the early eighteenth century to signify the estranged, and, in some cases, something like an "objective," perspective: in *A General Scheme or Idea of the Present State of Natural Philosophy* (1705), for instance, Robert Hooke encourages the natural philosopher to "look upon such experiments and observations that are more common, and to which he has been more accustom'd, as if they were the greatest rarity, and to imagine himself a person from some other country" to "discover significancy in those things which because usual were neglected."[176] Precisely because of his perceived outsider status, the foreign informant was imagined as the ideal observer, offering what was framed as an impartial perspective of the everyday and the commonplace, a reading

[173] Ballaster considers the fictional letters by an eastern informant genre to be one of five to comprise the oriental fiction tradition, along with the framed sequence of eastern tales, the traveler's account, the history of a state and/or life, and the heroic drama See *Fabulous Orients*, 22, as well as 41-5, for a brief overview of this genre. Weitzman makes a similar point on p. xv, but refers to the genre as that of the "Oriental letter writer."
[174] See Ballaster, *Fabulous Orients*, 43-5. Goldsmith's *The Citizen of the World* (1762) serves as arguably the most recognizable example of this trend, but Elizabeth Hamilton also draws from this development in *Translation of the Letters by a Hindoo Rajah* (1796).
[175] See Weitzman, xvii, xiii. Quotation from xiii.
[176] Robert Hooke, *The Posthumous Works of Robert Hooke* (London, 1705), 62. See also Kareem, 44, where she also cites Hooke.

that cuts through the discourses and narratives by which the native observer might be conditioned to see. Such an imagined perspective is exploited in order to recast the familiar as strange and new, producing effects consistent with Victor Shklovsky's concept of defamiliarization.[177] Put another way, through a reversal of the strategy underlying travel narratives as noted in Chapter 1, familiar locales are recast as exotic and unfamiliar, transformed into something akin to new, and strange, worlds for eighteenth-century readers. Aravamudan, in fact, points to the concept of singularity as structurally and thematically determinative of texts that fall within this strand of oriental fiction, the singular perspective creating what he terms a "stereoscopic vision" through which, he argues, "multiple epistemologies and metanarratives" can emerge.[178]

It is less the concept of singularity (and its association with multiple perspectives) and more that of estrangement that Kareem underscores in her discussions of fiction during this period. For her, Pre-Romantic writers marshal the estranged perspective as one narrative strategy for transforming the ordinary scene into a wondrous spectacle, as noted in the previous chapter: readers are trained to approach familiar scenes with wonder—with equal-parts credulity and skepticism—through techniques that make the familiar seem strange but also through the framing of narrative contents as both strange *and* true.[179] Kareem argues that in *Robinson Crusoe*, for instance, Defoe not only uses estranging techniques (such as delayed decoding) to remake the ordinary into the extraordinary but also underscores the "surprising" nature of the eponymous hero's adventures to solicit disbelief at both its contents and its claim to be a "true

[177] See Victor Shklovsky, "Art as Device," in *Theory of Prose*, trans. Benjamin Sher (1917; Normal: Dalkey Archive Press, 1990), 1-14.
[178] See Aravamudan "Oriental Singularity: Montesquieu, Goldsmith, Hamilton," in *Enlightenment Orientalism*, 76-111. Quotations from 79, 8.
[179] See Kareem, "Introduction: Wonder and the Rise of Fiction," 1-34, and "Fact and Fiction," 62-9, in *Eighteenth-Century Fiction and the Reinvention of Wonder*.

history"; it is the text's indeterminacy, that is, that solicits a response of ironic credulity, its simultaneous assertion and interrogation of its referentiality.[180] Turner also makes a similar argument for the overall aesthetic of prose fiction during this period: he argues that part of its allure was that it promised readers "the new, strange, or the 'extraordinary' in the same breath" as a "loyalty to the historical and the probable," further noting that the "conjunction of the Wonderful and the Natural often receives epistemological endorsement from an "Eye-Witness."[181]

Ironically, despite their joint emphasis on the conjunction of the strange and "true," and even Turner's singling out of the importance of the figure of the perceptive observer, neither critic seriously considers the importance of the genre of the fictional letters by an eastern informant for developments in prose fiction during this period. This, despite the fact that the genre is primarily constituted by ideas about credibility, illusion, and the defamiliarized scene. Such is the case because the genre draws from the contemporary discourse of translation that is similarly structured by the combination of all of these ideas. To briefly summarize, the distinguishing feature of ideas about translation during this period is that, to quote Dillon again, an intense "sympathetick bond," to the point of a total collapse of identities, characterizes the relationship between the translator and original author—an author who is from a foreign place and time. This imagined absorption of a foreign author's essence, filtered through the idea of a transmigration of souls, enables the translator to unlock secrets in a source text that even readers familiar with the text through prior translations or the original may not perceive. The transfer of "spirit" that results in a translator-cum-author figure, in other words, renders him/them akin to a

[180] See Kareem, "Rethinking the Real with *Robinson Crusoe* and David Hume," in *Eighteenth-Century Fiction and the Reinvention of Wonder*, 75-108. As the title indicates, Kareem argues that the familiar is made foreign through estranging devices drawn from seventeenth-century philosophical, as well as Protestant, writings. See also 18.
[181] Turner, 69, 84.

"good prospective," able to "first shew the ways / To Arts or to new Worlds" to quote Townshend and Suckling again. My argument is premised on the assumption that the genre of the fictional letters by an eastern informant draws from these ideas in a combination of obvious and subtle ways: readers are invited to identify with the imagined perspective of a foreigner in these texts, in much the same way that the native translator identifies with a foreign author, to re-experience a familiar "text" (in this instance, the world as "text").[182] This identification not only enables readers to see a familiar world made strange, but it also links the momentary assumption of a foreign perspective with the ability to see new details that may have as yet gone unnoticed.

Predictably, the form is also characterized by an "as if" quality. Just as the idea of a source's revival is undercut by an admission that it hinges upon an act of speculation on the translator's part, so, too, does the genre of the fictional letters by an eastern informant perform a similar sleight of hand: it promotes its status as a translation of authentic letters, within which are surprising, but accurate, descriptions of a familiar city, at the same time that it prompts readers to question the truth value of its claims. More specifically, through thematic preoccupations with the credible imposture, most notably embodied by "Mahometan" figures, instances of this form encourage readers to respond to its contents and status as a "translated" text with a combination of credulity and skepticism. Another way of putting this is that, while most of the texts that fall under this category of oriental fiction were introduced to readers as authentic translations, they also begin to gesture toward an idea of imitation as admitted re-creation rather than mimetic reproduction.[183] In fact, both Defoe in *Turkish Spy at Paris* and Montesquieu, in *Lettres*

[182] As already noted, Ballaster identifies this imagined collapse of identities as one of the ways oriental fiction, as a whole, stages the reading process as a form of transmigration; she does not link the identification with a foreign narrator to the imagined first experience of a known world, however. See "Narrative Transmigrations."

[183] In a recent article on the reuse of the recognizable frontispiece to *Letters Writ by a Turkish Spy* and *Robinson Crusoe* over multiple editions, Helen Cole also makes a brief note that the text and frontispiece

persanes, another popular instance of this form, link what is framed as the accurate representation of a familiar city and people with an imagined foreign perspective. They also undercut the asserted authenticity of their representations by filtering them through stock figures that are, themselves, associated with multiple forms of indeterminacy, among other things. As discussed in the following section, these early oriental fictions explore and illustrate ideas related to imitation as it pertains to both translation and prose narrative, thus helping to sharpen the concept of the credible fiction for readers.

FOREIGNIZED WORLDS

Defoe's real-life participation in political espionage, including contributions to the establishment of a spy network in the early eighteenth century for British statesman Robert Harley, might explain why he found an eastern spy figure enticing enough for him to contribute a sequel to *Letters Writ by a Turkish Spy* that extended Mahmut's account from 1687 to 1693.[184] In fact, in a letter to Harley, Defoe explicitly references the eight-volume collection to note that, while a "meer romance," it espouses a "good" moral centered upon a "settl'd person of sence and penetration, of dexterity and courage, to reside constantly in Paris," conceivably pointing to Mahmut as a literary model for their own political work.[185] Defoe's contribution continues in the tradition of the original compendium of letters, which took as its central aim the observation and narration of the distinguishing features of the "Christian courts, especially of that of France" during the late seventeenth century, as noted in the text's title page. Similarly to its predecessor, Defoe's *Turkish Spy at Paris* was premised on the fabrication that, as noted in Chapter 1, it was

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to *Letters Writ by a Turkish Spy* "present their fabricated 'authenticity' as an open secret," inviting the reader to regard both as "inventions." See Cole, "From the Familiar to the New: Frontispiece Engravings to Fiction in England from 1690 to 1740," *Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies* 39.4 (2016): 489-511.

[184] See Ballaster, *Fabulous Orients*, 151-2.

[185] *The Letters of Daniel Defoe*, ed. George Harris Healey (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1955), 38 [To Robert Harley, July-August 1704?]. Also cited in Ballaster, *Fabulous Orients*, 151-2.

an authentic translation from Arabic into French and/or English by way of Italian, and centered upon the spy figure Mahmut who manages to travel throughout Europe under the fabricated identity of "Titus, the Moldovian."

The trope of the letter-writing easterner also appeared in France in 1721. Initially published anonymously, Montesquieu's *Lettres persanes* was staged as a translation into French of letters ostensibly written by two Persian travelers to France. Despite its customary treatment as a youthful precursor to writings that would become foundational to the Enlightenment period in Europe, such as *De l'esprit des lois* (1748), Montesquieu's first book includes literary contributions that place it alongside the fiction of its time.[186] Filtered through two pairs of "foreign" eyes that scan the troubled Regency period after the death of Louis XIV in 1715, the letters dissect a wide range of subjects, from the nature of religion and the status of monarchical rule, to the artificiality of social distinctions and customs, all of which are subjected to rational observation and interrogation. The original 150 letters were so popular that the collection went into numerous editions in French, including a revised and expanded version published in 1754.[187] It was widely imitated on both sides of the Channel, with its translation into English by John Ozell in its sixth edition by 1773.[188]

As noted, both texts are pseudotranslations and, consistent with Toury's argument that pseudotranslations crystallize and exemplify ideas related to translation, they foreground translation's theorization during this period as a strategy positioned somewhere between imitation and creation. This is not to say that neither Defoe nor Montesquieu resorted to the

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[186] See Christopher Betts, Introduction to *Persian Letters*, trans. and ed. Betts (Penguin Books: London, 1973), 17-33.
[187] The additions were letters 15, 22, 73, 91, 111, 124, 144, 145, 157, 158, and 160. All references are to Montesquieu, *Lettres persanes*, in *Ouvres complètes* (Paris, 1835). Hereafter cited in text as *LP* (for quotations from prefatory material) or by letter number.
[188] See Ballaster, *Fabulous Orients*, 147, n. 89.

pretense of translation to evade censorship: in the initial preface to *Lettres persanes*, in fact, the "translator" notes that this is his primary reason for remaining anonymous, [189] while the "translator" of *Turkish Spy at Paris* suggests the same.[190] The suggestion is rather that both writers explicitly draw from contemporary ideas related to translation, either in the presentation of their texts and/or in the representations of the world they provide to readers within them, to introduce novel literary forms and themes into the target culture.[191] My argument, then, is twofold: both Defoe and Montesquieu suggest that "translations" are re-creations of their originals—renderings that are only presented to readers as if they are the originals. At the same time, however, they also prompt their readers to think of their translations as not actually translations at all, but rather, as disclosed simulations *of translation* as a mode of writing.[192] In this way, both Defoe and Montesquieu help to underscore the confusing status of narratives (translations and otherwise) that *appear* to be true, but are not; they also offer a means for linking the desired template for apprehending an imitation of a text, as it is understood during this period, to the desired template for apprehending what turns out to be a fictional representation of the world in narrative.

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[189] The translator writes of the possibility of publishing further letters: "*Mais c'est à condition que je ne serai pas connu car si l'on vient à savoir mon nom, dès ce moment je me tais. Je connais une femme qui marche assez bien, mais qui boite dès qu'on la regarde*" ("But this is on condition that I remain unidentified, because if my name comes to be known, from that moment on, I keep silent. I know a woman who walks quite well, but who limps as soon as someone looks at her," *LP*, 2).

[190] In the preface to *Turkish Spy at Paris*, the translator writes: "It is true, the translator has some letters on these subjects which he has not thought fit to make publick, because of the nice palates of a censorious age, who will take all advantages to insult the publication of such a stile " (*TS*, vi).

[191] Both Toury and Venuti stress the point that pseudotranslations function as a means of illuminating the actual effects of translation through, as Toury argues, introducing "novelties into a culture" (48) that, as Venuti argues in *Scandals of Translation: Towards an Ethics of Difference* (New York: Routledge, 1998), can take the shape of "literary forms and themes that are new to or currently marginal in the domestic culture" (33).

[192] Of course, Montesquieu would go on to publicly claim authorship of *Lettres persanes*, thus exposing the pretense. But, as I argue shortly, he subtly discloses the text's pseudotranslational status to the reader in its initial editions.

The translators of both texts offer some insight into their methods in prefaces affixed to the narratives, with the translator of *Turkish Spy at Paris* offering an extended meditation on the subject. As one might expect, each presents the text to readers as far from a perfect reproduction of its original source—both source as original author and source as original text. Rather, the texts emerge as something between a revival of a source and an admitted deviation from it. For instance, while the translator of *Turkish Spy at Paris* insists that he does not intend to "make old Mahmut speak English," as Mahmut "must be Turk or no Turk, either he must speak his own language or other people's language," he does note that he has "followed that sure rule in our tongue" which he argues is the "best rule in all tongues" (*TS*, iv, v). Namely, a good translator must "make the language plain, artless, and honest, suitable to the story, and in a stile easie and free, with as few exotick phrases and obsolete words as possible, that the meanest reader may meet with no difficulty in the reading" (*TS*, v). The translator of *Lettres persanes* gestures toward a similar approach: he notes that he strove to adapt the letters to "*nos moeurs*" (our manners), and to relieve readers of the "*langage asiatique*" (Asian language) and an "*infinité d' expressions sublimes*" (infinite number of sublime expressions, *LP*, 2). The implication is that the translator does this to create, to use Frere's words again, that "illusion of originality."[193]

At the same time that both translators stress that the importance of providing translations that do not draw attention to themselves as having originated in a different language, the translator of *Turkish Spy at Paris* subverts the possibility of this ideal process through an admission that the rendering of a text from one language into another is far from a sure thing.

[193] While not quite the same, the theory these "translators" promote recalls Jorge Luis Borges' assertion that translation should be a process of rethinking a source text in a new language. See Borges, "The Translators of The Thousand and One Nights," in *The Translation Studies Reader*, 2nd ed., trans. Esther Allen, ed. Lawrence Venuti (1980; New York: Routledge: 2004), 94-108.

Rather, he notes that it is a process of trying, and inevitably failing, to capture the "spirit" or "genius" of the original author. He elaborates:

> We can no more represent the eloquence, the spirit, the sprightly turns, and the happy genius of our accomplish'd, inimitable Arabian, by the most labored and studied translation into English, than a limner can paint the voice, and give the musick of the sound in the gestures of the lady. (iv)

Echoing Dacier, Defoe presents translation as akin to a transfer across different meda to underscore a familiar adage: some things will inevitably be lost in the process. Try as he might, and despite his insistence that he does not intend for "old Mahmut to speak English," the translator points to his inability to revive Mahmut in all his cultural and linguistic particularity in a new language, an admission that challenges Venuti's argument that translation during this period was fully characterized by a strategy of masked domestication. That is, on the one hand, there is the idea that the original author is reborn for readers, the translation endowed with that "illusion of originality," but, on the other, there is the clear and open acknowledgment that it is impossible to perfectly reproduce an original author/text.

Nods to the contemporary language of translation are also rife in Defoe's narrative, which only continues the association established in *Letters Writ by a Turkish Spy*: as noted in the original compendium, Mahmut is a vegetarian who insists that animals have souls, and later expresses sympathy for the belief in metempsychosis, even going so far as to wish recipients "fortunate transmigrations after death," despite the fact that such a belief has no precedent in orthodox Islam.[194] That is, from his inception, Mahmut is made to be both "Mussulman" and the walking embodiment of contemporary ideas of translation. This might help explain Mahmut's belief in an "invisible correspondence of…souls" in Defoe's text, particularly between two who

[194] *Letters Writ by a Turkish Spy*, vol. 1 (London, 1753) and vols. 2-8 (London, 1741). See ii. 1. L. 27 for an example of Mahmut's insistence that animals have souls. See viii. 1. L. 5 for quotation. Hereafter cited in text by volume, book, and letter number to distinguish these references from those taken from Defoe's *Turkish Spy at Paris*.

have, to quote Dryden again, a "soul congenial." In a letter to a close relative, Mahmut suggests that the "inconceivable power of sympathetic influence, and the free intercourse of spirits" enables information between close relatives to be shared across large distances, even as far apart as separate countries.[195] Moments of intense emotion, that is, are framed in Defoe's text as communicable to the degree that the recipient literally feels the original feeling despite its expression in another body. How else, Mahmut suggests, "is it that involuntary sadness seizes thy heart, at times when perhaps thou seest nothing near thee but what is the subject of pleasure and joy? At that moment, doubt it not, the soul of thy dearest parent Mahmut, here at this vast distance, suffers grief" (1. L. 21).

Representing the idea of collapsed identities as a means of delivering information is far from a mere thematic quirk in Defoe's narrative. The foundational structure of Defoe and Montesquieu's narratives, as it is the case for all the narratives of this genre, revolves around pairing the identification with an imagined foreign perspective with the delivery of what is presented as an accurate representation of a source (here, "source" as world). Put another way, readers are called upon to "transmigrate" into the position of a foreigner not only to stage the reading process as a form of transmigration, as Ballaster argues, but also to promote the idea that identification with another enables readers to access new information about even a familiar subject or landscape in a manner consistent with ideas about translation during this period. As noted in the translator's preface to Defoe's narrative, readers will encounter through Mahmut "improving observations on many subjects, as well religious as moral" with "as true deductions

[195] Mahmut elaborates: "The invisible correspondence of our souls will communicate things particular to our selves, but there is not the same conveyance of things publick and affecting our country; for tho' affection to our country may carry us high, yet this is no secret sympathy, nothing mutual between us there; we are not of the same species, or modell'd in the same mould of nature with our governours; whereas the channels of blood in relatives, come from the same spring, partake of the same temperament, and receive motion from the same principles" (1. L. 21).

and as clear a judgment as ever" (vii). The translator's preface to Montesquieu's narrative contains a similar pronouncement: Montesquieu asserts in his prefatory "Quelques réflexions sur *les Lettres persanes*" that the conceit of *Lettres persanes* lies precisely "*dans le contraste éternel entre les choses réelles et la manière singulière, naïve ou bizarre, dont elles étaient aperçues*" ("in the eternal contrast between real things and the singular, naïve or bizarre, manner in which they were perceived," *LP*, 1),[196] consistent with Aravamudan's assertion that the concept of singularity is constituent of this form of oriental fiction. Singularity, moreover, can sometimes lead to sharpened perception: the translator is astonished to see "*ces Persans quelquefois aussi instruits que moi-même des moeurs et des manières de la nation, jusqu'à en connaître les plus fines circonstances, et à remarquer des choses qui, je suis sûr, ont échappé à bien des Allemands qui ont voyagé en France*" ("these Persians, sometimes as knowledgeable as myself in the customs and manners of our nation, including knowledge of the most particular circumstances, and noticing things that, I am sure, have escaped many Germans who have traveled in France," *LP*, 2). These eastern spy/informant figures, that is, offer a defamiliarized lens through which English and French readers can see familiar subjects and landscapes, the various optical instruments evoked by their role serving as the perfect emblem for reexamining and re-experiencing the world.

As already noted, Defoe and Montesquieu do more than merely hint that their translations are not perfect reproductions of their originals. They also call into question the status of their texts as translations. The implication of my argument, then, pushes the significance of these narratives beyond the sphere of translation into that of fiction, and realistic fiction at that: that is, through prompting their readers to interrogate their claims for translation, to approach the

[196] "Quelques réflexions sur *Les lettres persanes*" first appeared in 1754. For more, see *Persian Letters*, trans. and ed. Betts, 339-40.

narratives, themselves, with knowing credulity, Defoe and Montesquieu simultaneously train them to approach any representation of the world with the same oscillation between belief and disbelief. In other words, they help their readers to see their representations of France as disclosed simulations, rather than as mimetic reproductions. Montesquieu gestures toward this idea in "Quelques réflexions," noting that the observations of his narrators will always be found with "*le sentiment de surprise et d'étonnement*" ("the sentiment of surprise and astonishment") because they find themselves, in a sense, transported "*dans un autre univers*" ("to another universe," *LP*, 1). Through identifying with imagined foreign narrators, Montesquieu's readers are encouraged to approach familiar scenes as though they are new worlds. The narrative highlights this conflation of foreignized familiar land and new world, in fact, in Usbek's first impression of Leghorn in Letter 23: Montesquieu reframes what would normally be an ordinary scene for eighteenth-century readers as "*singulier*" and a "*grand spectacle*" by filtering it through Usbek.[197] Through doing so, Montesquieu supports Kareem's argument about the fostering of a combination of marvel and doubt as the desired response to representations of the world in narrative.

However, it is largely through organizing their narratives around Mahometan personas that draw attention to their invented identities that Defoe and Montesquieu cultivate a skeptical attitude in their readers. As already noted in the last chapter, Mahometan mythology found a complement in conceptions of translation during this period: both discourses revolve around themes of counterfeiting and credibility, and their confluence in oriental tales that feature an

[197] Usbek notes: "*C'est un grand spectacle pour un mahométan de voir pour la première fois une ville chrétienne. Je ne parle pas des choses qui frappent d'abord tous les yeux, comme la différence des édifices, des habits, des principals coutumes. Il y a jusque dans les moindres bagatelles, quelque chose de singulier que je sens, et que je ne sais pas dire.*" ("It is a marvelous sight for a Mahometan to see a Christian town for the first time. I am not talking about the things that strike the eye immediately, such as the differences in architecture, customs, or clothing. There is something singular/curious even in the smallest details, which I feel and cannot express," L. 23).

Islamized backdrop or character(s) provided an opportunity for readers to practice identifying and puncturing impostures in multiple forms. As established in the eight-volume sequence, Mahmut adopts the identity of "Titus the Moldovian," a translator and teacher of oriental and classical languages, while secretly employed as a spy stationed in Paris. He is, himself, an impostor, but one whose deception is disclosed to readers. As he puts it himself in one of his letters, "I have counterfeited a Christian that I might better perform the duty of a Mussulman," which is for him to "dive into their [France's] secrets" and "discover the affairs of most importance" (ii. 1. L. 24, i. 1. L. 8). Like readers who must imaginatively "transmigrate" into the position of a foreign informant in order to see their familiar surroundings anew, Mahmut must undergo a process of self-transformation/translation (from Mahmut to Titus) in order to "better penetrate into the affairs of Christians."[198] But readers are prompted to doubt Mahmut's narrative not merely because he is an impostor, but also because he explicitly encourages a skeptical attitude himself.

In *Letters Writ by a Turkish Spy*, the concept of imposture ricochets across the narrative to inflect not only the impersonator spy but also the people and institutions of France that he encounters. Examples of "cheats," "counterfeits," and "impostors" abound in the eight-volume sequence,[199] a theme taken up in Defoe's contribution. His Mahmut, as the opening to the preceding section exemplifies, asserts throughout the narrative that Christianity (particularly Catholicism) is a "pretender," "a religious cheat," and "a holy fable," nothing more than a "fiction of the dervices, contriv'd to delude the people" (1. L. 4). Of course, much of this is

[198] As noted in the preface to the first volume of *Letters Writ by a Turkish Spy*: "By these [letters] may be known the perspicacity of this agent of the Turks; and by him the prudence of those that command in that nation, who chose (the better to penetrate into the affairs of Christians) a man, who could not be suspected by his exterior; who was deform'd, but prudent and advised; and, for the better concealing him, destined his ordinary abode in the one of the greatest and peopled cities of Europe" (iii).
[199] See i. 2. L. 17, ii. 3. L. 1, and vi. 2. L. 19, for examples.

fabricated posturing meant to serve as an "authentic" parroting of what a stereotypical Mahometan might say. But Mahmut's interrogation of Christianity is also joined by a subtle interrogation of his own faith that doesn't necessarily prove the legitimacy of Christianity by comparison: in *Letters Writ by a Turkish Spy* he writes that even "if an angel from heaven should tell [him] monstrous and incredible stories of things repugnant to the common sense and reason of all mankind," he would request to be excused for his disbelief. And, in the event that any of his readers think he is "going to turn Christian because of this liberty [he] take[s] to search for truth," he makes clear that "the case is the same or worse among them [Christians]" and thus neither religious tradition is free of "incredible stories" that challenge "common sense and reason" (ii. 1. L. 34). The point to stress is that the momentary inhabiting of an imagined foreigner's perspective could yield new, often "astonishing," observations; the inhabiting of a Mahometan's perspective could, moreover, foreground the slipperiness between fact and believable fiction in a way that actively solicits the reader's skepticism so as not only to question Mahmut's observations but also to question *alongside* him in a sympathetic maneuvering. What is true and what is a believable fiction becomes the primary question simultaneously driving the narrative and inflecting its own truth-claims.

While similar to a great degree, Montesquieu's *Lettres persanes* does differ from Defoe's *Turkish Spy at Paris* in important ways. Unlike Defoe, who represents Mahmut as an Ottoman spy stationed in Paris, Montesquieu splits the eastern gaze in his narrative between two Persian travelers who do not conceal their national or religious affiliation nor are they emissaries on a diplomatic mission. Consequently, they are not compelled to hide their letters from their

translator, going so far as to share most of them openly, as noted in the translator's preface.[200] The elderly nobleman Usbek, the main correspondent in Montesquieu's text, travels to France under the pretext of furthering his scientific knowledge after attempts to uncover political corruption at the Persian court leads to his self-imposed exile. The younger and more receptive Rica, who also sends letters back to Persia documenting his various observations, serves as Usbek's companion. Moreover, explicit claims that Christianity is a site of imposture do not permeate Usbek and Rica's observations to quite the same degree as those made by the various iterations of Mahmut.[201] Rather, it is Roxane, one of Usbek's wives left behind in his harem in Persia, who takes the place of both the impersonator spy and Christian France as the central sign of imposture, a linking that may help explain Montesquieu's claim in "Quelques réflexions" that the seraglio subplot was connected to the largely disparate letters that make up the text by "*une chaîne secrete*" ("a secret chain," *LP*, 1).[202]

By way of a brief summary: a seraglio rebellion takes place while Usbek and Rica are abroad, and the discovery that Roxane is its mastermind is particularly bewildering for both Usbek and his chief eunuch as they had regarded her as the embodiment of conformity and virtue. Instead, she emerges as "*une cruelle imposture*" ("a cruel impostor," L. 159), the realization of which stuns Usbek even at the level of narrative: concluding the collection with

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[200] Ballaster argues that the shift from spy to that of a general informant who need not conceal his national origins is possibly a result of declining Ottoman powers that caused the idea of the "spy" to lose its political cachet. See *Fabulous Orients*, 42.

[201] Rica does note, however, that the pope and the king of France are each a "*magicien*" ("magician"), their control over the minds of their subjects so absolute that they are able to pass off inconsistencies as fact. See L. 24.

[202] This has naturally led to interpretations of the text that read the various observations of France and the seraglio subplot as integrally intertwined. Ballaster, for instance, argues that "the parallel between political and sexual 'government,'" the former focused upon monarchical and clerical authoritarianism and the latter concerning harem culture, is the text's "organizing principle" (*Fabulous Orients*, 166). Aravamudan, while rejecting any "understanding of the seraglio as an allegory of monarchy," does posit that the "side-by-side elaboration" of the satire of French society and the seraglio subplot creates a "stereoscopic vision" that is central to his notion of Enlightenment Orientalism, previously discussed (*Enlightenment Orientalism*, 81, 79).

Roxane's confession has the effect of freezing the elder Persian traveler in a state of perpetual shock, the sign of a mind suspended between belief and disbelief. To drive home this point, Usbek's increasing inability to comprehend the people and events in his seraglio is associated with a number of epistemological impediments: leading up to the rebellion, he finds himself unable to get an accurate written account of the events from anyone within the seraglio, including his chief eunuch.[203] Letters never reach their intended recipients, or commands are ignored, and fabrications ensue as a result. Roxane's final letter (L. 161), where she finally uncovers her ruse in language that would reverberate across several eighteenth- and nineteenth-century narratives,[204] only further underscores her mastery in spinning tales that are believable but false, and the consequences of Usbek's inability to identify a deception when he encounters one. That is, Usbek's failure is a result of credulity at the expense of skepticism, an orientation toward the world against which Rica attempts to warn him in Letter 141.

Unsurprisingly, the letter that both emphasizes the importance of approaching representations with a combination of credulity and skepticism, and enables Montesquieu to draw attention to his text as a staged translation, itself contains a translation. Upon the request of a French lady at court, Rica prepares a translation of a Persian tale that he decides to share with his companion. The translation is of a story that is already known to Usbek, and so its novelty is

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[203] Genevieve Lloyd, in "Imagining Difference: Cosmopolitanism in Montesquieu's *Persian Letters*," *Constellations* 19. 3 (2012), also notes the "epistemological dimensions" of the seraglio subplot in order to draw attention to the inverse relationship between Usbek's increasing familiarity and comprehensibility of Europe and the "confusions and deceptions that beset the exchange of information and command" in his household (488). This observation is made as part of Lloyd's larger argument about the story's role in building a "capacity for cross-cultural empathy and cosmopolitan imagining" in its readers (480).

[204] Ballaster notes Roxana's final letter goes on to "echo through much eighteenth-century fiction through to Samuel Richardson's *Clarissa* (1747-8)" (*Fabulous Orients*, 167). One could also make the argument that echoes of Roxane's final letter, particularly her insistence that "*j'ai pu vivre dans la servitude, mais j'ai toujours été libre…mon esprit s'est toujours tenu dans l'indépendance*" ("I may have lived in bondage, but I have always been free…my mind/spirit has always had its independence"), can be heard in expressions made by Emily in *Caleb Williams* (1794), Safie in *Frankenstein* (1820) and the heroine of Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* (1847).

that it is presented in a new rendering, much as *Lettres persanes* is meant to function as a defamiliarized portrait of a familiar world for English and French readers. At the center of the tale is a case of disclosed imposture. A man named Ibrahim has killed one of his wives, Anais, in response to her reproaches about the unpleasant nature of the seraglio and his conduct. Upon death, she finds herself transported to heaven where she assumes the role of head of her own all-male seraglio. Unable to put her past life behind her, however, she decides to send down one of her celestial husbands in the guise of her former earthly one to improve the living conditions of her sister-wives. This "*imposteur*" Ibrahim mobilizes the support of the wives against the actual Ibrahim, who is ironically recast as a fraud and exiled as a result. Conditions in the seraglio subsequently improve, and, paradoxically, deception is also banished, as the fake Ibrahim—who openly acknowledges his "borrowed" identity—believes in the importance of living openly and honestly. The tale ends with the eventual return of the real Ibrahim to his seraglio where he finds his fortune spent, his wives liberated, and the presence of thirty-six children.

Rica's translation recalls an oriental tale that appeared in *The Spectator* on August 9, 1714,[205] pointing to a mutual exchange of ideas between this strain of oriental fiction and the London periodical. The tale, written by Eustace Budgell, is an adaptation of a story that originally appeared in the second volume of François Pétis de la Croix's *Contes persanes* (1710-12), and later translated into English by Ambrose Philips (1714-15). The tale is simple: a dervish-king tricks a King Fadlallah into abandoning his body for that of a bird so that he may take over Fadlallah's form and rule in his stead. Unlike the wives in Rica's Persian tale, however, Fadlallah's consort Zemroude does not catch on to the ruse, although she does find herself mysteriously enchanted by a nightingale (the real Fadlallah). The tale ends with Fadlallah returned to his correct form, having outmaneuvered the dervish-king and killing him in the

[205] Spectator no. 578.

process. Centered upon the idea that a consciousness can transmigrate from one body to another, the tale was included as an imaginative illustration of Locke's point that, in the words of Budgell in the preamble to the tale, "it is consciousness alone and not an identity of substance" that defines "personal identity."[206]

Of course, the fundamental point of Rica's tale is to illuminate the immorality and ineffectiveness of authoritarian rule, here signified by an oriental despot who resorts to subjugation, and even murder, in order to safeguard it.[207] Embedded within the primary moral, however, is the gesture toward the importance of identifying and ideally registering a credible fiction. Bringing together the related ideas of translation and imposture during this period, the tale recasts the problematic potential of falling for a believable fiction into a kind of farcical comedy by having the impostor turn out to be better than the individual he is impersonating. But

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[206] Budgell is likely referring to Locke's point in Book II, Chapter XXVII in *An Essay on Human Understanding*, ed. Peter H. Nidditch (Oxford: Clarendon, 1975), where he notes the following on personal identity: "This being premised to find wherein *personal Identity* consists, we must consider what *Person* stands for; which, I think, is a thinking intelligent being, that has reason and reflection, and can consider it self as it self, the same thinking thing in different times and places; which it does only by that consciousness, which is inseparable from thinking, and as it seems to me essential to it… For since consciousness always accompanies thinking, and 'tis that, that makes every one to be, what he calls *self*; and thereby distinguishes himself from all other thinking things, in this alone consists *personal Identity, i.e*. the sameness of a rational being" (335; emphasis in original). It's important to note that Budgell is illustrating the transmigration of consciousness from one body to another and not that of soul. Locke, himself, dismissed the idea of the transmigration of souls: "For if the *Identity* of soul alone makes the same man, and there be nothing in the nature of matter, why the same individual spirit may not be united to different bodies, it will be possible, that those men, living in distant ages, and of different tempers, may have been the same man: Which way of speaking must be from a very strange use of the word *Man*, applied to an *Idea*, out of which body and shape is excluded: And that way of speaking would agree yet worse with the notions of those philosophers, who allow of transmigration, and are of opinion that the souls of men may, for their miscarriages, be detruded into the bodies of beasts, as fit habitations with organs suited to the satisfaction of their brutal inclinations. But yet I think no body, could he be sure that the soul of *Heliogabalus* were in one of his hogs, would yet say that hog were a *Man* or *Heliogabalus*" (332; emphasis in original). Ballaster makes a similar observation in *Fabulous Orients*, 26. Moroever, Budgell's tale of transmigration was not the only one to appear in *The Spectator*. See Yang, "Gross Metempsychosis," particularly 23-30, for a brief discussion of this and other fables that take transmigration as their central theme in the periodical.

[207] Lloyd has described this embedded tale as a female "utopian fantasy" that articulates "ideas of female equality and freedom," a counterbalance to the culmination of the seraglio subplot (490). For more on Montesquieu and literary representations of the harem, see Ruth Bernard Yeazell, *Harems of the Mind: Passages of Western Art and Literature* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), particularly 66-73.

the open recognition and acceptance of the "*imposteur*" Ibrahim foregrounds the possibility of telling the difference between the real and the credible, and underscores the ideal approach for interpreting the latter. Despite the identical appearance of both the real and the fake Ibrahim, Montesquieu represents the wives as capable of automatically distinguishing between the two and embracing the latter with a form of knowing credulity. They know he is not their real husband, they never fall for the fiction, but they are willing to buy into the charade all the same. Importantly, Rica's tale is itself represented as a translation of a story already familiar to Usbek. By suggesting a link between this embedded translation of a familiar tale about an impostor and Roxane's imposture, and further suggesting a link between these moments and the "translated" text itself, Montesquieu subtly prompts readers, well before admitting authorship, to regard his own text with a similar combination of belief and disbelief—to buy into the fiction, that is, while remaining aware that it is one.

By now, the relevance of these texts to the early novel should be apparent, perhaps nowhere more so than in Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* and *Roxana.* As already intimated, Defoe's most recognizable novel exhibits a preoccupation with the bewildering sight and its concomitant interpretive difficulties, despite its scholarly status as an indicator of empiricist epistemology. It has also been argued that imposture forms a unifying theme of Defoe's works as a whole.[208] As also already noted, it has only been in more recent studies that *Robinson Crusoe* has emerged as a prime example of a text that demonstrates how the eighteenth-century tradition of translation overlapped with that of the early novel. While Johnson argues that *Robinson Crusoe* encourages its readers to "read in translation," in order to draw attention to competing systems of

[208] For more on imposture and Defoe, particularly in relation to theater, see David Marshall, "Acts of Solitude: Theater in the Narrative of Defoe," in *The Figure of Theater: Shaftesbury, Defoe, Adam Smith, and George Eliot* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), 73-164. Surprisingly, *Turkish Spy at Paris* is not mentioned in the discussion.

signification that reveal a gap between experience and its narration (and between the object and its word),[209] pairing a reading of Defoe's novel alongside *Turkish Spy at Paris* helps reveal how exactly one might "read in translation": the Ottoman spy, who draws from contemporary conceptions of translation to point to the simultaneously believable and illusory quality of representations of the world, had already begun to anticipate Crusoe's solicitation of ironic credulity toward both his adventures and the novel's claim to be a "true history."

Crusoe's "large Pair of Mahometan Whiskers, such as [he] had seen worn by some Turks" is perhaps the least significant allusion to the figure of Mahmut (*RC*, 177). It is Crusoe's reliance on a prospective glass while on the island that most raises the specter of the Ottoman spy, perhaps all the more evident since the decision is made during a short interlude of calm between feeling "perfectly confus'd and out of myself," at the discovery of a footprint in the sand and "perfectly confounded and amaz'd" at the sight of a pile of human remains on the beach (*RC*, 182, 194). The need for sharpened discernment strikes him between a moment of self-abandonment and one of traumatic culture shock. Unlike Mahmut, however, Crusoe does not undergo self-transformation or defamiliarize what would have been to English readers a likely familiar locale. Rather, he and the motley cast of characters he encounters are put to the inverse task of rendering the experience of the actually unfamiliar. This is not an imaginative exercise that exploits the perspective of a perceived outsider to recast the familiar anew but the imagined perspective of an actual outsider out in a complex multilingual and multinational world. Not knowing what to believe is just part and parcel of the experience. Nevertheless, as in the *Turkish Spy at Paris*, the foreign and the familiar converge in *Robinson Crusoe* to underscore

[209] Johnson offers the example of what she terms "proliferating couplets" in the novel—Crusoe's "crisis of naming" which presents itself in his equivocation of whether objects he encounters are "Chests or Boxes," or whether objects he makes are "in the Form of a Shovel or Spade," and so forth (*RC*, 85)—as a demonstration of a gap between word and object (*A History of the Novel in Translation*, 92).

the slipperiness between the real and the believable fiction in ways that characterize the adventures of the often bewildered traveler and begin to train readers to approach the true or seemingly true account in an appropriate way.

Given that Defoe clearly broadcasts his affinity for stock oriental tropes, it should come as no surprise that he would also be drawn to the figure of Roxane.[210] Just as the idea that Crusoe serves as the sign of an ideology of an anchored individualism unravels in the face of his several self-bending and self-fracturing transformations so too does Roxana challenge the notion that the early novel unproblematically champions a stable and coherent national (and monolingual) self. Roxana's national fluidity (she is a French Huguenot refugee raised in England who crisscrosses a number of western European countries and identities, with an "oriental" identity thrown in for good measure) only compounds her psychological ambidexterity: is she Roxana or is she Susan? Is it possible to be both? And, more puzzlingly, what does it mean that the key to uncovering her "true" identity as a delinquent English mother, while trying to pass herself off as a motherless Quaker, takes the shape of identifying the Turkish garb to which her public persona has become associated? Drawing from the oriental stock figure upon which she's modeled, Roxana's dizzying transformations prove her to be the living embodiment of a collection of believable fictions that are passed through at such an alarming speed that it becomes almost impossible to tell what is real and what is fiction masquerading as real. Toward the novel's end, when Roxana as Quaker is forced to listen to the "story of Roxana, that is to say, of myself," a story that is built

[210] Aravamudan also highlights Defoe's use of the familiar oriental stock figure in his discussion of *Roxana*; his central argument is that Defoe's novel represents a "domestication of the foreign" that, however its "interest in geographical horizontality is being trumped by a fear of vertical social porousness," still retains "multilocal referentiality" that is characteristic of oriental fiction during this period. See *Enlightenment Orientalism*, 64-8; quotations from 65, 67. See also Katie Trumpener, "Rewriting Roxane: Orientalism and Intertextuality in Montesquieu's *Lettres persanes* and Defoe's *The Fortunate Mistress*," *Stanford French Review* 11.2 (1987): 177-91, for a discussion of the Roxane figure in these texts as well as Jean Racine's *Bajazet* (1672).

on fabrications but has reached the status of fact, the question of credibility has reached one of its sharpest points in the novel.[211] It is not coincidental that this moment evokes the familiar oriental stock figure that comes to serve as a sign for the threat of falling for a believable, but false, tale.

If studies of credible fiction during this period are widened to include an examination of all its currents then a new picture emerges. The nascent novel ceases to be the exclusive home of the early credible fiction and its contiguity to ideas about translation and related narrative forms becomes too obvious to dismiss. Put another way, Defoe and Montesquieu's pseudotranslations—both of which gesture toward the simultaneously believable and illusory quality of the credible imposture—are not the only texts that contribute to the conceptual consolidation of the credible fiction. Just as pertinent are the pseudo-factual account of a seafaring adventurer who crosses the Atlantic ocean and finds himself washed ashore on an abandoned island, and that of an Englishwoman of French descent who makes her way in the world through traversing multiple national and religious identities.

CODA: DETECTING IMPOSTURES

As already noted, the figure of the Mahometan informant gives way to other imagined eastern personas as the century continues, with the popularity of the genre itself eventually declining. This is not to say that the form ultimately disappears, or that the enthusiasm for other genres, particularly the increasingly popular novel, overshadows its demand.[212] Rather, as already suggested, the early novel incorporates its stock tropes and figures, furthering the preoccupation with both the idea and the quality of the credible imposture to help sharpen the concept of fictionality for the reading public. That is, while the form does begin to wane in

[211] Daniel Defoe, *The Fortunate Mistress* (London, 1724), 351.
[212] See Aravamudan, *Enlightenment Orientalism*, where he makes the contrary claim that the novel form emerges as an alternative to that of oriental tales.

popularity, it leaves a lasting legacy that is more than just decorative. Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* and *Roxana*, as I have shown, illustrate this point, as do other lesser-known narratives. One particularly striking example is the anonymously published *The Impostors Detected, or, The Life of a Portuguese* (1760), a strange text that perfectly demonstrates how ideas about translation, imposture, and fictionality form a natural complement during this period.

Ostensibly written by a Portuguese gentleman named Ranucio, the narrative was supposedly composed exclusively for the author's own use and, to better "conceal" it, penned "in a language little understood amongst us," although the language is never named.[213] A curious "editor" later purchases it from the sale of a personal library and speaks of its publication in France in an "Editor's Advertisement," although the book itself was published in English in London and there is no known original in French. While it is possible that a Portuguese writer wrote the narrative in English or French, and that it was first published in France and then later in London, it is highly likely that the history is fabricated. If so, this would make the story, which involves an imagined local's observation and interrogation of the customs of his home country in a foreign language, something like the convoluted inverse of the genre of the fictional letters by an eastern informant, albeit sans the epistolary structure. Broken up into four books, it documents the observations of Ranucio whose main ambition is, as its subtitle indicates, to "humorously" expose "the artifices and intrigues of Romish priests." Interspersed throughout are embedded tales, all of which take the idea, to varying degree, of imposture as one of their themes. The conjunctional effect of the "editor's" note that the story offers readers "singularity and amusement" in his advertisement and the narrator's tongue-in-cheek assertion at the end that the documented adventures—some of which are clearly fantastical—are not "extraordinary" to

[213] *The Impostors Detected, or, The Life of a Portuguese* (London, 1760). Hereafter cited in text by volume and page number.

"people well acquainted with the world" signal the author's investment in exploiting the tension between the reader's belief and disbelief.

While one of the embedded tales has "oriental" overtones, including a scene where an enslaved Spaniard so convincingly simulates a statue of Mahomet that a Mahometan performs prayers in front of him (i, 100),[214] it is a tale about the kingdom Papimania and the titled tale "The History of the Count de Redundo and Donna Theresia" that more strikingly demonstrate how the narrative plays with ideas of counterfeiting and credulity. By way of a brief summary: the first tale—which the narrator notes "is as curious, and interesting, as any in this book"—centers upon a princess who hires a druid to help convince the residents of the kingdom Papimania that her son was not born with multiple deformities (i, 60). This is a particularly challenging task as the boy had been born with "fifty arms, and as many legs" and "a long tail full of the most subtle poison" with the ability to launch "thunders and lightening" at anyone who recoils at the prince's appearance (i, 54). An elixir is served to a select number of the kingdom's nobles, which produces "extraordinary effects," including "fascinat[ing] their sight, and [making] them behold the most admirable and surprising things" (i, 59). As a result, the multi-limbed boy with a tail becomes a "master-piece of nature" (i, 62). When other nobles receive news of the young prince's transformation, they can hardly believe it: willing to suspend judgment until they can confirm the truth with their own eyes, they travel to see the young prince and are greeted with "the inchanted cup," which helps them see "with quite different eyes"—that is, "with the same eyes as she [the princess] herself did" (i, 64). The princess bolsters her enchantment by appealing to the "credit and authority" of the hypnotized nobles, further safeguarding her deception by serving the elixir to as many people in the kingdom as possible.

[214] It is worth noting the traditional aniconism in Islam. It's unclear if this moment is meant to poke fun at this proscription, or if the author was ignorant of it.

The illusion is punctured when pictures are drawn up of the young prince and copies are sent out to all the provinces of the kingdom. Coinciding with the waning effects of the elixir, the nobles and people find themselves no longer "imposed upon" (i, 65), and the prince is consequently seized and the kingdom plunged into disarray. The tale is told during a dinner hosted by Ranucio's uncle, with one of the attendees objecting to it as not respectable. That is, what ensues at the end is a debate about civil decorum rather than believability, although the overall point of the tale, and its function in the narrative, is clear: to whimsically point to the simultaneously credible and illusive qualities of a fiction, although credibility and illusion are stretched in the tale to new limits ("credit and authority" are lent to the illusion not because it is believable but because of *who* believes it, and the illusion itself is the result of an actual enchantment). The tale also importantly juxtaposes two forms of "imitation": on the one hand, there is a picture of the prince acquired through imaginatively identifying with another person—here, the mother. While having to resort to an elixir, the nobles nonetheless begin to see the prince through her eyes in an imaginative identification that recalls the translator-author relationship. On the other, there is seeing the prince as he is depicted in a faithful portrait—a representation that is more like a mimetic depiction of his observable form. The latter imitation exposes the illusive nature of the former one by comparison.

Another embedded tale, "The History of the Count de Redundo and Donna Theresia," is also presented to readers as a documentation of "strange" and "wonderful" adventures that the storyteller insists, however fabulous they may seem, are "strictly true" (ii, 74, 75). Continuing in the vein of the satiric main narrative, the "strictly true" tale recounts the adventures of a Portuguese man who finds himself on an island populated with monkeys who speak Portuguese. While there, a beaver insurrection, followed by an uprising of tricorns, plagues the kingdom. To

make matters worse for Redundo, he catches the ire of a resentful courtier and only manages to escape the troubled kingdom through the help of one of these creatures. The primary narrator, Ranucio, looks upon the tale as "the mere effects of his [Redundo's] invention," but the others in his company amusingly note "that there was a great deal of truth" in it, especially in "the latter part" (ii, 124). It's less important to parse the reasons behind the varying reactions than it is to note the side-by-side placement of skepticism and credulity as natural responses: Ranucio doubts, while others are swept up in the fiction despite its obvious impossibility. Even the skeptical Ranucio is uninterested in interrogating the credulity around him, appearing almost dismissive of his own disbelieving reaction in favor of underscoring the tale's entertainment value, noting that "whatever was the case [whether the tale is true or not], this entertaining relation procured the count the thanks of the all the company" (ii, 124-5). While both tales, then, investigate ideas related to counterfeiting and credulity, there is an implicit acceptance that tales that are presented as simultaneously strange and real tread the line between true and not true in ways that solicit a kind of ironic credulity as the appropriate response.

As noted, the anonymously published text appeared in 1760, well after multiple credible fictions had appeared on the English and French literary scene, making its play with the realistic quality of narratives familiar to readers. While Defoe had to insist that his *Robinson Crusoe* was a "true history," fending off accusations that it was invented in 1719, the idea of the credible fiction had become almost conventional in the second half of the century. For the most part, authors no longer insist that their characters refer to actual individuals but acknowledge instead that their worlds, and the people within them, are invented even if they appear to be *like* the real one. I make a leap of about 40 years in this last section (between the publication of Montesquieu's *Lettres persanes* and *The Impostors Detected*) to highlight the development of the

genre of the fictional letters by an eastern informant over the course of the century, but other strands of oriental or oriental-like fiction explore and experiment with ideas related to imitation in the earlier part of the century that result in crucial contributions to the consolidation of the credible fiction as a concept. I discuss these fictions in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 3

RE-CREATING THE WORLD IN AUBIN'S "TRUE HISTORIES" AND MIDCENTURY ORIENTAL FICTIONS

After managing to pass herself off as a Spanish man to a slave buyer in Istanbul, the English heroine of Penelope Aubin's *The Life and Amorous Adventures of Lucinda* (1721) quickly masters the spoken language of her fellow captives. Rather than acquiring an official language of the Ottoman Empire, however, Lucinda becomes fluent in a hodgepodge language, what one critic terms a kind of "Creole Mediterranean":[215] "When I considered of it farther, I found it a mixture or gallimaufry of most languages, Italian, French, Spanish, &c. I soon perfectly understood it, and by a little practice was able to speak it as well as the best of them; and as easy and natural to me it became as my mother-tongue."[216] That is, Lucinda finds herself at home in a foreign language, which has traces of multiple languages, while assuming a fraudulent identity. The representation of Lucinda's supranational and multilingual adventure is not an anomaly in Aubin's oeuvre. In fact, such representations comprise the bulk of her writing to the degree that a unifying feature of Aubin's novels could be said to be their "thematization" of translation.[217] Much like Defoe's Crusoe, Aubin's characters take to the sea only to find themselves overtaken by foreign ships, deposited on foreign soil (where episodes of Ottoman captivity often take place), shipwrecked on sparsely inhabited islands, or a combination thereof.

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[215] Johnson, *A History of the Novel in Translation*, 134.

[216] Penelope Aubin, *The Life and Amorous Adventures of Lucinda*, in *A Collection of Entertaining Histories and Novels*, vol. 1 (London: 1739), 234. Hereafter cited in text as *L*. While Johnson terms this hodgepodge language a "Creole Mediterranean," it also meets the definition of a lingua franca. For more on the historical and imagined roles of lingua franca, see George Lang, "The Literary Settings of Lingua Franca (1300-1830)," *Neophilologus* 76.1 (1992): 64-76, and Peter Burke, "Hybrid Languages," in *Hybrid Renaissance: Culture, Language, Architecture* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2016), 97-112.

[217] Johnson, *A History of the Novel in Translation*, 129. For Johnson's analysis of Aubin's "true histories," see "*Translated Communities*: Penelope Aubin's Beautiful Infidels," 98-159.

Naturally, whether as visitors, slaves, or shipwrecked survivors, Aubin's characters routinely encounter multiple linguistic others during these adventures and, as is often even more so the case, find themselves required to don foreign dress.

In fact, the idea of foreign dress emerges as the linchpin connecting Aubin's conception of translation to her prose narratives: in a brief dedication to her translation *The Life of the Countess De Gondez* (1729), Aubin writes that "she [the Countess de Gondez] is come to visit Great Britain in an English dress."[218] By explicitly glossing translation as an original author's visit to a foreign nation in that nation's "dress," Aubin evokes both ideas about translation as the original author's rebirth in a new language and nation, so to speak, and signals to her readers that her multitude of characters who crisscross foreign nations in a variety of costumes are themselves undergoing a form of translation.[219] And, much like the translator who imagines himself and the original author linked via a process of metempsychosis, Aubin's characters undergo transformations that result in an almost identical effect: they re-create their best approximation of a foreign other while simultaneously foregrounding their original identity. Aubin's characters are, in a sense, like the oriental spy figure—a figure that traverses nations, puts on costumes from alien cultures, and convincingly impersonates another. Unlike the oriental spy figure, however, these "translated" characters do not serve to effect defamiliarization for readers, nor are their pretenses regularly kept hidden. Rather, they encompass an ironic thematic

[218] Penelope Aubin, *The Life of the Countess De Gondez. Written by her own hand in French, and dedicated to the princess de la Roche-Sur-Yon. And now faithfully translated into English* (London: 1729), n.p.

[219] Aubin's association of translation with transfer to another place isn't idiosyncratic; according to the OED, a primary meaning of *translation* before and during this period is the "conveyance from one person, place, or condition to another," specifically as it relates to the transfer of a bishop from one diocese to another. Aubin's association of translation with "dress" may also be a reference to early modern printed costume books that showed the dress of people from all over the world; representative titles are Jean Jacques Boissard's *Habitus variorum orbis genitum* (*Various Costumes of the Peoples of the World*, 1581), Pietro Bertelli's *Diversarum nationum habitus* (*The Costumes of Different Countries*, 1592), and Wenceslas Hollar's *Theatrum mulierum* (*European Women in Costume*, 1643).

preoccupation that invites readers to consider the prevalence of characters that believably, but admittedly, assume fraudulent identities in these "true histories."

I turn in this chapter to both "true histories" that thematize translation and oriental tales that drop the translation pretense but nonetheless absorb ideas informing the practice into their content. In doing so, these texts support the distinct but related claims, articulated in the first chapter, that eighteenth-century fiction writers draw from the discourse of translation to theorize their own practice and that such theorizations help shape a concept of the credible fiction that crystallizes around the midcentury. As noted earlier, this argument runs contrary to several conventional views of eighteenth-century fiction. Rather than support the view that it is the early novel that serves as the exclusive site for the discovery of fictionality, or that credible narratives are exclusively those that take the ordinary and the everyday (glossed as the self-same) as their focus, these texts suggest a range of alternative views. Among these divergent hypotheses, presented here to articulate a process of development over time, are the following: that the concept of fiction may owe part of its origin to eighteenth-century ideas about translation that frame it as a tension between imitation and creation; early-eighteenth-century "true histories," particularly those that depict cross-cultural and multilingual encounters, gesture toward a discourse of fictionality through their depictions of impersonators who draw attention to their impersonation; oriental tales written in the midcentury sharpen these ideas through extended meditations on the experience of encountering the simultaneously believable and untrue; and depictions of the extraordinary, often presented as the result of the encounter of the familiar and the foreign, provide a model for the act of reading fiction.

I begin this chapter with Aubin, whose supranational adventure narratives encourage readers to adopt an attitude of ironic credulity, an attitude that Kareem notes is crucial to

defining the relationship between reader and fictional text as I noted in earlier chapters. Lucinda, whose "too great credulity" entraps her in one misfortune after another (*L*, 173), undertakes a number of transformations that subtly disclose to her and to similarly well-traveled/"translated" characters the prevalence of fabrications that pass for real. Through these transformations, readers are invited to consider the possibility that any of the "true" characters could, for a time, believably impersonate a fictitious other to the degree that he or she appears—but only ever appears—real. In doing so, Aubin brings the credible character to fictional life, gesturing toward its capacity to convince its reader of its simulated reality, or, to use Lynch's term again, its performative efficacy, as well as its ability to draw attention to its own illusoriness. As I elaborated in the first chapter, while Lynch argues that it is the gothic aesthetic that introduces the idea that "a fiction's authority" need not derive from "its mimetic accuracy, plausibility, or didactic force" but rather, from its performative efficacy,[220] Kareem looks to eighteenth-century fiction more generally for the origin and development of this idea. In fact, as she writes, it is "precisely the "performative efficacy" of eighteenth-century fiction's realism—its capacity to convince—that puts it in a position to produce the startling effect of calling attention to that realism's illusoriness."[221]

I then turn in the second half of this chapter to three oriental fictions written in the midcentury: Mary Wortley Montagu's "The Sultan's Tale" (1749?),[222] James Ridley's *The Tales of the Genii: or, The Delightful Lessons of Horam, the Son of Asmar* (1764), and Frances Sheridan's *The History of Nourjahad* (1767). Each of these fictions employs stock devices that recall Galland's translation of *Alf Layla wa Layla*; in fact, Ridley adopts the translation pretense (it is presented as a "translation" from Persian by "Charles Morell"), although this is revealed to

[220] Lynch, 61.
[221] Kareem, 4, 4 n. 14.
[222] See Introduction, n. 61, for bibliographical information. Hereafter cited in text as *ST*.

be a fabrication in the last few pages of the fiction. The transformations that characters undergo in each of these fictions not only stretch belief to a greater degree than those in Aubin's adventure narratives—for instance, characters can take the shape of other characters as well as animals, goddesses and genii routinely take human form, and so forth. They also ironically model for readers how best to consume the increasingly credible narrative—even as the transformations become markedly more incredible. I argue that it is precisely their thematization of translation that puts these fictions in a position to simultaneously train readers in an attitude of ironic credulity and help the concept of the credible fiction come into sharper focus.

TRANSLATED CHARACTERS

Soon after Lucinda's abduction by a gentleman whom she had previously spurned, a combination of shock and fatigue leads her to imagine the vision of a weeping Charles addressing her: "Oh my charming, my dear, my faithful Lucinda, how miserable am I become! I thought I had provided sufficiently for our security…but to my ruin I find that destiny has deluded my hopes, and your too great credulity has occasioned our misfortunes" (*L*, 173). Lucinda understands the import of these words only upon discovery that her seemingly obliging maid has really been in league with her abductor; her inability to identify a deception as such is singled out as the primary reason an intended elopement with her childhood friend, Charles, is interrupted. In fact, the all-too-late discovery that one has been the victim of a sham is a common theme in Aubin's narratives: a husband doesn't discover his wife's adulterous affair until around the time she gives birth to a daughter, for instance (Monsieur du Pont, who the narrator notes "had discovered something of [his wife's] intrigue" in the same sentence as news of her delivery

in *The Life and Adventures of Charlotta du Pont*, 1723),[223] or an unsuspecting woman is deceived into a relationship with an already married man (Charlot, who has "suffered for [her] credulity" in *The Noble Slaves*, 1722,[224] and Dorinda in *Charlotta du Pont*), and so forth. Characters routinely encounter other characters, whose combination of stated intent and corroborating behavior endow them with an air of credibility, only to discover that they have fallen for elaborately spun constructions masquerading as perfectly plausible realities.

This point bears repeating: it is not that characters are gullible by nature, or that they find themselves unable to identify a deception as such because of careless or distracted thinking. Lucinda never falls for farfetched schemes. She judges her maid to be a reliable confidante because her maid behaves as such, having given her "frequent asseverations that she would serve me faithfully even to the expence of [the maid's] life" (*L*, 177). Everything points to the maid's trustworthiness. Lucinda finds herself in an almost identical situation soon after her escape from her abductor. After marrying her rescuer Lewis, "who gave me all assurances imaginable of his inviolable passion for me; his words, his behavior, his concern, and every action was an authentick demonstration of it" (*L*, 186-7), she discovers three years into their marriage that he has begun an affair. She could not foresee Lewis's infidelity as a possibility because he gave no indication of it. If anything, his words and actions suggested the opposite conclusion. Lucinda does not mistake fantasy for reality, in other words, but something that *appears to be* reality—that even has seemingly authentic evidence corroborating its truth-claim—for it. She has a tendency to mistake what appears to be real, but is not, for the real.

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[223] Penelope Aubin, *The Life and Adventures of Charlotta du Pont, An English Lady,* in *A Collection of Entertaining Histories and Novels*, vol. 3 (London: 1739), 22. Hereafter cited in text as *CP*.
[224] ---, *The Noble Slaves*, in *A Collection of Entertaining Histories and Novels*, vol. 1 (London: 1739), 135. Hereafter cited in text as *NS*.

If the fraudulent character emerges as a central theme in Aubin's narratives, it is thrown into sharpest relief when characters find themselves in foreign locations. While the settings that make up Aubin's narratives include various locations in Europe, the usually tumultuous seas, and sparsely inhabited islands, it is perhaps unsurprising that a favorite go-to backdrop is where the "vile impostor's name is ecchoed through the empty quires and vaults" as it is described in *The Strange Adventures of the Count de Vinevil and His Family* (1721).[225] Often glossed as Turkey, the Islamic world is where characters undergo their most drastic and convincing transformations. Like the Countess de Gondez on her "visit" to England in an English "dress," Aubin's characters put on what she represents as forms of Mahometan "dress" during their time abroad that enable them to convincingly present themselves as though they are of the region. Unlike the examples cited in the previous paragraph, however, these transformations are not always malicious: characters often successfully impersonate this or that imagined persona to escape captivity or to avoid unwanted attention. Across Aubin's narratives, characters darken their skin to pass as Moors, or put on habits to pass as maids, merchants, and, commonly, religious dervishes, with one character-turned-hermit noting, "this habit is my passport here" in a kind of playful enactment of Pierre Bourdieu's notion of habitus (*CV*, 27).[226] Female characters, particularly, find that dressing up as men (Mahometan and otherwise) helps to increase their chances of avoiding harm. Lucinda, as noted above, maintains this form of "dress" while in Istanbul; so do characters in *Charlotta du Pont*, *Count de Vinevil*, and other fictions. Even characters of the

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[225] ---, *The Strange Adventures of the Count de Vinevil and His Family*, in *A Collection of Entertaining Histories and Novels*, vol. 2 (London: 1739), 5. Hereafter cited in text as *CV*.

[226] See Pierre Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice,* trans. Richard Nice (1980; Cambridge: Polity, 1990). It is important to note that, despite my argument that Aubin's representation of European characters who darken their skins and put on "foreign dress" are related to ideas about translation, these moments do recall the history of cultural appropriation (including the use of blackface) in theater that were based on problematic assumptions and that has been rightly denounced as a form of racism. While not the focus of my study, Aubin's representation of "Mahometans," while including moments of intercultural sympathy and even admiration, also resorts to stereotypes that should strike the modern reader as offensive.

region undergo what are framed as believable transformations, such as a "blackamoor" who puts on the skins of a bear (*CP*, 62, 65) and a Turkish captain who "changed my dress for that of a slave" (*NS*, 25). The depiction of foreign spaces in Aubin's narratives rarely recalls actual historical contact and interaction—very little effort is spent on particular foreign settings or different cultural traditions, for instance.[227] Rather, these spaces primarily function as imaginative backdrops for a host of character transformations that purposely stretch and manipulate belief.

In saying that Aubin's narratives thematize translation, particularly its conception as a form of metempsychosis, I do not mean that her narratives encourage readers to imaginatively transmigrate into the place of an other,[228] or that irresolvable differences make up its structural and thematic foundation.[229] Rather, I am exploring how Aubin's narratives capture the tension between imitation and creation inherent in descriptions of translation in the eighteenth century, and, in so doing, contribute to the developing concept of the credible fiction. As argued in the first chapter, translators who frame their practice as a form of transmigration of souls see themselves as hosts for an authorial presence at the same time that they stress their own claims to originality: to quote Dryden again, the translator deciphers what is "secretly in the Poet, or *may be fairly deduc'd* from him" (my emphasis). The translator simultaneously asserts the copy's likeness to and difference from the original in order to foreground his contribution and to disclose that it is his best approximation of the source material and its author. The translation is a re-creation, rather than a faithful reproduction, of its source material, a re-creation that is framed

[227] There are exceptions. Aubin does give an overview of eighteenth-century Turkish burial rites in *Lucinda*, for instance, (248-50), the source of which is unknown, but such attention to particular foreign settings or cultural traditions is a rarity.
[228] See Ballaster, "Narrative Transmigrations." See also Chapter 1, n. 139.
[229] See Johnson, *A History of the Novel in Translation*, 27. See also Introduction, n. 49.

as existing alongside its original almost on an equal footing rather than serving as either its displacement or its derivative.

The transformations that Aubin's characters undergo abroad follow an almost identical logic, although they encapsulate the imagined metempsychosis *and* ideas about translation itself: her characters simultaneously absorb the "dress" of a foreign other and assert their own identity to emerge, not as perfect reproductions of their foreign models, but, rather, as their re-creations. Another way of putting this is that, like the translation that is both similar to and different from its source text, Aubin's characters assume the persona of a foreign other at the same time that they foreground that they are not, in fact, other. Lucinda, for instance, so assiduously "counterfeits" her idea of a man from Spain that "in a little I could strut and cock my hat as well as the best, and force out a necessary oath to adorn my discourse" (*L*, 203). Her disguise is as meticulous as it is convincing: when a privateer attacks her and her shipmates, she insists that "no one who had been a witness of my behavior, would have suspected me for any other than a finished hero" (*L*, 229). After her enslavement in Turkey, she even captures the eye of her master's daughter who attempts to convince Lucinda/Spanish male captive to accept her promise of help and marriage in exchange for religious conversion. Lucinda may be counterfeiting her idea of a foreign other, but her counterfeit appears as real as they come to characters not in on the secret. But, importantly, there are very few who are not. While Lucinda's convincing embodiment of a Spanish hero is received as real by some characters, the vast majority of characters—and the reader—know that she is not actually a Spanish hero. Despite her convincing likeness to a foreign model, Lucinda is still Lucinda. That is, Lucinda is still herself.

Aubin's other narratives also exhibit transformations that stress the likeness to and dissimilarity from their foreign models. Characters frequently successfully pass as foreign others

when doing so guarantees their safety or minimizes their exposure to danger, but their pretenses are often disclosed to or revealed as such by similarly "translated" characters. In *Charlotta du Pont*, a disguised Abrifeaux—perhaps a botched version of *faux abri* or "false shelter"—correctly suspects the "foreign" women who help rescue him upon arrival in Turkey are not quite what they seem (*CP*, 132).[230] Similarly, in *Count de Vinevil*, Ardelisa comes upon a woman in a "Turkish habit" that she accurately hypothesizes is a disguised Christian woman like herself (*CV*, 36). Characters who choose to sincerely absorb aspects of what is framed as a foreign lifestyle do so openly and not from an assumed identity: Janetone discovers that the head of a seraglio in which she has found herself is an acknowledged Mahometan convert originally from Italy in *Charlotta du Pont*, and the Persian Tanganor agreeably converts to Christianity and marries the Spanish captive Maria, who willingly undergoes a "kind of cultural conversion" herself, in *The Noble Slaves*.[231] Characters like Lucinda, on the other hand—those whom I would argue "translate" themselves—never abandon or lose sight of their original identities from within their assumed ones. By enacting translation, they stress the simultaneous presence of both.

Aubin's thematization of translation foregrounds two contradictory ideas. The first stems from the depicted necessity to pass as a native of the region one is visiting: like the figure of the oriental spy, characters put on unfamiliar "dress" in order to conceal their regional or cultural origins and to embody a foreign persona. To be like the foreign model, here, is to impersonate a foreigner convincingly. A character's believability as other is paramount. At the same time that believability is foregrounded as crucial to the "translation" of character, however, so too is its

[230] Abrifeaux, who has disguised himself as a "mean person" (*CP*, 135), correctly identifies that the "foreign" women are really disguised Europeans.
[231] Maria chooses to live in exile and adopts aspects of what Aubin frames as a "Turkish" or "Moorish" lifestyle including drinking sherbet, sitting on carpets, and owning slaves (Johnson, *A History of the Novel in Translation*, 151). Of course, Aubin's framing has no authoritative source, and England is still very much a participant in the slave trade throughout the eighteenth century.

fabrication. Characters do not actually become other. This is less about demonstrating how self can be other, or the irresolvability of self and other, and more about demonstrating how a self can convincingly re-create another form. The characters believably impersonate others, at the same time that they draw attention to their impersonation. It is this self-disclosure that distinguishes the character transformations that happen abroad from those that happen closer to home: the fraudulent maid and Lucinda's first husband, mentioned earlier, do not draw attention to their deceptions, either to select characters or to readers. Their intention is to deceive. The characters that transform themselves abroad, however, while they do so to avoid detection, disclose their pretense to the vast majority of characters and to readers. Their intention is not to deceive but to draw attention to their deception.

More crucially, by having her characters serve as re-creations, rather than reproductions, of a foreign other, Aubin depicts the "translation" of self to other as concurrently a switch from referentiality to nonreferentiality. That is, Aubin's purportedly "true" characters, for which Aubin makes explicit referential claims, do not mimic the style and behavior of a particular foreigner whom readers should understand actually refers to an embodied individual in the world. Rather, Aubin's "true" characters create personas that have their origin in ideas about the foreign region and its people. They impersonate, in other words, their best approximation of a foreigner (what they have "fairly deduc'd," to re-conjure Dryden), a figure who could believably be part of the region but who is entirely, and admittedly, invented. They are, to quote Gallagher, "nobody in particular,"[232] although Aubin's "nobodies" are meant to refer to ideas about a specific foreign type (what the text frames as Mahometans) rather than a generalization about a group of people closer to home. It is this combination of self-disclosure and assumed nonreferentiality that reinforces to readers that the assumed identities, however credible, are not

[232] Gallagher, 341.

sincere. They only appear to be such. In this way, they are simultaneously credible *and* explicitly nonreferential (they do not claim to refer to actual persons in the world). They appear real but they are admittedly not.

It is precisely through such thematizations of translation that Aubin helps bring into focus an idea of the credible fiction. The directive to be both like and different from a source text is reframed in Aubin's novel as an injunction to be both like and different from a person in the world—to be only *like* them (their re-creation), but not *them*. The individuals in her "true histories" assume personas in foreign locations that are registered within their respective worlds and to readers as neither referential nor quite deceptively referential.[233] Her characters, rather, enact through their transformations abroad the idea of the believable narrative—they assume personas that the vast majority of characters, and readers, receive as both believable *and* untrue. As previously noted, Gallagher has argued that the visibility of fictionality went hand-in-hand with its movement toward credibility: in her account, it "gained a discourse of its own as it became less blatant…the less overt it seemed, the more it had to emerge into conceptual prominence."[234] Aubin not only helps gesture toward a concept of the credible narrative, but she also supports Kareem's argument that the credible narrative grounds its reality effect through performative efficacy, or the capacity of her characters to be convincing in their transformations. Aubin's characters convincingly impersonate people who are only *like* people in the world, that is, as opposed to imitating particular people in the world.[235] Aubin's narratives, in fact, help

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[233] As noted in the Introduction, Gallagher writes: the concept of "fiction seems to have been discovered as a discursive mode in its own right as readers developed the ability to tell it apart from both fact and (this is the key) deception" (338).
[234] Ibid., 340.
[235] As already noted (see Introduction, n. 60, and Chapter 1, n. 120), I build on Kareem's assertion that eighteenth-century fiction prioritizes the role of credibility over probability (65, n. 74). While she argues that the roots for this concept of fiction lie in the eighteenth-century discourse of wonder, as well as the paradoxical rules governing fiction during this period—the call to be probable and incredible had the

support the argument that the idea of the credible narrative and ironic credulity were mutually constitutive: she depicts these moments of character transformation as soliciting an interplay between credulity and skepticism, or what Kareem argues the period registers as wonder, to reinforce a "self-conscious awareness of one's assent to literary representations *as if* the representations were real," and not actually so.[236]

To stress again, through foregrounding the assumed persona's similarity to and dissimilarity from its imagined source material, Aubin suggests that the appropriate response to such depicted moments of "translation" is an attitude of ironic credulity. She subtly trains readers across multiple narratives to approach such moments with a combination of belief and disbelief and, to reinforce this oscillation, Aubin often includes characters that respond to the precise moment of encounter with a "translated" character with variations of wonder. To approach something with wonder in Aubin's narratives is not merely to register surprise, but to both "wonder at and wonder about," or to approach with surprise on the one hand, and with doubtful curiosity on the other.[237] It is to fall for an illusion at the same time that one registers its illusoriness. When a disguised Don Sancho encounters Angelina and Catharina, both of whom disguise themselves as eunuchs as part of a plan to escape Ottoman captivity, he looks upon them "with amazement." Don Sancho's "amazement," however, is not simply surprise at coming upon two individuals where he did not expect to find them, but also doubtful curiosity:

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opposite effect of leading fiction to become improbable and credible (see 65-6 for her full analysis)—I assert that ideas stemming from the contemporary tradition of translation, particularly its absorption and modification by eighteenth-century writers, serve to refine this concept of fiction as well.

[236] Kareem, 64 (emphasis in original).

[237] Kareem argues that to "wonder at" corresponds to the first OED definition of wonder: "To feel or be affected with wonder; to be struck with surprise or astonishment, to marvel." To "wonder about" corresponds to the second OED definition: "To ask oneself in wonderment; to feel some doubt or curiosity (how, whether, why, etc.); to be desirous to know or learn." As Kareem stresses, however, this is not to reduce wonder to a binary opposition but to stress its conception as a "finely gradated spectrum that moves from astonishment through curiosity toward radical doubt" (8). For more on Kareem's overview of the eighteenth-century discourse of wonder, see 7-14.

his "amazement" is registered at first as "astonishment" ("the beauty of their faces, the splendor of their habits, and the strange place he found them in, astonished him") and then, only moments later, as doubtful curiosity ("he concluded they were women disguised, and doubtless fled thither for shelter; and that they must be Europeans," *CP*, 120). This oscillation between credulity and skepticism likewise characterizes Abrifeaux's encounter with the same women, who have now darkened their skin and put on long tunics to pass as Mahometan hermits: "The stranger viewed the ladies with wonder, their strange habit and tawny complexions ill agreeing with the sweetness of their features, and delicate hands and limbs" (*CP*, 132). Here, it is precisely what is framed as their indeterminacy that solicits wonder.

A similar moment occurs in *Lucinda*, at the precise moment of Lucinda and Charles' surprise reunion in Istanbul, at which point she discovers that he is also a captive of her Turkish master:

> Neither the habit with which [Charles] was clothed, the abatement of the sweetness of his countenance by his continual slavery, or the long beard he was obliged to wear, could disguise him from my knowledge. If my astonishment was great, his was yet more extraordinary; for I found his eyes fixed upon me, and alterations in his face that shewed the confusion of his mind. (*L*, 232)

Lucinda instantly recognizes Charles who, while he is "foreignized" by his clothing and long beard, has not assumed a false persona. He is openly himself, although his circumstances and appearance have considerably changed. Charles, on the other hand, does not quite puncture Lucinda's disguise as a Spanish man although his "astonishment," which was "extraordinary," registers both surprise and confusion. There is something about her/him that unsettles Charles to the degree that he shares with his "Spanish" fellow captive: "every time I look upon you, I have a secret inclination that makes me covet you in my arms" (*L*, 235), and that she/he "perfectly represent[s]" Lucinda's "image" (*L*, 254).

Lucinda's decision not to reveal herself to Charles is a rare one in Aubin's narratives. As already noted, characters are often identified as false foreigners by those they meet or they acknowledge their pretense to inviduals whom they judge to be harmless or in similar circumstances. Despite her decision to remain hidden from Charles, however, he still doubts the authenticity of what he is seeing; in other words, his confusion models for readers a skeptical attitude, reinforcing the notion that not everything that appears to be real is actually so. At the same time that he represents a subtle skepticism, however, Charles is also depicted as one taken completely unaware when Lucinda does finally reveal her secret: he is overcome with "surprising joy," "trembling with pleasure," and exhibiting a passion described as "extraordinary" upon hearing that the figure who had reminded him of Lucinda is, in fact, Lucinda (*L*, 256). If Charles is skeptical of what he is seeing, he is—at the same time—also caught up in the illusion of it. These moments help sharpen and magnify the contradictory ideas that Aubin's "translated" characters foreground through modeling a response to how one might receive personas that are presented as both credible and admittedly untrue: through some combination of belief and disbelief.

My argument thus far has revolved around thematizations of ideas related to translation that bring the idea of the credible fiction into sharper focus, but Aubin's narratives also solicit ironic credulity at their own contents in ways that further crystallize the concept. As Kareem has asserted, "true histories" cultivate an attitude of ironic credulity not only through their inclusion of scenes of wonder, but also by framing their contents as both strange and true; by making "the familiar seem strange," readers are invited simultaneously to wonder at the strangeness of the descriptions and wonder about the truth-value of the representations.[238] Aubin's narratives demonstrate this point, but I would offer a slight modification. Aubin brings together the strange

[238] Kareem, 3, 10-11. Quotation from 3.

and true not only through making the familiar seem strange, as Kareem argues, but also through spotlighting the extraordinary and the strange that actually exists in the world. While an editor refers to her writings as "novels" in a collection published posthumously in 1739, Aubin unequivocally presents her own narratives as true, but "extraordinary," histories. Her *Charlotta du Pont*, for instance, outlines "the adventures of a young lady, whose life contains the most extraordinary events that I ever heard or read of," the story of which she gets from "the mouth of a gentleman of integrity" (*CP,* vi). And, the first line of *Lucinda* explicitly refers to the "surprising varieties of fortune" that can sometimes produce their own oscillating response of wonder and reflection: "The custom of former ages to grieve and lament at the birth of their children, and to rejoice and make festivals at their burials, is not so much to be wondered at, when we reflect upon the surprising varieties of fortune, and the inconstancy of that fickle goddess" (*L*, 163). Lucinda's adventures, which show "the uncertainty of [fortune's] favors (*L*, 164)," are like those past customs—they appear too implausible to believe unless one also remembers that life can, all on its own, brings its own share of the incredible.[239]

The extraordinary is primarily glossed as the effect of bringing together the familiar with the foreign but, rather than refer to the encounter with the unfamiliar in ways that recall historical encounters, as already noted, it emerges refracted through the contemporary discourse of translation. In fact, I claim it is precisely the absorption of ideas related to translation in these narratives, particular their depiction of the "translated" character, that intimates the call to consider their own contents as simultaneously believable and admittedly untrue. This is perhaps

[239] As is the case with the unknown source for her information on Turkish burial rites, Aubin makes anthropological claims about other cultures, as well as about "former ages," without reference to authoritative or historical sources. The point appears less to make accurate statements about other cultures/periods and more to suggest through this kind of proto-comparison the potential for one's own "familiar" culture to need explication, or the possibility of its appearing "strange" to others, in keeping with my argument about the oriental fictions discussed in the second chapter.

nowhere more clear than with the heroine of *Lucinda*. The initially credulous Lucinda undertakes a number of transformations: she does not just assume the guise of a Spanish man before she is captured by a privateer of Barbary, but she also puts on the "remarkable" clothes of her housekeeper (*L*, 185),[240] and retains her "slavish garb" after she is freed by her master (*L*, 256). These transformations subtly disclose to her and other characters the prevalence of fabricated identities that masquerade as real. But it is Lucinda's final transformation that is perhaps her most astonishing: after being captured by the Dutch army and forced into service, Charles and Lucinda, still in their "slavish" attire, facilitate their escape by "changing [their] garb" so that they may pass "for Londoners" during a routine stop ashore (*L*, 279-80). Or, as Johnson puts it, they escape "disguised…as themselves."[241] They must put on the "garb" of their original identities in order to reclaim them and, in so doing, place their ostensibly referential identities in uncomfortable proximity to Lucinda's invented ones.

This association is only reinforced when Lucinda does finally return home only to be accused as a "false impostor" by her nearest living relative, simultaneously evoking Western representations of Mahomet and Mahometanism and suggesting that her time abroad has "foreignized" her in ways more permanent than she may have realized (*L*, 289). Like Charles, she has become "a stranger to my country" (*L*, 253).[242] Despite the "many undeniable signs and demonstrations" that she gives, Lucinda's uncle refuses to acknowledge her as his niece. Instead,

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[240] While on their way to Florence, Lucinda puts on the clothes, "which were most remarkable" (185), of her late housekeeper, Margaret, not in order to pass as Margaret, but to pass as a nondescript housekeeper. She, in other words, re-creates a persona based on ideas about the "type" to which Margaret is framed as belonging.

[241] Johnson, *A History of the Novel in Translation*, 135.

[242] Johnson also notes that Lucinda is "the stranger at home," although to be a stranger at home in Johnson's analysis is to remain in an indeterminate mode—to be both self and other at the same time (134-5)—as opposed to my argument that to be made strange, to assume a foreign persona, is to be both self and *like* the other (to pretend to be the other) in one's re-creation of them, which raises questions about one's status as "real" or only pretending to be real.

"he had sufficient testimony to prove that Lucinda" is nothing more than a "trick and cheat" (*L*, 289). The narrative frames this as an issue of inheritance: to acknowledge Lucinda is to forfeit part of an inheritance the uncle received upon the death of her parents. But in a narrative that equates being made "strange" with being made fictional, to imbue the title character, however momentarily, with an air of deception is to cast doubt not only on her claim to truth but also on her claim to self-referentiality. (A possibly false) Lucinda may be pretending to be (the real) Lucinda. Lucinda may also just be pretending to be real. Interestingly, Lucinda's identity is restored not through the courts but through her uncle's retraction of his accusations; rather than prolong the lawsuit, Lucinda is underhandedly offered a deal to accept a portion of her inheritance in exchange for her acknowledgment as the real Lucinda. Her identity is restored but its restoration bypasses legal verification. Readers are given a character whose verification as "the real thing," in both senses of the word, is withheld.

Lucinda, the "author" of the text, ends her account with a small note explicating the reasons behind its publication. Having married Charles, and now the mother of three boys, she writes:

> The eldest has a spirit of rambling, and is already gone to seek his fortune in the world…and if any judgment may be made from his temper, and those surprising accidents that have already happened to him, he will in time, I am afraid, furnish some minutes for a narration more surprising than any that have befallen his relations. Yet providence, together with the sad example of the sufferings of his parents in this lively plan drawn by themselves, will make him, I hope, return to his duty. And had not this intention, joined with the importunate desires of some ladies, who…prevailed with me to publish this in prevention of a false account that was coming abroad, as I understood to my prejudice, these memories would scarcely have seen the light. (*L*, 291-2)

Lucinda publishes her adventures, "principally founded on facts" as the title page advertises, in order to obstruct the publication of a libelous account as well as discourage her son from undertaking a series of actions that would result in "a narration more surprising" than what she

has herself furnished. This reminder to readers that Lucinda's account is both purportedly factual—as opposed to the pending "false account"—and surprising, because it includes atypical incidents, solicits that very combination of wonder and reflection that its first line describes. But what makes Lucinda's adventures surprising, what makes them "strange," is precisely that they primarily unfold in strange lands and require the imperative to make oneself "strange" by putting on foreign "dress." And, as I have argued, to make oneself strange is also to place oneself in that strange and surprising state of being perfectly believable but not quite real. There is no way for readers to know if Lucinda's account is truly "founded on facts" or if it is yet another "false" one. But its call to approach it with wonder/reflection opens the door to the possibility that *Lucinda* is something other than fact or deception, something that is not quite one or the other, but somehow both, or neither, at the same time.

(IN)CREDIBLE RE-CREATIONS

The wondrous scene makes yet another appearance, this time in Montagu's oriental story fragment "The Sultan's Tale" (1749?). With the aid of the Roman goddess Diana, who has assumed the form of a court lady named Bettina, the princess Emma institutes an all-female order of chastity that validates each member's standing through the use of enchanted flowers. The flowers, if placed on the "bosom of a vestal" will retain their freshness for twenty-four hours, but fade within a few hours if placed on that of a married woman (16). Safe in the knowledge that she has successfully protected herself against would-be impostors, Emma surrounds herself with verified members of her order only to find herself confronted with a hard-to-believe sight:

> For many drawing rooms no lady appear'd whose nosegay had been seen to droop, but in a little while, all came as usual and stay'd to the last without one sprig's withering. The princess and Bettina stared at each other with looks of amazement, and when they were

> alone, and talk'd it over, allmost persuaded themselves they had been mistaken in the former day's observation and had doubtless wrong'd many innocent young ladies. But the next drawing room made them change that opinion and encreased their wonder, for not only all the order were there, but many married women with nosegays as big as brooms, which remain'd unfaded the whole evening. (23)

The fecundity of blooming flowers, particularly the appearance of married women sporting flourishing nosegays, is a sight that stretches the bounds of believability for Emma and Diana/Bettina. Suspended between the sureness of what their eyes register (nosegays "without one's sprig's withering" or "as big as brooms") and skeptical doubt regarding the authenticity of the meaning of what they behold, they inhabit a space of "amazement" and "wonder." They cannot believe what, by all accounts, seems real.

While Aubin's "true histories" thematize translation, the eighteenth-century British oriental fiction tradition could be said to owe its very conception and development to it, as I suggested in the first chapter.[243] It is not just that these fictions are fundamentally shaped by popular and influential translations, such as Marana's *L'espion turc* and Galland's *Les mille et une nuits*, but they are also shaped by shifting conceptions of translation. As also already argued, fictions staged in some part of the Islamic world particularly, because of the association of Mahomet and Mahometanism with false appearance and imposture, emerge as imaginative sites for more nuanced meditations on credibility. In addition to dramatizing ideas related to translation, including the "translated" character, these fictions also offer crucial contributions to the developing concept of the credible fiction in ways that move beyond Aubin's "true histories." Rather than foreground how characters can remain themselves while assuming the guise of an other, or merely gesture toward ironic credulity as an appropriate response to the

[243] I should note that Aubin's narratives not only draw from the eighteenth-century tradition of translation but, as one would expect given the overlap also, explicitly, from the contemporary oriental fiction tradition. *Lucinda*, for instance, contains two embedded tales—"Conjugal Duty Rewarded; Or, the Rake Reformed" and "Fortune Favors the Bold; Or, the Happy Milaneze"—which would have recalled Galland's translation of the *Alf Layla wa Layla* earlier that century.

believable/nonreferential character, the oriental fictions that are the focus of this section provide extended meditations on the experience of encountering manifestations of what is both believable and untrue. Written midway through the century, these fictions explicitly endorse an approach to how best to read the increasingly credible narrative.

Oriental tales, because they make no claims to factuality and typically take the incredible as their central focus, might seem like the perfect mode to explore the capacity of fiction to lure its reader into an imagined world. Characters, and readers, routinely marvel at and are swept away by incredible sights and descriptions in these fictions. Or, as Ballaster puts it, oriental fiction stages the reading process as, itself, a form of imaginative projection, encouraging readers to momentarily lose themselves in the process.[244] But midcentury oriental fictions also feature characters, like Diana and Emma, that doubt. These fictions depict what it's like to immerse oneself in an imaginary world, but they also cultivate an attitude of disbelief: they routinely encourage their readers to judge the believability of the scenes and situations that make up their contents rather than simply to marvel at them. Characters in oriental fictions encounter situations that seem perfectly real according to the standards of their worlds, only to wonder about their authenticity. Through relying on their own judgment to determine the reality of what they encounter, characters model a sharpened skepticism that encourages readers to approach representations of the real (both what passes for the real in these stories and representations of the real elsewhere) with equally skeptical wonder.

Montagu is, of course, known more for her letters about Turkey. Accompanying her husband in August 1716 on a diplomatic mission there, she remained in Istanbul until his

[244] Ballaster, "Narrative Transmigrations."

dismissal in July 1718.[245] Despite her first-hand knowledge of the region, including her acquaintance with all-female spheres not accessible to male historians and travelers,[246] her manuscript story fragment turns away from eastern subjects to feature instead familiar western classical figures. Montagu deploys the oriental frame narrative, however, to relate a story about classical figures in a way that evokes the defamiliarizing strategies of Defoe and Montesquieu explored in the second chapter. These characters may have struck readers as familiar but they are made strange through their narration by an "oriental" character:[247] the tale begins with a sultan who decides to relate the story behind the belief in the enchanted flowers to a sultana. "The Sultan's Tale," then, is really more accurately described as a western classical story in foreign dress. Despite the scant critical attention it has received,[248] Montagu's oriental tale helps demonstrate how the oriental fiction becomes a site through which to introduce strategies for reading the increasingly credible fiction.

As the opening of this section suggests, the fraudulent sight is everywhere in Montagu's tale. Flora offers the enchanted flowers to Diana because she "complain'd to her [Flora] of the limitation of her power in some things and particularly of her being lyable to be deceived in her opinion of her nimphs" (18). Diana decides to restore Flora's standing when her popularity decreases as a result of the flowers' powers of exposure, and she does so by becoming a "counterfeit Bettina" (21). And, of course, there are the ladies of the princess: Emma puts Diana

[245] The letters were composed after her return to England, likely between 1718 and 1724, and not published until 1763. See Teresa Heffernan and Daniel O'Quinn, Introduction to *The Turkish Embassy Letters*, 11-34, for an overview of Montagu's life and the text's composition and reception.
[246] See Heffernan and O'Quinn, 28.
[247] Ballaster refers to this as the tale's "reverse hybridity." Montagu introduces the story of Diana and Flora through the conventional use of a storyteller who frames the narrative but the storyteller, in this case, is an "oriental" sultan who, as Ballaster writes, "reverses the familiar move of importing fictional materials from the East into western narrative. The sultan's act provides an alienating effect in that familiar figures now appear more enigmatic or open to interpretation" (*Fabulous Orients*, 190).
[248] As far as I know, Ballaster is the only scholar to offer a substantial analysis of the tale. See *Fabulous Orients*, 186-90.

in the uncanny situation of having her earlier complaint echoed back to her: "why can not I distinguish by their looks, those who have forfeited their title to their white robes" (21)?[249] Even Emma herself engages in a manipulation of reality of her own: rather than wear the enchanted nosegays herself, she puts on "artificial flowers" that "were so well imitated as not to be distinguish'd from natural ones by any human eyes" (22). By the time Emma and Diana come upon their wondrous scene, the prevalence of the fraudulent sight has been so well established that it appears to be the foundation of their environment. In worlds (terrestrial and otherwise) where nothing appears as it truly is, it is not surprising that Emma and Diana/Bettina doubt what their eyes register as true.

While the combination of married women with flourishing nosegays is enough to give anyone pause, what makes the sight truly puzzling is that its purported authenticity is substantiated with what was supposed to be a reliable form of corroboration: the enchanted flowers. Representation, here, is at odds with common sense. Rather than accept representations at face value, Montagu spotlights a skeptical posture though the depiction of a baffled, but suspicious, Diana. After witnessing what she could not believe, Diana attempts to solve the mystery that she is assured has "no inchantment" (24). The catch is that she no longer has access to her powers, and must rely on "female arts alone" (24). Diana's temporary disempowerment is crucial as it renders her akin to Montagu's readers: recourse to one's own judgment is the only means available for determining the reality of a story. Through her efforts, she discovers that the incredible sight has a perfectly rational explanation: a young man, eager to help his mistress remain in Emma's order, receives help from Venus who, through a convoluted series of events, leads him to create a kind of flat vase that can be pinned to one's chest and which maintains a

[249] As the narrator notes, Emma "obliged them to wear [the white robes] as long as they continued unmarried" (21).

flower's freshness. Through Diana's efforts, she and Emma receive confirmation of their doubts: what they assumed could not be real turns out not actually to be so. Like the sultana in the frame narrative, who notes that the belief in the enchanted flowers is not congruent with common sense or her daily experience but has often "wonder'd" at it (16), Diana offers a model for the act of reading fiction that makes use of both amazement and sharpened skepticism, thus gesturing toward an idea of something like objective truth that can be empirically verified.

But unlike Diana, readers know that what they are reading is only make-believe. Montagu, by staging her story in a space explicitly flagged as imaginary, recasts Diana's judgment of the reality of what is before her eyes as the reader's judgment of a story's believability. Montagu invites readers to mirror Diana's skepticism, and to follow along as Diana tries to disentangle the real from the contrived. Through doing so, she trains readers to replace a consideration of a description's authenticity (is it real or not?) with a consideration of its credibility (is it believable or not?). Of course, as Gallagher notes, it is not incredible stories but realistic ones that are "the real test for the progress of fictional sophistication in a culture"; when readers approach a credible narrative with no thought as to its epistemological status, then it is safe to assume that a concept of fiction has been fully absorbed by a culture.[250] But while there is no chance that readers will mistake Montagu's tale as a description of some event that really happened, readers are explicitly encouraged to approach its descriptions of what passes for real with an eye toward both its illusoriness and its believability. That is, Montagu's tale helps readers begin to integrate a concept of the credible fiction through foregrounding how representations of the real are only ever representations, and to remind readers to judge the success of such narratives by their location within the bounds of believability.

[250] Gallagher, 339.

I begin with this short discussion of Montagu's tale to illustrate the importance of midcentury oriental fiction to the development of the increasingly credible fiction. Despite Montagu's relevance, however, it is Ridley's *The Tales of the Genii* (1764) and Sheridan's *The History of Nourjahad* (1767) where these ideas receive their fullest attention. Before turning to this final discussion, however, it is first necessary to briefly examine the evolving concept of genius. Central to the contemporary discourse of translation, the concept of genius also begins to crystallize in the midcentury into two separate, but related, discourses that overlap with those of translation as well as fiction: genius as referring to the powers of an author's creativity and originality and, more importantly for oriental fiction, genius as the representation of truth from within a fabulous frame.

FABULOUS TRUTHS

When Dryden writes in the preface to his translation of *Ovid's Epistles* that "'tis time to look into our selves, to conform our genius to his [the original author], to give his thought either the same turn, if our tongue will bear it, or, if not, to vary but the dress, not to alter or destroy the substance," he is evoking multiple ideas related to the concept of genius. As I noted in the first chapter, while the concept now conventionally refers to an exceptional capacity for intellectual and creative thought, genius has been part of a broad and shifting semantic field since antiquity with associations to such varying ideas as a begetting spirit, animus, something like a tutelary god born with each individual, the rational soul, and others.[251] Its diverse array of meanings helps to explain its conceptual slipperiness in the eighteenth-century discourse of translation. The "genius" that translators aim to absorb through a process of imagined transfusion or transmigration is also glossed as "spirit" or "soul": through the use of the word "genius,"

[251] See Nitzsche, *The Genius Figure in Antiquity and the Middle Ages.*

translators could point to notions of the author's life energy or virility (akin to the mysterious "substance" that Dryden refers to above, which he hopes the "transfusion" won't destroy), or something more like his rational soul (which has a stronger association with the idea of an author's special capacity for thought). Translators may have also evoked the notion of a begetting spirit: the revival of these original authors, and their writings, was seen as part of an effort to preserve and disseminate esteemed parts of a literary past.[252]

Inherent in Dryden's statement is also a nascent awareness of a sense of national/linguistic difference, yet another association included within the concept's developing repertoire. The genius of Shakespeare emerges for eighteenth-century writers as a symbol for an innate talent, an originality, that also comes to represent a notion of a distinct English identity no longer bound by an adherence to classical precepts.[253] This development in the concept of genius will be further nuanced in the next chapter, but, for now, it is enough to draw attention to hints of it in Dryden's use of "our tongue:" translators should attempt to conform their genius to the author's as long as their "tongue" will bear the same turns of thought. In the event that this is not possible, the translator may rely on his own genius to alter the source material's "dress," a notion that not only further reinforces a sense of national particularity but which also aligns its expression with the native translator.[254] Perhaps the concept's most relevant inflection, however, concerns the idea of combining truth with artifice. Beginning in the Middle Ages, the genius figure was often associated with the articulation of truth pertaining to both the ethical sphere and

[252] See Terry, *Poetry and the Making of the English Literary Past*.
[253] See Gilberta Golinelli, "The Concept of Genius and its Metamorphoses in Eighteenth-Century English Criticism," *Textus* 18.1 (2005): 189-204.
[254] One also gets a sense of this joint turn to the translator's genius and to an increasing sense of national particularity in Dryden's preface to *Sylvae*, discussed in Chapter 1, where he notes that his translations are such that if the original author "were living, and an Englishman…are such as he wou'd probably have written" (n.p.)

the physical world from within a fabulous frame.[255] Rather than engage in direct revelation, these figures were shown to convey forms of truth through what twelfth-century philosopher and poet Bernard Sylvester termed an *integumentum*, or a kind of fictitious covering.[256] It has even been argued that the dream vision genre, characterized by a dreaming protagonist who is led to self-knowledge by a divine intermediary, represents an outgrowth of this articulation of the concept.[257] More than just pointing to the combination of truth and artifice, however, the genius figure also comes to refer to the tenuous attempt to represent truth allegorically. Through simultaneous gestures toward its possibility and impossibility, the figure comes to embody what one critic has argued is the "irresolvable perversity, paradoxically both natural and artificial" at the center of allegorical writing and, even, the entire "artistic enterprise."[258] That is, the genius figure becomes a means to explore larger questions about representation.

Of course, the conception of genius as a composite of truth and artifice resonates with the overall form of the oriental fiction tradition itself: as numerous eighteenth-century writers assert, oriental fictions are distinguished by their combination of moral instruction and fabulous descriptions. Galland asserts in the preface to his popular translation, for instance, that those who are inclined to "*profiter des exemples de vertus et de vices*" ("profit from examples of virtue and vice") that his text provides will "*tirer un avantage*" ("benefit").[259] Blair echoes this assertion: though he acknowledges that the *Nights* is the "production of a romantic invention," it is,

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[255] See Jonathan Morton, "Ingenious Genius: Invention, Creation, Reproduction in the High Middle Ages," *L'Esprit Créateur* 55.2 (Summer 2015): 4-19.
[256] Sylvester defined *integumentum* as "*genus demonstrationis sub fabulosa narratione veritatis involvens intellectum, unde etiam dicitur involucrum*" (a kind of demonstration which envelops the true meaning within a fabulous [fictional] narrative, and so it is called a covering)." Qtd. in Morton, 6. Translation provided by Morton.
[257] See Nitzsche, 62-3. In fact, the dream vision genre may serve as a relevant literary precursor for Montagu: Venus's help comes in the form of a cryptic dream in her oriental tale.
[258] Morton, 18.
[259] Galland, "Avertissement de la première edition" in *Les mille et une nuit,* 8.

nonetheless, "beautified with very humane morality."[260] Some argued that the fabulous frame made the delivery of moral instruction more palatable. The alleged "author" of Ridley's tales, the sage Horam, for instance, notes that the collection of stories that constitute the *Tales of the Genii* were "conceived [with] the purpose of disguising the true doctrines of morality, under the delightful allegories of romantic inchantment."[261] And Sheridan had intended for *The History of Nourjahad* to be the first of a collection of "moral fictions" for the Prince of Wales.[262] It is not surprising that Sheridan found an affinity between the *specula principum* genre and oriental fiction: familiar "oriental" storyteller figures like Shahrazade and the wise vizier, who couched their own moral instruction within fabulous tales, formed a central device of the oriental mode itself.[263]

Ridley and Sheridan not only set their fictions as moral tales within fabulous frames, but they also each feature a genius figure (or figures, as is the case with *Tales of the Genii*). But these figures do more than just point to the inherent tenuousness of representing truth allegorically. In addition to serving as imaginary vehicles for moral truth, they also raise questions about the manipulation of reality, where the "real" comes uncomfortably close to the fraudulently real. This is not surprising: while the eighteenth-century discourse on translation relies less on this particular conception of genius, there is some observable overlap. The translator's re-creation of a source text inhabits the same precarious claim to representation: it is the admittedly impossible attempt to revive a source text in a new language and age. And, while not quite an articulation of truth within a fabulous frame, the translation is still that similarly

[260] Blair, "Fictitious History," 77.
[261] James Ridley, *The Tales of the Genii: Or, the Delightful Lessons of Horam, the Son of Asmar*, 2 vols., 3rd ed. (London: 1765-66), xxxii. Hereafter cited in text as *TG*. Unless otherwise noted, all citations are from the first volume.
[262] Alicia LeFanu, *Memoirs of the Life and Writings of Mrs. Frances Sheridan* (London: 1824), 296.
[263] Ballaster, *Fabulous Orients*, 140-41.

composite thing: it is at once something like a copy and something like an original composition, the re-articulation of a source text within a partly inventive frame. The genius figure retains its association with the idea of truth within a fabulous frame, that is, at the same time that it develops to include the idea of the credible narrative in oriental fictions, with both narrative forms drawing attention to the tenuousness of their representations. Another way of putting this is that, in importing ideas drawn from translation, oriental fictions also appear to have imported and merged other ideas associated with it. Through doing so, Ridley and Sheridan join a long line of eighteenth-century writers who examine the effort to combine forms of truth and deception in narrative and offer their suggestions for how best to read these composite tales.

Ridley's *Tales of the Genii* (1764) was presented as a collection of lessons originally written in Persian for the heir to the Mughal dynasty and translated into English by one Charles Morell. A collection of nine tales written in the style of *Alf Layla wa Layla*, its combination of moral truth and fabulous descriptions is explicitly captured by the figure of the genius: the opening frame narrative introduces two young children, who are led by a genius to join the other young "faithful under their charge" to a place where they "hear lessons of humanity from the lips of our immortal race" (*TG*, 40, 39). As just noted, it was precisely this fabulous framing that was seen as facilitating the delivery of the text's moral message, a paradoxical combination that appealed to the alleged translator.[264] Despite the appeal, and despite the claim on its title page that it was "Faithfully translated from the Persian Manuscript," the "translation" contains a number of footnotes indicating that deliberate alterations were made to the original. That is, the "translator" is no mere conduit for the genius of the "original author," but makes a point to emphasize his own interventions to readers throughout the collection. Of course, this is all

[264] As the "translator" notes: "the descriptions were lively, the tales interesting and delightful, and the moral aptly and beautiful couched, under the most entertaining images of a romantic imagination" (*TG*, ii).

tongue-in-cheek, as the "translation" is no translation. The frontispiece to the second volume, which depicts an image with the caption "The author disguised in a Persian habit discovering himself" in a gesture toward self-discovery and disclosure (see Fig. 1), and the conclusion to the collection, in which Ridley admits that Horam is only a "phantom of my mind" and a "fiction" (363), reveals the translation claim to be a pretense. But Ridley's efforts to foreground the presence of a "translator" are not merely (or, at least, not only) to trick a credulous reader: he exploits the tension between imitation and creation evident in theorizations of translation to underscore the text's epistemological indeterminacy. Ridley's "translation," that is, turns out to be yet another credible narrative: it is an acknowledged fiction intended to pass convincingly as an authentic document.

It is the sixth and longest tale of the collection, "The Inchanters, or, Misnar the Sultan of India," where the idea of the credible narrative receives its fullest attention within the contents of the text. The story is straightforward: having just assumed the throne, the sultan Misnar finds he must protect his right to rule from an ambitious brother who has acquired the help of evil genii (not to be confused with the good genii from the frame narrative as well as within the tales themselves).[265] In addition to putting down revolts instigated by his brother, Misnar quickly learns that his supernatural enemies blur the line between reality and fantasy through the creation of illusions that convincingly pass for the real. He initially undertakes a quest to Mecca in search of magical relics that he believes will protect him from such deceptions, only to learn that a combination of prudence and vigilance proves to be a far better guard than any supernatural tokens. As he encounters one enchantment after another, Misnar trusts that a "cautious and discerning" attitude will enable him to tell the difference between the real and the deceptively

[265] Of course, the idea of good and evil genii corresponds to what Nitzsche identifies as one of the associations of the concept of genius: the separation between good and evil impulses. See Chapter 1, n. 87.

real (299). Reinforcing Misnar's belief is the evil genius Ulin who shares the antidote of sorts to their deceptions with Misnar's vizier Horam (who, as Ballaster notes, shares the narrator's name and is meant to serve as his alter ego)[266]: "Mahomet and his faithful crew of genii, will not permit us to overpower you, or your prudent master, unless through your own inadvertency you fall into our snares" (317). A skeptical posture, then, become a means through which Misnar and others can pierce through the illusions of the evil genii.

Unlike Montagu's story fragment, Ridley's tale goes beyond merely registering doubt. After a brief state of amazement, Diana comes to realize that there is some mystery behind the incredible sight that she and Emma witness. The sight itself is overtly hard to believe. Misnar, on the other hand, encounters illusions that are more believable as the real, the signs of their fabrication more subtle and, therefore, harder to discern. His function appears less to mirror and to reinforce an expected reader response and more to elicit one that may not be as immediate. That is, in judging the reality of what he encounters, Misnar not only invites readers to judge the believability of his experiences, but he explicitly draws attention to easily overlooked inconsistencies that indicate that he is under an enchantment. The example with which I began this dissertation will demonstrate this point. After deciding to abandon his fruitless quest to Mecca, Misnar encounters a group of men attacking a woman. The men flee the scene, and the woman explains that she has just escaped via a canal from Ulin's palace where she had been kept prisoner. She promises to lead Misnar to the palace when he strikes her dead. It had become apparent to Misnar during the course of their brief interaction that the woman in distress was really the evil genius, herself, in disguise.

Misnar offers a lengthy explication for his actions after-the-fact, suggesting that Ridley expects his readers to be baffled by the actions of his protagonist. Misnar explains to Ulin:

[266] Ballaster, *Fabulous Orients*, 317.

> That four ruffians should quit their prey at the sight of one man, did first stagger my credulity, and I expected at least, to find them return, and revenge my interposition; but when no one appeared to interrupt my security, I then began most to fear, and listened to thy tale as one, who expected to be ensnared by the wiles of thy hypocrisy. Thy tale, though artful, did happily contradict itself. Thy dishevelled garments were disposed in such an artful manner, as to excite desire rather than shame; they were also dry and clean, and contradicted your words, when you pretended you had swam across the canal. This strengthened my doubts, which you at length confirmed, by calling me, at the latter part of your history, *Sultan*. Then fled my doubt, and certainty succeeded. (307-8; emphasis in original)

Misnar moves from credulity to doubt and then, finally, to certainty. Because of the prevalence of increasingly credible narratives in his world, of illusions that are designed to pass for the real, Misnar is attuned to cracks in the story's logic, moments that signal he is under an enchantment. But, crucially, at the same time that he approaches the distressed woman's story with skepticism, he also listens as one "who expected to be ensnared." That is, he pretends to believe her story despite suspecting it to be a fabrication.

Whereas the genius figure in the Middle Ages had often signaled the need to discern truth from within a fabulous frame or covering, it signals in Ridley's fiction the need to tell the difference between the true and the fictitious. And, like all the moments of credible re-creations of the world discussed in this chapter, the moment with Misnar advertises itself as a deception by stressing its dissimilarity from—not just its similarity to—the world. For instance, Misnar sees through the woman's story because there are lapses in its logic that would not hold in reality. The woman, who claims she escaped by swimming in a canal, is dry. She addresses him as "sultan" when Misnar had not introduced himself as such. And so forth. To the skeptical character, the difference between the real and its believable re-creation is apparent. But the text does more than just depict a sharpened skepticism. It also encourages readers to adopt this attitude through such scenes that foreground descriptions of a character's process of judgment. The text invites readers to consider how the distressed woman's story is plausible enough to ensnare the credulous

reader, but also contains enough self-disclosing information to indicate to skeptical readers that they are under an enchantment. Until readers fully take for granted the concept of the credible fiction, and until ironic credulity becomes the default attitude with which they receive these narratives, skeptical characters like Misnar foreground the difference between the real and its believable re-creation. In doing so, they stress the epistemological difference between the two and model for readers how best to receive the latter, including Ridley's own "translation"/fiction: as one who expects to be, but does not actually become, ensnared.

What is possibly the most thorough meditation on reality and its representation to appear in oriental dress is Sheridan's 1767 novella *History of Nourjahad*, which was popular enough in its own time to be adapted for the stage as *Illusion: or, The Trances of Nourjahad*.[267] Practically ignored by critics and scholars since its publication, it has only recently begun to appear in studies of eighteenth-century literature, particularly those that seek to elevate the role of oriental fiction in contemporary prose developments.[268] Like Montagu and Ridley's fictions, *History of Nourjahad* recycles stock types and devices from the oriental fiction tradition including wondrous scenes, a genius figure, and, of course, what I have been calling "translated" characters, or characters who transform themselves to adopt believable, but false, personas. Its history also interestingly overlaps with that of *Mahomet: The Imposter*, a play staged by Sheridan's husband Thomas, the actor and theater director.[269] As such, the slipperiness between

[267] See *Illusion: or, The Trances of Nourjahad; An Oriental Romance in Three Acts* (London, 1813). While it may have been popular enough to be adapted for the stage, Jane Austen was apparently unimpressed with the performance: she writes to her sister, Cassandra, that 'We were too much tired to stay for the whole of Illusion (Nourjahad) which has 3 acts; -- there is a great deal of finery & dancing in it, but I think little merit." See Letter to Cassandra Austen, March 5, 1814, *The Letters of Jane Austen,* ed. Deirdre Le Faye (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995): 258-9.
[268] See Ballaster, *Fabulous Orients*, 140-3, and Aravamudan, *Enlightenment Orientalism*, 230-9.
[269] Thomas Sheridan's 1754 revival of the play, originally written by Voltaire in French (*Le Fanatisme, ou Mahomet le prophète*, 1736) and adapted by Miller and Hoadley into English (1744), ended in an infamous riot that resulted in the departure of the Sheridans from Dublin. See Chris Mounsey, "Thomas

the real and its believable re-creation unsurprisingly emerges as one of the central preoccupations of the tale. Unlike Montagu and Ridley's fictions, however, Sheridan's novella stages a more explicit intervention into ongoing debates about fiction. Specifically, whereas Montagu and Ridley invite readers to judge the believability of their scenes, Sheridan invites readers to consider the very notion of believability.

The plot is a complicated one: eager to promote Nourjahad to chief advisor against the wishes of his counselors, the sultan Schemzeddin decides to uncover the "real disposition" of his favorite candidate.[270] With the help of a number of willing participants, Schemzeddin creates an elaborate ruse intended to trick (and test) his friend: a visit by a "guardian genius" who convincingly grants Nourjahad's wish for infinite wealth and immortality leads him to believe that he is at the heart of a "marvellous" reality (13, 40). But there's a catch: Nourjahad's seemingly immortal life is interrupted by long bouts of sleep, thus appearing to completely deprive him of his physical and mental faculties for stretches at a time. Nourjahad embarks on his new life, heedless of any sense of responsibility toward others and falling into a morally bankrupt and hedonistic lifestyle. Three sleeping spells, that last about four, 40, and 20 years respectively, seemingly puncture his new existence. With the help of his servant Cozro (who is really Schemzeddin in disguise), Nourjahad comes to learn that these periods of unconsciousness follow moral breaches, an awareness that sets him on a path toward what is framed as a more ethical and virtuous life. This newfound moral conviction is not enough for Schemzeddin's illusion to lift, however. Instead, still under the influence of Schemzeddin's ruse, Nourjahad

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Sheridan and the Second Smock Alley Theatre Riot, 1754" *New Hibernia Review*/*Iris Éireannach Nua* 4.3 (Autumn 2000): 65-77, for a history of the riot. Sonja Lawrenson claims that Frances Sheridan started her oriental novella in 1764, around the same time she composed some lines about the riot (Sheridan's *Ode to Patience*). See "Frances Sheridan's 'The History of Nourjahad' and the Sultan of Smock-Alley" *Eighteenth-Century Ireland* 26 (2011): 27-8.

[270] Frances Sheridan, *The History of Nourjahad* (London: 1767), 6. Hereafter cited in text as *HN*.

finds his initially marvelous reality transformed into one of persecution. While out distributing Nourjahad's wealth to the kingdom's poor, Nourjahad and Cozro are seized by a new sultan's guards who refuse to believe they have broken a kingdom-wide curfew for the reasons given. It appears to Nourjahad that Cozro has been put to death and, refusing to disavow the "truth" of his reality, as he understands it, Nourjahad makes peace with what he believes is an impending death. It is at this point that a "loud burst of laughter" punctures the illusion, and Nourjahad is undeceived (218, 220).

It becomes almost immediately clear to readers that at stake in the simulated reality, despite its overall aim of providing moral instruction, is the status of its "truth." The sultan reprimands Nourjahad at each of their encounters during the farce not for his breaches of duty but for presenting a "forgery" and "outrageous falsehoods" (46, 47), assuming the role of an "impostor" (49), and "daring to impose on [his] credulity" with "incredible tales" (217, 46). What ultimately leads to the fiction's unraveling, moreover, is Nourjahad's steadfast belief that he has "spoken nothing but the truth" when it comes to his and Cozro's violation of the curfew, rather than, as one might expect, a declaration that he has mended his former ways. As is the case with the oriental fictions already discussed, the emphasis on the reality of what readers know to be simulated becomes an invitation to judge its believability. This is both because *History of Nourjahad* is clearly flagged as a fabulous tale, but also because a simulation of reality is part of the plot, itself. But the simulated reality's bifurcation into what are essentially two separate tales serves as an additional invitation, one that is not apparent in either Montagu or Ridley's fictions: readers are encouraged not only to compare the plots to each other, but also to judge each one on the form of "truth" it represents.

Unsurprisingly, as capturing "real life" becomes an expressed aesthetic aim for fiction, the notion of credibility likewise becomes a point of debate for writers, including Sheridan. In the "editor's" introduction to her *Memoirs of Miss Sidney Bidulph* (1761), Sheridan depicts the fictional editor and others in conversation about a story in which a leading hero meets an early death. The editor's neighbor finds the ending objectionable, whereas the editor's mother disagrees, judging it the more realistic alternative. She elaborates:

> Why should we not then allow the poet to copy from life, and exhibit to our view events, the probability of which are [sic] founded on general experience? We are indeed so much used to what they call poetical justice, that we are disappointed in the catastrophe of a fable, if every body concerned in it be not disposed of according to the sentence of that judge which we have set up in our breasts. The contrary we know happens in real life; let us not condemn what is drawn from real life.—We may wished to see nature copied from her more pleasing works; but a martyr expiring in tortures is as just, though not as agreeable, a representation of her, as a hero rewarded with the brightest honours.[271]

Contrary to the suggestion that writers should only imitate those "parts of nature, which are most proper for imitation," to quote Johnson again, the editor's mother offers an alternative prescription: bad things happen in real life, and so its imitation in narrative should include such representations. Those narratives that observe "poetical justice" may appeal to that internal "judge" who longs for fairness, but they are not representative imitations of the observable world.

It is important to note that the mother doesn't turn to the notion of credibility to make her point, but to probability. According to the above, a narrative's representation of the world should be judged according to the likelihood, and not exclusively the believability, of the events depicted. As I have argued, representations of what passes for the real in these narratives pass because they are believable as such—their performative efficacy is paramount. I demonstrated in the first chapter how the term probability referred to a number of ideas during this period—

[271] ---, *Memoirs of Miss Sidney Bidulph, Extracted from her Own Journal, And Now First Published*, 3 vols. (London: 1767), 7-8.

including credibility—but it's important to stress that the example given in the excerpt above of a "probable" event is anything but. Sheridan's example of a probable occurrence in eighteenth-century England—the example of a "martyr expiring in tortures"—is itself more aptly described as improbable. That is to say, it is hardly typical. But Sheridan uses this improbable example to speak to a larger point: her aim is to demonstrate how representations of real life have not been following "real life" as their model. While Sheridan reveals how it is the capacity of a narrative to convince its readers of its reality that authorizes its "imitation" and not, as one would expect, its accurately representative transcription of the world, she does so to stress the shortcomings of such an approach. Sheridan's novella, in fact, seems designed to underscore the downside of a developing realism that is grounded in credibility rather than probability; the fact that impossible events can acquire a veneer of authenticity if their performative efficacy is sound is not necessarily a good thing.

Sheridan illustrates this stance through the depiction of Nourjahad's "marvellous" simulated reality. Despite the overtly fabulous nature of the "incredible tale" that Nourjahad finds himself in—visits by a guardian genius, bouts of sleep that seem to last for years, and so forth—various confirmations of its assumed authenticity support its believability. That is, Nourjahad mistakes fiction for reality not because of a "troubled imagination which cheated him with this delusive promise" (13), as he worries initially, but because of mounting evidence, including the fabricated statements of witnesses, that make it impossible for him to believe otherwise. For instance, after waking from yet another manufactured sleeping spell, Nourjahad refuses to believe that his once young slave Cadiga is now an elderly woman until she shows him incontestable proof: an identifying birthmark (108). The testimonies of a host of other characters that flutter around Nourjahad only serve to further corroborate the false reality. To reject his

"marvellous" reality, then, is to reject both physical evidence (Cadiga's birthmark as well as the actual vial, which was "so substantial a proof of the reality of what had happened, leaving no room for doubts" (21)) and witness testimonies.[272] But, as Sheridan glosses it, Nourjahad's movement from marvelous reality to persecutory nightmare goes from an incredible tale to a probable/credible one. Schemzeddin's ruse is still in place, its believability confirmed by various forms of authentication, but ordinary, everyday activities replace visits by a genius figure and impossibly long bouts of sleep. Despite the simplicity of Nourjahad's new existence, however, it is still framed as no less wondrous, although it is his servant/sultan's virtuous example that now serves as a source of "awe" (151). While both simulated realities are convincing in their own way, Sheridan clearly means for readers to prefer this simpler fiction to its "marvellous" counterpart. They may both make claims to reality, that is, but only one is truly believable, even as they are both ultimately false.

Unlike Diana and Misnar, Nourjahad is no ideal model for readers. While he does represent a combination of credulity and skepticism in response to the wondrous things that he beholds, he too readily believes that which is impossibly real and makes no effort to question the truth-value of his "reality" with Cozro. Rather than explicitly represent an appropriate reader response, Nourjahad's function appears more to encourage readers to make alternative interpretations to those of the insufficiently skeptical protagonist. While various forms of proofs corroborate Nourjahad's marvelous reality, readers know that a veneer of authenticity is not

[272] As noted in Chapter 1 and above, the notion of probability was capacious enough to refer to a number of ideas: credibility, a text's inner consistency, and also fidelity to fact appealing to opinion or evidence. The issue of evidence naturally evokes the question of what counts *as* evidence (and *who* counts as a credible witness) within a legal framework, which may be an issue that Sheridan had in mind. For more on testimony, law, and probability, see Patey, *Probability and Literary Form*, particularly pp. 4-8. See also Barbara J. Shapiro, *Probability and Certainty in Seventeenth-Century England: A Study of the Relationships between Natural Science, Religion, History, Law, and Literature* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), particularly her chapter "Law," 163-93.

enough to render impossible situations credible. Unlike Nourjahad, readers knows that a visit from a genius figure, for instance, is incredible not only because the story is imaginary but because it is not substantiated by their own lived experiences. On the other hand, Nourjahad's tale of persecution contains nothing within it that stretches the bounds of believability. In fact, its credibility is increased because of its probability (as in the fact that it contains scenes of suffering that are meant to correspond to lived experience). While both simulated realities contain the capacity to convince—they both serve as credible re-creations of a world that is like the observable world—Sheridan intends for only one to emerge as convincing enough to serve as a legitimate representation of "real life," in a gesture toward the continued interrogation of the status and meaning of the idea of believability in fiction.



1. Frontispiece, James Ridley, *The Tales of the Genii: or, The Delightful Lessons of Horam, the Son of Asmar*, vol. 2, 3rd ed. (1766)

CHAPTER 4

REVIVING THE PAST IN WALPOLE AND REEVE'S GOTHIC FICTION

Clara Reeve, in her preface to *The Old English Baron* (1777), writes that "a sufficient degree of the marvellous, to excite the attention; enough of the manners of real life, to give an air of probability to the work; and enough of the pathetic, to engage the heart in its behalf" are required to bring together "the ancient romance and modern novel."[273] Reeve's tripartite schematic reads almost like a recipe, with its call for relative quantities and balances between narrative elements. Its inclusion of "the manners of real life" is particularly remarkable given that her *Baron* is the second self-styled "gothic story" to appear during this period, a mode of fiction hardly associated with realistic depictions of everyday life. In fact, her predecessor Horace Walpole, whose *The Castle of Otranto* (1764) inspires her own *Baron*, unsuccessfully unites the two prose forms, according to Reeve, because he overlooks this increasingly important narrative element: he fails to keep his story "within the utmost *verge* of probability" (vi), which results in a laughable, rather than laudable, "work of imagination" (vii).[274] Just as painters preserve the "*keeping*" in their works (vii),[275] so too, Reeve stresses, writers must maintain a

[273] Reeve, *The Old English Baron,* v, iii. Hereafter cited in text as *OEB*.

[274] The quotation in full: "The book we have mentioned is excellent in the two last points ["enough of the manners of real life" and "enough of the pathetic"], but has a redundancy in the first ["sufficient degree of the marvelous"]…the machinery is so violent, that it destroys the effect it is intended to excite. Had the story been kept within the utmost *verge* of probability, the effect had been preserved, without losing the least circumstance that excites or detains the attention. For instance; we can conceive, and allow of, the appearance of a ghost; we can even dispense with an enchanted sword and helmet; but then they must keep within certain limits of credibility: A sword so large as to require an hundred men to lift it; a helmet that by its own weight forces a passage through a court-yard into an arched vault, big enough for a man to go through; a picture that walks out of its frame; a skeleton ghost in a hermit's cowl:—When your expectation is wound up to the highest pitch, these circumstances take it down with a witness, destroy the work of imagination, and, instead of attention, excite laughter. I was both surprised and vexed to find the enchantment dissolved, which I wished might continue to the end of the book; and several of its readers have confessed the same disappointment to me: The beauties are so numerous, that we cannot bear the defects, but want it to be perfect in all respects" (v-vii, emphasis in original).

[275] Emphasis in original. The OED defines *keeping* as "The maintenance of the proper relation between the representation of nearer and more distant objects in a picture; hence, in more general sense, 'the

delicate equilibrium between imagination, probability, and sentimental appeal in fiction, a chord she seeks to strike in *Baron*. Too much or too little of any of them runs the risk of destroying the intended effect.

Hesitation quickly replaces Reeve's initial confidence in her literary capability, however, and its expression takes the shape of a familiar translation trope. She "begins to fear that it might happen to [her] as to certain translators, and imitators of Shakespeare: the unities may be preserved, while the spirit is evaporated" (vii). Reeve raises the specter of those translations or imitations that fail to capture the "spirit" of their sources to underscore the risk that sometimes accompanies literary endeavor: the production of an inert product. In other words, whether because following prescriptions for fiction is deadening or because an imitation is not the living original, Reeve worries that she might have produced a spiritless depiction of "real life." Walpole is in agreement and notes, in what could be seen as a reversal of the charge Reeve made against him, that, while *Baron* is "professedly written in imitation of *Otranto*," it is "so probable, that any trial for murder at the Old Bailey would make a more interesting story."[276] While Walpole agrees that there should be a "blend" of "imagination and improbability" with realistic depictions of "nature,"[277] he is primarily concerned with the under-use of the former in contemporary fiction. Reeve's "imitation"—her imitation of both *Otranto* and, given Walpole's aims for his text, of nature—is nothing more than a "*caput mortuum*,"[278] a crucial phrase that

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proper subserviency of tone and colour in every part of a picture, so that the general effect is harmonious to the eye' ([Frederick William] Fairholt); the maintenance of harmony in a composition." An excerpt of this definition is also cited in *The Old English Baron/The Castle of Otranto*, ed. Laura L. Runge (Glen Allen: College Publishing, 2002), 41, n. 6.

[276] *The Yale Edition of Horace Walpole's Correspondence*, ed. W.S. Lewis (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1937), 28: 381-2 [To Mason, April 8, 1778].

[277] Horace Walpole, *The Castle of Otranto, A Gothic Story*, 2nd ed. (London, 1765), vi. Hereafter cited in text as *CO*. All references from the preface to the second edition are also to this edition.

[278] *Horace Walpole's Correspondence*, 28: 382 [To Mason, April 8, 1778].

aligns Reeve's text with those failed translations described by Denham in the first chapter.[279] That is, Reeve has been unable to capture the "spirit" of multiple sources. Funnily enough, despite his valorization of "the powers of fancy" in fiction (*CO*, vi), Walpole deceptively presents his own *Otranto* in the preface to the first edition as a "translation." And, while he quickly admits authorship in the preface to the second edition, he still maintains his fiction is a "translation" of a kind in the same preface: he claims that *Otranto* is a reproduction of both nature and the "great master of nature, Shakespeare," in a sustained conflation of the acts of imitating the world and imitating a literary work (*CO*, viii).

This final chapter turns to the early gothic works of Walpole and Reeve to examine how each draws from the eighteenth-century discourse of translation in its call for a new form of fiction. Unsurprisingly, given its inaugural and foundational status, Walpole's *Otranto* has been given careful and sustained attention in scholarship. Despite the critical attention that has led to something like an over-dissection of the text, however, his deployment of translation metaphors has been overlooked. Even more surprisingly, Reeve's *Baron* as a whole, despite its status as the century's second gothic fiction and the first written by a woman, has received very little critical attention. As Abby Coykendall puts it, Reeve's treatment in scholarship has rendered her an "anomaly" in the gothic tradition, in large part because she "forsake[s] the genealogy that she seems to sanction."[280] As intimated above, even Walpole refused to acknowledge Reeve's claim that *Baron* was his "literary offspring" (*OEB*, iii), presciently anticipating (or helping to

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[279] As discussed in the first chapter, John Denham writes in the preface to his translation of Virgil in 1656 that in the "pouring out of one language into another, [poesie] will all evaporate; and if a new spirit be not added in the transfusion, there will remain nothing but a *caput mortuum*."

[280] Abby Coykendall, "Gothic Genealogies, the Family Romance, and Clara Reeve's *The Old English Baron*," *Eighteenth-Century Fiction* 17.3 (2005): 449, 444. Coykendall also notes that the "myopic consideration of women Gothic novelists" as writers who only write about their own gender has also contributed to Reeve's ambiguous status within the tradition (447); attempts to position her as the precursor to the "female gothic," that is, stand little chance given that there is a dearth of female characters in *Baron*.

determine) the ambiguous status that still accompanies Reeve's fiction. Reeve "shelters" her *Baron* under Walpole's "genius," only to modify his ideas into something he refuses to recognize. Ironically, part of Reeve's "problem" is that she follows Walpole at the same time that she distances herself from him, an equivocal stance that is perfectly consistent with the norms structuring contemporary translation discourse.

It's less important to me to prove the "gothicness" of Reeve's gothic fiction, or to provide a new way of thinking of the mode that would be inclusive of works like *Baron*. The point of this chapter, rather, is to demonstrate how these early gothic works—the two earliest instances of the mode—turn to translation to give shape to their ideas about the marvelous-probable fiction. By the time Walpole publishes *Otranto*, a concept of fiction distinct from either fact or deception is already established, but the precise contours of the credible fiction are still up for debate. And, as this chapter demonstrates, it is not the status of the *credibility* of credible fiction that animates Walpole, but, rather, the status of its *fictionality*. For him, signs of unreality in a fiction become signs through which an author can show his originality, signs that he also paradoxically associates with accurate historical representation, capturing national spirit, and imitating beloved authors. For Reeve, Walpole's overuse of such signs does threaten the credibility of his text; more importantly, she pairs this warning with an acknowledgment that the marvelous is nonetheless crucial to producing copies with "spirit." More generally put, turning to translation's operation in these gothic fictions helps to illuminate not only Reeve's contribution to the early gothic project, but also the ways in which both authors influenced the development of the credible fiction.

When *Otranto* was initially published, it was earnestly presented as a translation from medieval Italian to modern English. Its story is situated in Otranto, an actual town located on the eastern coast of Southern Italy, with a history that would have likely evoked thoughts of the centuries-long wars and skirmishes of the Crusades, particularly fears of Ottoman invasion. The title page of the first edition introduces the text as originally written in Italian by "Onuphrio Muralto," whom readers learn in the affixed preface likely composed it between 1095 and 1243,[281] and translated for contemporary readers by "William Marshal." Purportedly found in a family library, the manuscript was presented as a relic of "the darkest ages of Christianity" (*TP*, iii), a bygone era when people still believed in "every kind of prodigy" (v). In fact, the alleged translator asserts that the manuscript's account of "preternatural events," which he admits even the modern romance writer would find too outlandish, serves as a kind of corroboration of its historical authenticity: he notes that "an author would not be faithful to the *manners* of the times who should omit all mention of them" (v, emphasis in original). This call for a more circumspect approach to translating the products of the past is followed by a brief mention of the particularities of different languages and the difficulties that they can pose for the translator. The differences in the "variety and harmony" of English and Italian, for instance, are such that "Marshal" promises to publish the original Italian, should the translation meet with success; he will do this though it would "depreciate my own labour" (vii).[282] The translator, that is, reminds

[281] Horace Walpole, "The Translator's Preface," in *The Castle of Otranto, A Gothic Story,* 1st ed. (London, 1764), iii. Hereafter cited in text as *TP*.

[282] Marshal's claim that the publication of the original would "depreciate my own labor" could be read as a nod to the increasing subordination of the translator's rights to those of the author beginning in the latter half of the eighteenth century. For more on this, see Venuti, "Copyright," in *The Scandals of Translation*, 47-66.

readers that the text is foreign in two senses of the word: it is from another language (and speaks of people from an alien nation and culture), and it is also a product of an alien past.

As already argued, descriptions of translation in the eighteenth century gesture toward a gap between the source text and its translation that the translator can only bridge through his best approximation of the source. Despite the use of the image of metempsychosis and other related metaphors, the unimpeded flow of spirit between the author and translator is an acknowledged illusion, at once promoted and admitted as such. This is partly because of a perceived difference between languages, and partly because of an increasing sense of unbridgeable distance between historical periods. When Aphra Behn writes that she is "confident a French man a hundred years hence will no more understand an old edition of Froisard's *History*,[283] than he will understand Arabick," she is rendering explicit a notion of the past—even the recent past—as something akin to a foreign country.[284] But unlike the translators (real and imaginary) discussed so far, Walpole's Marshal emphasizes difference rather than following the standard approach of stressing an affinity between the author and translator or recalibrating a source text so that it conforms to the norms of the target language and culture. While he admits to being "prejudiced in favour of his adopted work," his partiality has not rendered him blind to his author's "defects" (vi), and his apology for the representation of "ancient errors and superstitions" of the past at no point registers the desire to omit them (iv). Moreover, while he admits that his translation has necessitated a certain amount of deviation from the original,[285] the publication of the original would certainly depreciate his own labor. That is to say, it is less an original in its own right than

[283] Jean Froissart's *Chronicles* (14th century).
[284] According to Behn, this is particular to French, however. She argues that Italian and Spanish, for instance, are "the same now" as they were "a hundred of years ago" but she does not elaborate as to why she believes this is the case. See Aphra Behn, Preface to *A Discovery of New Worlds, from the French* (London, 1688), n.p.
[285] "It is difficult in English *to relate* [from Italian] without falling too low or too high" (*TP*, vii, emphasis in original).

it is an admitted derivative of Muralto's work. Thus the goal is not to re-create the past in the present, but to show the past, in all its strange particularity, to the present. To take the claims made in the first preface seriously is to register a change from the desire for the translator to be both like and unlike his source author, and for the translation itself to exist in this equivocal mode, to more of an emphasis on the distance of author and source text from the translator and present-day readers. The illusion of re-creation is abandoned.

Of course, this call for something like a foreignizing approach to translation—an approach that would become the dominant aim of translation in the early nineteenth century with figures like Friedrich Schleiermacher at the head—is undermined by the second preface to *Otranto*, in which Walpole admits authorship. It turns out that the text is *not* a sign of a translator's minimal intervention but, rather, an invented work whose author, under the "borrowed personage of a translator" (*CO*, v), tries to pass off as a legitimate translation. Marshal emerges, in this sense, as something like Walpole's alter ego: the imagined translator advocates for a more literal approach to rendering otherness, despite one's reservations or judgments, for the sake of accuracy, whereas Walpole irreverently and intentionally blurs other and self, past and present, and fact and fabrication. This is not to say that the increasing sense of national and linguistic particularity toward which the imagined translator gestures is, itself, also an invention of Walpole's: as the century goes on, a conception of translation within a framework of the nation and its other—with even the past as other—does replace that of translation as the transmission of spirit, however imperfect, across languages and historical periods.[286] Marshal, despite his fictionality, accurately gauges future developments in translation discourse. Walpole, however, exploits and reframes the tension between imitation and creation still inherent in midcentury descriptions of translation to amplify his call for a new form of

[286] McMurran, 19.

fiction, conceived as a reaction against developing trends. Equally invested in endowing his work with an air of authenticity as a discovered manuscript from the past *and* in wholly admitting to its modern genesis, Walpole's first self-styled gothic work treads the line between the believable and the openly fabricated to become yet another re-creation of the world. This re-creation, however, while meant to resemble something like a past world, stresses and revels in its fictitious origin to a degree that is absent in the previously discussed fictions.

This isn't saying anything new. As mentioned, Walpole explicitly outlines his vision for a new form of fiction in the second preface to *Otranto*, stressing the importance of striking a balance between providing a copy of "nature" or "common life" and deploying the products of "imagination" or "fancy." It is these latter that he claims have been abandoned. Of *Otranto*, he writes:

> It was an attempt to blend the two kinds of romance, the ancient and modern. In the former all was imagination and improbability: in the latter, nature is always intended to be, and sometimes has been, copied with success. Invention has not been wanting; but the great resources of fancy have been dammed up, by a strict adherence to common life… The author of the following pages thought it possible to reconcile the two kinds. Desirous of leaving the powers of fancy at liberty to expatiate through the boundless realms of invention, and thence of creating more interesting situations, he wished to conduct the mortal agents in his drama according to the rules of probability; in short, to make them think, speak and act, as it might be supposed mere men and women would do in extraordinary positions. (*CO*, vi-vii)

Appalled by what he frames as the too-heavy reliance on the adherence to "common life" as the dominant aesthetic aim for fiction, he writes what could be considered a manifesto on the importance of an author drawing more from imagination.

When one considers the hazy line separating the image of a revived beloved author from an acknowledgement that it is only the translator's best approximation of his source material in descriptions of translation, it makes sense that Walpole would turn to the figure of the translator in his gothic text. After all, the text participates in the century's larger Gothic revival movement,

a movement based on the acknowledged simulation of the medieval past.[287] The two prefaces, in fact, when considered alongside one another, serve as an externalization of this tension.[288] As already noted, Marshal insists upon the authenticity of the "found" manuscript in the first preface. Readers are to consider the text as itself akin to the giant helmet that mysteriously falls from the sky or the enormous sabre that Frederic unearths from six feet under the ground: relics of a past that insist upon their recognition in the present. Technically, the text is a translation—and, therefore only a representation—of the thing itself (the "found" manuscript), but Marshal goes to great lengths to assure readers that his translation is as faithful as the process will allow. This is different from the imagined translators of Defoe or Montesquieu, who insist that their "authors" must "speak their own language or other people's language," but claim to omit passages they found unsuitable for Christian eyes.[289] Marshal, on the other hand, insists that readers accommodate the text's difference rather than the other way around. Walpole's second preface, of course, reveals the pretense. The text is not an actual relic of the past but a convincing simulation of one. On the one hand, then, the text solicits readerly faith in its declared enactment (the past has come to visit the present, so to speak), while, on the other, it discloses that it is wholly an imagined representation of it. Others have noted Walpole's oscillation between rousing the reader's belief and disbelief in *Otranto*,[290] as well as his "flirtation" with the

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[287] This largely architectural movement includes Walpole's Strawberry Hill, a mock gothic structure that he nicknamed his "little gothic castle" (*Horace Walpole's Correspondence*, 20: 111; To Mann, January 10, 1750).

[288] Walpole published the preface to the second edition (Apr. 1765) shortly after publishing the preface to the first (Dec. 24, 1764), and so, with the exception of about four months, eighteenth-century readers would have had access to both prefaces. See E.J. Clery, Introduction to *The Castle of Otranto* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), xi.

[289] Defoe, *A Continuation of Letters Written by a Turkish Spy in Paris*, v.

[290] Kareem also looks at Walpole's two prefaces, arguing that the first "rouses the reader's skepticism at its supernatural content even as its form as a "found" manuscript covertly exploits the reader's credulity," while the second "takes for granted the reader's skepticism and overly solicits poetic faith in the narrative's content" (146). She follows her discussion of the prefaces with a brief one on the text's narrative content, arguing that Walpole both "solicits suspense at the level of plot, but also suspense

"apparitional quality" of realist novels,[291] but how this tension resonates with ideas stemming from the contemporary discourse of translation has gone unnoticed.

Despite the claim to translation in the first preface, it is really the second preface that most fully discloses this relationship and it takes two distinct, but overlapping, forms: as just noted, Walpole evokes the tension between imitation and creation inherent in descriptions of translation in his emphasis on the simultaneous importance of copying nature and the use of imagination in fiction, but he also explicitly links copying nature with copying an author. The figure of Shakespeare, that is, is where imitating the world in fiction and literary imitation meet. Walpole resorts to this conceptual juggling to justify his mingling of tragedy and comedy, a blending of forms he anticipates will rile some of his readers. Offsetting the more serious behavior of the central characters is the comic behavior of the servants, a site of potential dissonance that Walpole justifies by appeal to both nature and the "great master of nature, Shakespeare," who Walpole notes, "was the model I copied" (*CO*, viii-ix). Walpole claims that, just as there is a difference between the behavior and expressions of "princes and heroes" and servants in the real world, so, too, would Shakespeare's *Hamlet* and *Julius Caesar* have lost a "considerable share of the spirit and wonderful beauties" if they had not included "the humour of the grave-diggers, the fooleries of Polonius, the clumsy jests of the Roman citizens" and so forth (viii, ix). To follow nature is to follow its inconsistencies *and* its former imitators.

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between engrossment and reflection" by casting doubt on the reliability of his own medium and by his use of the "odd" (147, emphasis in original). See Kareem, 145-50, for her full discussion.

[291] In *Ends of Enlightenment*, Bender describes the "capacity of realism to give us the impression of real things" as the "apparitional quality of realism," a quality that he argues gothic fiction writers "bring…to the surface," (104). Walpole's use of plain language, free indirect discourse (which Bender argues is the first sustained instance of it in English fiction), and his interest in putting ordinary people in extraordinary situations makes him a pioneering figure who "tapped into crucial aspects of realism as the defining features of the Gothic" (106-7).

Walpole follows his conflation of imitating the world in fiction and literary imitation with a description of his perceived orientation toward Shakespeare that is familiarly, albeit cryptically, nestled somewhere between the imperative to imitate and the imperative to create. It is worth quoting in full:

> The result of all I have said is to shelter my own daring under the canon of the brightest genius this country, at least, has produced. I might have pleaded, that having created a new species of romance, I was at liberty to lay down what rules I have thought fit for the conduct of it: but I should be more proud of having imitated, however faintly, weakly, and at a distance, so masterly a pattern, than to enjoy the entire merit of invention, unless I could have marked my work with genius as well as with originality. Such as it is, the public have honoured it sufficiently, whatever rank their suffrages allot to it. (xv-xvi)

Walpole's allusion to Shakespeare grasps the shift in conceptions of genius happening in the century as outlined in the preceding chapter: Shakespeare's genius emerges in the eighteenth century as a symbol for an innate talent that also comes to represent a notion of Englishness no longer bound by a link to antiquity.[292] It is, all at once, an allusion to the innate talent of a past author ("the brightest genius"), an increasing sense of national particularity ("the brightest genius *this country*…has produced"), and a sign of one's own powers of originality. Walpole acknowledges his "pattern" at the same time that he distances himself from it in order to make room for his own authorial interventions: his faint, weak, and loose imitation, in fact, will cease to be one if his own "genius" and "originality" shine through his work to the degree that he is able to "enjoy the entire merit of invention."

Walpole introduces a jumble of ideas. He links copying nature with copying Shakespeare. He also frames the act of following Shakespeare as something between imitation and creation. Following Shakespeare, moreover, becomes a means of reproducing what is framed as aspects of national genius, which Walpole suggests is uniquely—perhaps exclusively—able to represent

[292] See Golinelli, "The Concept of Genius and its Metamorphoses in Eighteenth-Century English Criticism."

local "*manners*." In the same preface, Walpole takes issue with Voltaire's dismissal of Shakespeare on the grounds of the latter's combination of tragedy and comedy, suggesting that the French writer's inability to appreciate Shakespeare's works may be owing to differences in national taste.[293] Furthermore, he cites Voltaire's justification of such blending in comedy upon the principle that "[*r*]*ien n'est si commun*" ("nothing is so common") than "*un mélange de serieux* [sic] *et de plaisanterie, de comique et de touchant*" ("a combination of gravity and humor, of the comic and moving"; *CO*, xi), and insists that this should be equally applicable to tragedy. Especially since it "ought to be," according to Walpole, also "a picture of human life" (xi). Walpole comes full circle then: to copy nature is to copy Shakespeare, and to copy Shakespeare is to copy "human life," the representation of which may differ depending on the national-literary system from which it emerges. To imitate, moreover, inevitably leads to creation, with the two forms of writing brought together in a blurry conflation to the degree that it becomes impossible to tell the difference between them. All this in a text that is an acknowledged re-creation of the forgotten past (and, moreover, a past that never was).

It has become a truism to note that it is impossible to glean a coherent and consistent statement from this text apart from incoherence and inconsistency, but one might venture to claim that the figure of Shakespeare, to Walpole, serves a similar purpose to the so-called "found" manuscript: Shakespeare becomes a sign of a literary past and a national particularity in need of renewed representation in the eighteenth century. And to emulate—as in, to make a

[293] In response to Voltaire's claim in "A M. Le Marquis Scipio Maffei," prefixed to *Mérope* (1743), that "[*c*]*es familiarités naturelles eussent été, à ce que je crois, bien recues dans Athenes; mais Paris et notre parterre veulent une autre espece de simplicité*" ("these natural familiarities would have been, as I believe, well received in Athens; but Paris and our theater want another kind of simplicity"), Walpole notes: "I believe this is the only instance in which it was ever pretended that thirty thousand persons, living near two thousand years after the aera in question, were, upon the mere face of the poll, declared better judges than the Grecians themselves of what out to be the manners of a tragedy written on a Grecian story" (*CO*, xiii-xiv).

"copy" of a "model"—in both cases is to aspire to that state between imitation and creation: to re-create one's source (source author, source text, or even aspects of the observable world as a source) so that the representation appears as its acknowledged simulation. *Otranto*, for instance, is not an imitation of any of Shakespeare's plays in the conventional sense but a sign of their re-creation for the eighteenth century, a re-creation that relies on Walpole's originality to bring them into renewed existence. Walpole's "rule" might be "nature," in other words (*CO*, viii), but this is not mimesis so much as it is a kind of realism grounded in performative efficacy—to quote Lynch and Kareem again—in a copy's capacity to be convincing as the original even as it drastically differs from it. Walpole positions himself as imitator/author not only to re-create aspects of a national "spirit," but also to revive a neglected literary tradition for the purpose of enlivening, so to speak, what he sees as a diminished state of fiction. These ideas will be briefly revisited in the last section, but the point to stress now is that while the models may have shifted from classical authors to more "local" ones, and ideas related to translation may have taken on a more nationalistic hue, Walpole's *Otranto* continues to demonstrate how notions of translation still had a kind of cachet when it came to theorizations of fiction.

The second self-styled "gothic story" to appear in English is Reeve's *The Old English Baron*, a fiction that she presents to her readers as the "literary offspring of the Castle of Otranto" and which she intends will serve as "a picture of gothic times and manners" (iii). Like *Otranto*, Reeve's text is presented to readers as a medieval manuscript, complete with breaks in the main narrative where in the interest of credibility, an "editor" inserts notes about the artifact's condition and legibility. Readers are to understand that the text is a reproduction of a family history, one that outlines the events leading to the restoration of a previously dispossessed house in medieval England. Like its predecessor, *Baron* is initially introduced to readers as a

translation/transcription of a "found" manuscript: Reeve published her fiction under the title *The Champion of Virtue* and made earnest claims for its authenticity as a document from the past that she only "translated" and "modernized."[294] This pretense was dropped in subsequent publications of her text, which first appears as *The Old English Baron* in 1778. Like its predecessor from its second edition onwards, *Baron* turns out to be no more than a credible narrative: it is a fiction intended to simulate (a past) reality, but it speaks of a reality that admittedly never was. Crucially, Reeve also claims that her simulation of a fictional past is an attempt to combine old and new literary forms, similarly turning to the discourse of translation in her preface to help articulate a call for a new form of fiction.

While she is against the supplanting of old forms by modern ones, it is the "modern novel," rather than a modern form of romance, that threatens to displace the "ancient romance" in Reeve's formulation (*OEB*, iii). The confusion with nomenclature was, as I noted earlier, an issue in its own time and has formed its own line of inquiry in scholarship.[295] For authors like Walpole and Reeve, however, it is really the growing divide between incredible and increasingly credible fictions that emerges as a central concern, one that cannot be perfectly mapped onto a discussion of genre.[296] Walpole and Reeve are in agreement that the "ancient romance" is a "heroic fable, which treats of fabulous persons and things," as Reeve notes in the first volume of *The Progress of Romance* (111). Or the genre, to re-quote Walpole, of "imagination and improbability" (*CO*, vi). Its language is "lofty and elevated," and it "describes what never

[294] Reeve writes in the preface to *The Champion of Virtue*, of which her preface to *Baron* is almost a perfect replica, (Colchester, 1777): "a certain friend of mine was in possession of a manuscript in the old English language…and if it were modernised, might afford entertainment to those who delight in stories of this kind. Accordingly…I transcribed, or rather translated a few sheets of it" (vii).
[295] For different approaches to the question of the difference and/or similarity in the novel and romance forms, see Aravamudan, *Enlightenment Orientalism*, Davis, *Factual Fictions*, Doody, *The True Story of the Novel*, McKeon, *The Origins of the English Novel*, and Turner, "'Romance' and the Novel in Restoration England."
[296] See Turner, "'Romance' and the Novel in Restoration England."

happened nor is likely to happen" (*PR*, 111). By contrast, the increasingly dominant form of fiction to emerge in the eighteenth century—what Walpole and Reeve variously refer to as the modern romance or novel, but by which they mean the same thing—is a "picture of real life and manners, and of the times in which it was written" (*PR*, 111), where writers attempt to copy "nature" (*CO*, vi). It is realistic in a way that the older form of romance never pretended to be, taking not abstractions or ideals of human behavior, but "real life" as its model. As already noted, Reeve crucially elaborates on the realistic quality of this new form of fiction, drawing attention to both its appearance of probability and its ability to "deceive us into a persuasion (at least while we are reading) that all is real" (*PR*, 111). Reeve's emphasis on technique dwarfs her emphasis on content. As she suggests, it is fiction's capacity to familiarly relate, naturally represent, and give the appearance of probability that enables it to convince readers of its reality.

Like Walpole, Reeve does not accept that the separation of incredible and credible fictions into different categories is irreversible. For her, gothic fiction should simultaneously preserve an "air of probability" and include a "sufficient degree of the marvellous." As expressed by the trope of the "found" manuscript, it should simultaneously solicit belief and disbelief, pointing both to the convincing and to the illusory nature of its representations. Reeve's prescription for gothic fiction is not all that different from her understanding of the novel, which should resemble the world it describes in the sense that it should simulate the experience of being in the world. This is not the world *as it is*, however, but only an imagined world that is something *like* it. This impression of reality—what Reeve glosses as a kind of "enchantment" in her preface to *Baron*—is crucial for both the novel and gothic fiction. While Reeve explicitly notes her debt to Walpole, *Baron* represents a critical departure: she does not need to make claims to historicity for her narrative to solicit readerly faith in its contents. It is enough for her

descriptions to stay with "certain limits of credibility." Of course, Reeve's worry that she has failed to capture "spirit" registers a hesitation that her formula for fiction may not work in practice. It is admittedly unclear what Reeve's means by "spirit": has she failed to render the "spirit" of "real life" in the eighteenth century, or the "spirit" of a past age? Or, as Walpole suggests, has she failed to capture the "spirit" of the literary predecessor to her work, *Otranto*? She believes her fiction is credible *enough*, but suggests that staying within the bounds of believability is not enough to help readers fall under fiction's "enchantment." This problem will be further nuanced in the last section of this chapter, but Reeve's worry that to copy involves more than merely to strictly follow a source is not a new one. That is, though her reference to the image of metempsychosis is admittedly oblique compared to Walpole's, Reeve's turn to the notion of "spirit" shows how the problems of translation have become the problems of credible fiction.

While re-creating the imagined world of the past—and through that, the world of the present—becomes the explicit aim of Walpole and Reeve in their early gothic works, it is worth noting briefly that "Mahometan" lands do emerge, albeit in muted form, as a backdrop in their fictions. This is unsurprising given that the events of both stories are said to have happened during the time of the Crusades, between the first and last crusade in *Otranto*, and right before the Ottoman empire's capture of Istanbul in 1453 in *Baron*. Including references to this particular region of the world would be part of the task of building the credibility of both fictions. A commitment to historical accuracy is supplemented, however, with a recycling of stock tropes and devices that either originate with or are popularized by the oriental fiction tradition, a tradition with which both Walpole and Reeve were closely familiar.[297] That is to say

[297] In 1785, Walpole published *Hieroglyphic Tales*, a collection modeled after *The Arabian Nights*, and Reeve affixed the oriental tale, "The History of Charoba, Queen of Aegypt," which she claims on its title

that these gothic fictions also evoke Mahometan oriental fictions, with their dominant themes of imposture and counterfeiting. While "prisoner to the infidels" in historic Palestine, Frederic has a dream that leads him to a "venerable hermit" who helps him uncover material evidence that proves Manfred is the false prince of Otranto; Walpole, that is, links the region with stories that stretch the limits of believability (*CO*, 130-131). In *Baron*, the religious convert M. Zadisky, "of Greek extraction, but brought up by a Saracen officer," bookends a fiction that is arguably obsessed with the task of proving "the reality of my claim, and the identity of my person;" a "translated" character, in other words, is linked with the preoccupation with credible identity (*OEB*, 2, 3). The slipperiness between what is real and what is only its convincing representation is not only a tension these fictions exploit in their structure, that is, but it also forms a central thematic concern that has implications beyond the nature of credible fiction.

TRANSLATED HISTORIES

The relationship between Walpole's inaugural gothic fiction and eighteenth-century historical writing has been a generative subject in recent scholarship.[298] His *Catalogue of the Royal and Noble Authors* (1758-86), *Anecdotes of Painting in England* (1762-96), and *Historic Doubts on the Life and Reign of Richard III* (1768) all offer overt interrogations of established norms of historical writing,[299] making this documented preoccupation something like an invisible thread that runs through his various projects. Unsurprisingly, Walpole's interest in history and its

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page is "taken from a history of Ancient Aegypt, according to the traditions of the Arabians," to *The Progress of Romance*, also published in 1785.

[298] See Abby Coykendall, "Chance Enlightenments, Choice Superstitions: Walpole's Historic Doubts and Enlightenment Historicism," *The Eighteenth Century* 54.1 (2013): 53-70; Jonathan Dent, "Contested Pasts: David Hume, Horace Walpole and the Emergence of Gothic Fiction," *Gothic Studies* 14.1 (2012): 21-33; Ruth Mack, "Horace Walpole and the Objects of Literary History," *English Literary History* 75.2 (2008): 367-87; and Sean R. Silver, "Visiting Strawberry Hill: Horace Walpole's Gothic Historiography," *Eighteenth-Century Fiction* 21.4 (2009): 535-64.

[299] See Coykendall, "Chance Enlightenments" for a discussion of these texts.

representation also surfaces in his collection of absurd and nonsensical oriental tales, although it is couched within a meditation on the nature of fictional writing. *Hieroglyphic Tales* (1785) concludes with the following postscript to the collection:

> They [the collection of tales] deserve at most to be considered as an attempt to vary the stale and beaten class of stories and novels, which, though works of invention, are almost always devoid of imagination. It would scarcely be credited, were it not evident from the *Bibliotheque* [sic] *des Romans*, which contains the fictitious adventures that have been written in all ages and all countries, that there should have been so little fancy, so little variety, so little novelty, in writing in which the imagination is fettered by no rules, and by no obligation of speaking truth. There is infinitely more invention in history, which has no merit if devoid of truth, than in romances and novels which pretend to none.[300]

Despite its inclusion here as almost an afterthought, Walpole renders explicit his belief in the proximity of historiography to that of fictional writing.

The interrogation of historical writing from within the parameters of fiction is not unique to Walpole. It has been argued that the novel emerged as a distinct category in the middle of the eighteenth century because of its "oppositional collaboration with history," having become a means through which to critique historiography.[301] While staying within the bounds of what Everett Zimmerman terms the "verifiably referential" is meant to distinguish historical writing from fictional writing, the reference to actual events in the latter, and the inclusion of plausible or even invented information in the former, blurred the line between the two for many writers.[302] Additional points of convergence were noted, some made by fictional characters purporting to be real themselves: Fielding's narrator in *Joseph Andrews*, for example, insists that readers should turn to histories (what he calls romances) for accurate descriptions of "countries and cities," but

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[300] Horace Walpole, *Hieroglyphic Tales* (Strawberry Hill, 1785), postscript.
[301] Everett Zimmerman, *The Boundaries of Fiction: History and the Eighteenth-Century British Novel* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996), 14, 4. Quotation from 14. Zimmerman looks specifically at conventional eighteenth-century novels, but he does briefly mention Walpole's *Otranto* as an example of eighteenth-century fiction that interrogates historical writing. See 51-2.
[302] Ibid., 13, 2. Quotation from 2. Zimmerman discusses how Samuel Richardson's *Clarissa* (1748), Fielding's *Tom Jones* (1749), and Lawrence Sterne's *Tristram Shandy* (1759), among others, interrogate norms of historical writing.

to "biographies" (such as the fictional *Joseph Andrews*) for accurate delineations of "the lives of great men," even if such "biographies" often "mistake the age and country" where events happened.[303] The narrator goes on to assert that he describes "not men, but manners; not an individual, but a species," whose truthfulness can be verified by general human experience, which points to what Gallagher phrases a "greater referentiality."[304] Thus he claims a form of probable truth that can't be found in those histories that narrow their focus to verifiable fact, suggesting that a more vivid picture of the past can be found in fiction than in history.[305]

Walpole's *Otranto* and Reeve's *Baron* join a large number of eighteenth-century fictions that interrogate the nature of historical writing, efforts that did not go unnoticed in their own time. While it may be hard to believe now, even Scott, the acknowledged founder of the historical novel, recognized that parts of *Otranto* were making sincere claims to historicity: he notes that Walpole's "object" was "to draw such a picture of domestic life and manners during the feudal times as might have actually existed, and paint it chequered and agitated by the action of supernatural machinery, such as the superstition of the period received as a matter of devout credulity."[306] That is, the supernatural descriptions are put to historical effect, helping to create a portrait of a past world, and not exclusively entertainment value. The portraits of the past in both *Otranto* and *Baron*, then, might include actual events such as the Crusades, attest to some form of probable representation, or attempt to creatively document the beliefs of the past. The crowning gesture of both fictions, however, is that they are meant to serve as creative instances of what Sean R. Silver has termed "gothic historiography;" more materially oriented, this

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[303] Fielding, *Joseph Andrews*, 162-3. Zimmerman also makes this point on 24-5.
[304] Fielding, 164; Gallagher, 342.
[305] Zimmerman, 25-6. Aristotle makes a similar contrast between history and poetry (literature) in *Poetics*: he argues that history relates actual, particular events whereas poetry relates likely/probable events. See Aristotle, *Poetics*, in *Poetics. Longinus: On the Sublime. Demetrius: On Style*, trans. and ed. Stephen Halliwell, Loeb Classical Library 199 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995) 58-9.
[306] Walter Scott, *Lives of the Novelists* (Philadelphia, 1825), 128. Mack makes a similar point on 370-71.

approach to history emphasizes the narrative that objects tell, so to speak, stories seen as upending the written narratives of early Enlightenment historians such as David Hume.[307]

Hume and Walpole were aware of each other's works, even entering into documented dialogue about issues related to the construction of historical narrative. Their relationship has been a subject of interest for scholars, with one going so far as to claim that *Otranto* could be viewed as a "bold response" to Hume's historiography, which is most fully epitomized by his eight-volume *History of England* (1754-62).[308] Put in its most straightforward form, the accounts unearthed by a gothic historiography, which are framed as multiple, haphazard, and irrational, are purposefully constructed in contrast to the sweeping narratives of Enlightenment historiography, characterized by a veneer of causality, consistency, and authority. To cite a major point of contention between the two "historians," Walpole censured Hume's lack of documentation in his early volumes,[309] a charge that, while it led to Hume's adoption of the now routine practice of identifying citations, exemplified his dismissal of what he framed as "laborious and disagreeable" study.[310] It was precisely this, however, that attracted antiquarians like Walpole. In fact, this interest in historical minutiae helps explain the collection of oddball items that Walpole proudly displayed at his mock gothic castle, Strawberry Hill, as well as the fundamental role that a number of mysterious objects play in *Otranto*. In fact, from the fiction's outset, the mysterious gargantuan helmet that comes crashing down upon Otranto, crushing the

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[307] See Silver, "Visiting Strawberry Hill." Silver's discussion is exclusively on the writings and architectural achievements of Walpole, but Reeve's *Baron*, as the "literary offspring" of *Otranto*, is relevant to this discussion as well.
[308] Dent, 21. See his "Contested Pasts," Coykendall's "Chance Enlightenments," and Silver's Visiting Strawberry Hill" for examples of studies that examine the relationship between Walpole and Hume, and from which the following discussion draws.
[309] See Horace Walpole, *A Catalogue of the Royal and Noble Authors of England*, vol. 2 (Strawberry Hill, 1758), 86-7.
[310] *Letters of David Hume*, ed. J. Y. T. Greig, vol. 1 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1932), 152: 285 [To Horace Walpole, August 2, 1758], in *The Complete Works and Correspondence of David Hume* (Charlottesville: Intelex Corp., 1995). See also Coykendall, "Chance Enlightenments," 57-8, 61.

heir, and thereby throwing Manfred's (false) claim to the castle into disarray, could be seen as a dramatization of Walpole's historiography: it is an emphasis on the surprise appearance of hitherto unknown details, often in material form, that insist upon their recognition as they disrupt previously held beliefs. The shock, astonishment, or even horror, that these details elicit, moreover, are not just for entertainment, but function as what Silver describes as qualities of realism that assert their own "irrational, and inconvenient, materiality."[311]

Embedded within the project of gothic historiography is the concomitant consolidation of what Abby Coykendall terms "gothic empiricism." Seen as a reaction to the dominant Enlightenment tendency to regard sense perception and deductive reason with a kind of unexamined "religiosity," gothic empiricism emerges to call attention to the ways that the products of imagination can compete with the beliefs moored by empirical reasoning.[312] Coykendall argues that Walpole's *Otranto* serves as a refutation of Hume's contention in *A Treatise of Human Nature* (1739-40) that the "reveries of a castle-builder" are no match for the "impressions of our senses," which he argues, are "more strong, firm, and vivid."[313] But Hume's point is actually more complicated, and it is worth quoting the relevant excerpt in full. He writes:

> Nothing is more evident, than that those *ideas, to which we assent*, are more strong, firm, and vivid, than the loose reveries of a castle-builder. If one person sits down to read a book as a romance, and another as a true history, they plainly receive the same ideas, and in the same order; nor does the incredulity of the one, and the belief of the other, hinder them from putting the very same sense upon their author. His words produce the same ideas in both; though his testimony has not the same influence on them. The latter has a more lively conception of all the incidents. He enters deeper into the concerns of the persons: represents to himself their actions, and characters, and friendships, and enmities: he even goes so far as to form a notion of their features, and air, and person. While the

[311] Silver, 551.
[312] Coykendall, "Chance Enlightenments," 53. She writes further: "*Otranto* is a seminal instantiation not just of gothic literature, but of what might be called gothic empiricism, in that it undercuts the disavowed textuality and strained circularity of Enlightenment discourse, and installs in their place a stringent skepticism in which sense perception and deductive reason enjoy far less certain though fair more conscientious sway" (63).
[313] Coykendall, "Chance Enlightenments," 65.

> former, who gives no credit to the testimony of the author, has a more faint and languid conception of all these particulars, and, except on account of the style and ingenuity of the composition, can receive little entertainment from it."[314]

Because readers already have a considerable amount of faith in the veracity of a "true history," the descriptions appear more "strong, firm, and vivid" than those found in a romance, which is why Walpole claims in the first preface that the story is a translation of a manuscript that was "found in the library of an ancient Catholic family in the north of England" (*TP*, iii). That is, Walpole contests the idea of history offering a "more lively conception" even as he has to acknowledge the general public opinion on the subject, an equivocation that is crucial to his ideas about both historical and fictional writing.

Like Coykendall, Jonathan Dent similarly points to the subversion of empirical reasoning within the project of the gothic, arguing the related point that the use of the supernatural in *Otranto* "subverts the normative ways of perceiving reality (and the past) endorsed by Enlightenment historiography."[315] Thus this is not just a case for the potential equivalence in the strength and vividness between products of imagination and empirical reasoning, but also for the unique capacity of imagination to render the historical past for eighteenth-century readers. The point is not to suggest that Walpole and Reeve argue for the replacement of one mode of historiography over another, however. As Dent has noted, their aim is less to advocate for a specific approach to the study of the past (although Walpole's emphasis on material history does point to a possible methodology),[316] and more a concerted effort to emphasize the illusory nature of historical accounts that purport to be all-encompassing, authoritative, and, above all,

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[314] David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature* in *The Complete Works and Correspondence of David Hume*, 97. My emphasis.
[315] Dent, 28.
[316] Ibid., 31.

objective. Or, to return to Walpole's postscript to *Hieroglyphic Tales*, there is "infinitely more invention in history" than in even the fictional romance or novel.

Underlying Walpole's assertion, however we judge it, is the recognition that historical writing and credible fiction share an essential narrative strategy: both represent worlds that are like contemporary or past worlds in the sense that they are re-creations of them. They do not provide unmediated access to their worlds, nor do they exclusively confine themselves to, to use Zimmerman's term again, the verifiably referential. Writers of historical accounts that do limit themselves to the verifiably referential are more aptly termed "topographers or chorographers," according to Fielding's fictional narrator.[317] Readers won't find a vivid picture of the past with them. Despite the veneer of authenticity of historical accounts, then, their representations often rely on conjecture and probability, and are mediated by the writer's subjectivity and the norms of her historical period, among other things. Recognition of this fact is what drives Walpole's imagined translator to insist in the first preface to *Otranto* that an author must include descriptions of superstitious beliefs in accounts of the past even if he does not subscribe to them himself.[318] Historical accounts that do not attempt to present the past on its own terms, Marshall/Walpole implies, are only disclosing the subjective and ideological preconceptions of their writers. It is precisely this enactment and interrogation of historical interpretation and narrative that has led Zimmerman to note that eighteenth-century fictions like *Otranto* are "not commonly historical fiction, but very often [they are] *historicized* fiction."[319]

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[317] Fielding, 162.
[318] The quotation in full: "Belief in every kind of prodigy was so established in those dark ages, that an author would not be faithful to the *manners* of the time who should omit all mention of them. He is not bound to believe them himself, but he must represent his actors as believing them" (*TP*, v, emphasis in original).
[319] Zimmerman, 51.

Dent explicitly points to Walpole's impersonation of a translator to argue that the gothic foregrounds the representational quality of historical narratives through its reference to translation: "all historians can be compared to translators," he writes, "in the sense that they can only ever generate linguistic *representations* (or approximations) of the past." He argues that, in response to Hume's attempt at objectivity, the gothic turns to the motif of the translated manuscript to remind its readers that historical narratives are not *the* past, but only its "*substitute*."[320] While making no mention of translation, Ruth Mack makes the opposite case for the relation between historical reality and historical representation in *Otranto*. Drawing from F. R. Ankersmit's argument that historical reality and its representation are "ontologically equivalent," in the sense that they share a relation of replacement rather than reference, Mack argues that *Otranto* suggests that historical representation is "not a shadow of its original but like it in kind."[321] She offers Walpole's use of the mysterious object that appears at the text's opening as an illustration of her argument: after the astonishing appearance of an oversized helmet that falls and kills Manfred's heir Conrad, Theodore points out that it looks almost identical to a helmet on a statue at a local church. Of course, the statue is a memorial to Alfonso, the former prince of Otranto, and Theodore is unknowingly his true heir. But Mack's point is that neither object—neither the gigantic helmet that falls from the sky and serves as the impetus for the narrative's main actions nor the helmet on the statue of Alfonso—is the original relic. They are

[320] Dent, 26, emphases in original. Dent further writes: "The device of the discovered manuscript (and the difficulties involved in its translation) undermines Hume's rational historiographical interpretations by revealing that historical representations are necessarily distortions of a past whose real character can never be objectively transmitted."

[321] F. R. Ankersmit writes in *Historical Representation* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001): "Epistemology relates words to things, whereas representation relates things to things…The paradigmatic model of description is the true statement: the subject-term of the statement identifies and refers to a thing in reality whereas its predicate-term attributes a certain property to it. This distinction between subject- and predicate-term cannot be made in representations. If we look at a painting or a photograph we cannot distinguish between components that refer and those that attribute. And this is what we would expect, since representations and what they represent are ontologically equivalent" (12). See also Mack, 379-80.

only its representations. Despite their representational status, Walpole still endows the objects with a quality of legitimacy, suggesting that the past "comes alive" through a process that "takes history and the historical object as the same kind of representation."[322]

Despite Dent's use of the term "substitute," his argument relies more on the assumption that the relation between historical reality and its representation is one of reference rather than replacement. While he also references Ankersmit's study, Dent, as noted above, explicitly states that the motif of the translated manuscript foregrounds the *representational* nature of historical narrative.[323] Translation, here, is used as a reminder that the historical narrative is a replacement only in the sense that it is an imperfect and distorted one, continuing to gesture back toward an original. Dent's claim for imperfect substitution by the historical object, then, and Mack's for its equivalence, offers two contrasting arguments for access to historical reality. On the one hand there is the belief that the representation remains derivative, and, on the other, a belief that it offers the same kind of representation as its original. While focusing their study on works of art, Alexander Nagel and Christopher S. Wood offer a third possibility with their idea of the "anachronic:" to describe an object as anachronic is to acknowledge a "double historicity," or a recognition that artifacts may be at once regarded as "fabricated" and as though "they were old

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[322] Mack, 381. It's worth pointing out that the mysterious helmet that figures so heavily in *Otranto* recalls the gold helmet of Mambrino, a fictional Moorish king who features first in *Cantari di Rinaldo* and then later in several chivalric romances, with even a brief mention in *Don Quixote*: "Thou hast spoke very much to the purpose, and hit the nail on the head, replied Don Quixote, therefore I annul my oath, so far as it regards my revenge, but I make and confirm it anew, to lead the life I have mentioned, until such time as I can take by force as good a helmet as this from some other knight; and thou must not think, Sancho, that I am now making a smoke of straw; for, I know very well whom I imitate in this affair; the same thing having literally happened about the helmet of Mambrino, which cost Sacripante so dear," (105).

[323] The lines in question are reproduced here in full: "Walpole's 'translator' is a stark reminder that, despite Hume's longing for a certain amount of objectivity in historical writing, all historians can be compared to translators in the sense that they can only ever generate linguistic *representations* (or approximations) of the past. By highlighting that historical knowledge is as much *engineered* by language and narrative structures as it is *discovered* in archives, Otranto significantly undermines Hume's historiography. From its very inception, the Gothic draws attention to history not as the past, but as a *substitute* for the past" (Dent, 26, emphasis in original).

very old things."[324] Contemporary translation discourse, as I have argued, offers a similar equivocal orientation for the production of text: like the translation that is a re-creation of its original, that is both an original in its own right and an approximation of a source text, historical representation finds itself in a slippery orientation toward the reality it purports to represent. Dent is right to suggest that Walpole's impersonation of a translator provides a key to his thoughts on historical writing, but it is not done solely to foreground the "contrived nature of all historical representations," as he puts it.[325] Walpole's impersonation also points to the capacity of historical and fictional writing to revive past worlds. Put another way, Walpole suggests that historical representation should be *like* the reality it aims to represent, should give readers a glimpse into a past world as though it has miraculously reappeared in the contemporary age. In this way, Walpole suggests that historical narrative should aim to be both representative *and* like its original in kind, something between a derivative and its own original—anachronic as opposed to anachronistic. It is the past miraculously born anew at the same time that it is admittedly only its convincing simulation.

To be sure, what functions as the "source" here is certainly not the *actual* past even as Walpole creates an opportunity for readers to experience a world that he suggests is something *like* it. Walpole clearly acknowledges the imaginative origin of his supernatural descriptions in the second preface but nonetheless makes a case for the historical value of their effects in the first. In claiming that he intends to be "faithful to the *manners* of the time" through his depictions

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[324] Alexander Nagel and Christopher S. Wood write in *Anachronic Renaissance* (New York: Zone Books, 2010): "This was not a matter of collective naiveté or indolence, but rather a systematic self-delusion, a semidelusion, designed to extract from the artifact the maximum possible referential reach" (29). They term this form of "hesitation" in a work of art "anachronic" as opposed to "anachronistic," to stress "the temporal instability of the artwork, and its re-creation of the artwork as an occasion for reflection on that instability" (13).

[325] Dent, 26. Dent does note that Walpole demonstrates that imagination "should be embraced as a valuable tool in making the past 'live,'" but he does not link this with Walpole's deployment of translation discourse (28).

of superstitious belief, Walpole acknowledges the value of giving readers an approximation of what it might have been like to live in a past world through that world's eyes, so to speak. Another way of framing this is that an imagined past perspective replaces the imagined foreign perspective, and instead of seeing something like their own world through "foreign" eyes, readers see what is meant to be representative of a past world filtered through what are posited as past discursive registers. As noted in the preceding section, it is not the familiar made to seem foreign, but an acknowledgment of the already foreign past. Of course, once the fictionality of the first preface is admitted, the world of *Otranto* simultaneously functions as a representation of something like a past world *and* an "extraordinary" one peopled with "mere men and women" who "never lose sight of their human character" (*CO*, vii). Even this extraordinary and improbable world, that is, must still have the capacity to convince its readers of the realistic quality—not the reality—of its world even as it explicitly discloses its fictionality.

Despite Walpole's confirmation that *Otranto* is not actually a "found" manuscript, the initial pretense (and, later, recognized conceit) still proposes a view of history and its representation that is only further advanced by the central focus of the narrative's plot. It is arguably the use of the "restoration of previously dispossessed houses" device in *Otranto*, which *Baron* also reproduces, that most fully thematizes the simultaneously credible and constructed nature of historical representation. It is in the shape of a family history, however, that both texts stage their intervention, specifically in the shape of a family estate buttressed by forms of representation that appear to validate the claims of its current owner. Manfred is the seemingly indisputable prince of Otranto, a family will having authorized his inheritance of the titled estate. Lord Fitz-Owen of *Baron*, similarly, has legitimately purchased the Lovel estate from his brother-in-law, the lawful holder of the estate's title. Their claims to their estates are as credible

as—it turns out—they are fabricated, the will in Otranto turning out to be "fictitious" (*CO*, 196), and the existing Lord Lovel having acquired the title by murdering its previous holder, thus rendering any transaction under authorization invalid. The image of legitimacy and authority in the shape of these estates and their owners' claim to them turn out to be deceptive, despite their initial credibility and persuasiveness. It is an image that only appears credible to the characters in each story, however; both Walpole and Reeve alert their readers at the outset to the instability of estate ownership and, relatedly, to the prevalence of credible but false representations. Put another way, they each demonstrate how easy it is to create a counterfeit world.

Readers know to question Manfred's claim to Otranto from the text's first page. A prophecy has haunted his tenure, one that obliquely signals to readers that this first gothic story is about the exhumation of the buried past: "*That the castle and lordship of Otranto should pass from the present family, whenever the real owner should be grown too large to inhabit it*" (2-3, emphasis in original). Manfred's tenants suspect there is something about the prophecy that alarms their prince, but it is "difficult to make any sense of [it]" (3). They have no reason to doubt his standing. In keeping with the special status that material objects hold for Walpole, a host of mock relics appear to expose Manfred's fictitious, and narrative-based, claim. Some of these are represented as literally being unearthed from below the ground (the "enormous sabre," 132), while others fall from the sky (the "enormous helmet," 5) or materialize out of thin air (the various oversized limbs that appear throughout the castle, 39, 177, the hermit's skeleton, 182).[326] Spectators unsurprisingly react with variations of "astonishment" and "horror" at these objects

[326] Of course, the hermit's skeleton is not quite a "material" object in the way that the narrative represents the sabre and helmet, simultaneously described as akin to a living being (Frederic initially mistakes the robed skeleton, when its back is to him, for a real person) and as a "scepter," "phantom," and "apparition" who vanishes after relaying his message (182). "Alfonso's shade," furthermore, which appears toward the text's end and has no "physical" quality, functions in much the same way as the material/pseudo-material objects in the text: it suddenly appears to offer counter-historical information (195).

(132, 5), their gargantuan proportions and/or otherworldly character emphasizing their irrationality.[327] Their sudden appearance and shock value are central to Walpole's gothic historiography, propelling their spectators to reexamine and interrogate what had been hitherto regarded as incontestable historical truth. These objects do not fit in the counterfeit world, their sudden presence forcing an acknowledgment of how the counterfeit world's construction required the exclusion of the stories that the objects represent.

A similar story forms the plot of *Baron*. Upon returning from his military incursions abroad, Sir Philip Harclay sets out to see his friend, Lord Lovel, only to discover that he has passed away and that his heir has sold the estate to his brother-in-law. Reinforcing this sense of confusion is the concurrent preoccupation with estate ownership, signaled by Sir Philip's own legal troubles. Upon his return to England, he discovers that not only has his family died, but his estates have been sequestered and he must "prove the reality of his claim, and the identity of his person" in order to have them returned to him (3). From the outset, that is, readers are alerted to the fragility of claims to ownership, a state of affairs that Sir Philip suggests is part of the modern age: before discovering that his friend Lord Lovel has died, he observes that it's "strange" that even "in his own neighbourhood, and where his ancestors had usually resided" nobody knows who he is (4). There had been a time, Sir Philip suggests, when claim to ownership was verified through recognition and not legal forms of corroboration as he finds is the case now with his own estate. Under the shadow of questions of legitimacy, then, Sir Philip learns of this strange change of hands to the Lovel estate, a situation whose peculiarity is only further intensified when Sir Philip encounters Edmund. Before discovering that Edmund is the true heir, Sir Philip observes his resemblance to his late friend in both manner and appearance, later describing him as a "relick of a noble house" (126). A host of other material and ethereal

[327] As already noted, Silver makes this argument on 551.

objects further corroborate Edmund's ancestry: the discovery of a key to the apartment where the bones of the late Lord Lovel lay, jewelry belonging to late Lady Lovel, as well as the supernatural appearance of a "ghost-knight" (who turns out to be the ghost of the late Lord Lovel himself) all serve as evidence in one way or another of Edmund's rightful claim to the Lovel title and the false pretensions of its current holder.

The point to stress is that both fictions highlight how easy it is to create a convincing, but ultimately false, historical narrative on a small, familial scale. These counterfeit claims to a title can change a family history and even radiate outwards to impact national history (it is not only the circle of lords and barons that must be convinced of the validity of Edmund's claim, for instance, but Sir Philip also requests that Parliament officially recognize Edmund as the true Lord Lovel, 224). As already noted, the preoccupation with convincing but illusory accounts is sharpened and magnified by thematizations of translation that, as with the oriental fictions explored in earlier chapters, unsurprisingly evoke the figure of Mahomet. Alfonso, Frederic, and Sir Philip all travel to historic Palestine and its surrounding areas to fight the "infidels" and "Saracens" (*CO*, 92; *OEB*, 1),[328] followers of a faith established by "Mahomet" about five to nine centuries previously depending on the precise date of the events depicted in both

[328] While neither text includes mention of "Mahomet" or "Mahometans," there is no question that the terms "infidels" and "Saracens" refer to Muslims in the Near East. The OED offers the following definition for *Saracen*: "Among the later Greeks and Romans, a name for the nomadic people peoples of the Syro-Arabian desert which harassed the Syrian confines of the Empire; hence, an Arab; by extension, a Muslim, esp. with reference to the Crusades." Setting aside the OED's failure to mention other ethnic groups that have historically existed, and continue to exist, in that region, as well as its inaccurate conflation of Arab and Muslim, the historical backdrop of the Crusades in both texts clearly suggests that the characters are fighting Muslims in the Near East. Interestingly, the OED also offers a definition that indicates the term *Saracen* was sometimes used to refer to Goths or gothic architecture: a now obsolete definition for *Saracen* is "[a]n ignorant and tasteless person, a 'barbarian', 'Goth', 'Vandal,'*" and Sir C. Wren erroneously applied the term Saracen to pointed or gothic architecture, writing in 1713 "*[t]his we now call the Gothick Manner of Architecture...I think it should with more Reason be called the Saracen style."

narratives.[329] The figure that comes to be seen as a master manipulator in Western discourse, along with his sizeable band of so-called credulous believers, emerges in these fictions as a specter of the susceptibility of populations to false historical narratives. Not for nothing is the term "impostor" thrown around as an attempt to expose perceived manipulations of reality: Manfred calls Theodore and Jerome each an "impostor" at different points in *Otranto* when he suspects untruths are being "imposed upon" him (*CP*, 76, 81, 138), and Theodore accuses Manfred of ruling Otranto through imposition.[330] Similarly in *Baron*, the threat of being imposed upon is considered so prevalent in the world of the fiction that Fitz-Own observes at one point that it is "no wonder that princes should be so frequently deceived, when I, a private man, could be so much imposed upon within the circle of my own family" (*OEB*, 142).

As already noted, it is in "Joppa" [Jaffa] that Frederic unearths the oversized sabre that has a supernatural affinity with the equally large helmet back at Otranto.[331] This signals a concomitant affinity between the two regions, both distinguished by contesting claims of ownership that are each supported by their own historical and religious apparatuses. This is not to say that Walpole's gesture toward historical relativity is expansive enough to imbue even "infidel" accounts with the possibility of legitimacy, but rather that the specter of these accounts underscores how easy it is to create counterfeit claims that reach the status of uncontested truth for their followers. Of the two fictions, it is arguably in *Baron* that the figure of Mahomet looms largest in the form of the "translated" M. Zadisky, however. In addition to arguments that view

[329] As already noted, the first preface of *Otranto* situates the story sometime between 1095 and 1243, and *Baron* closes with a mention of Istanbul's capture by the Ottomans in 1453. Muhammad was born sometime in the late sixth century, and began preaching sometime in the early seventh century.
[330] Theodore claims that Manfred's guards are "but too willing to execute the orders which [he] unjustly imposed upon them" (30).
[331] As written in *Otranto*: "As they [Frederic's retinue] made the circuit of the court to return towards the gate, the gigantic sword burst from the supporters, and, falling to the ground opposite the helmet, remained immoveable" (101).

Zadisky as an extension of Sir Philip's Christianizing mission and as a kind of literary double of Edmund,[332] the religious convert also appears to function as something like a forced reminder that questions of authenticity will forever haunt representations, historical and otherwise. This function only becomes intelligible, however, when one considers Reeve's attempt to align increasing levels of credibility with something like certainty, an attempt that has implications not only for the nature of historical writing but also for fictional writing as I will argue shortly. While "authentic writing" that nobody sees validates Theodore's claim to Otranto (*CO*, 199), and thus questions of legitimacy are not fully removed by the end, Reeve on the other hand sets out to prove that Edmund is the undoubted heir to Lovel castle: through recourse to feudal law, reason, and supernatural intervention, Reeve obsessively documents all the "proofs" that verify Edmund's claim, expending considerable energy to show that, as demonstrated at the outset, one can prove "the reality of [one's] claim, and the identity of [one's] person."[333]

Another way of putting this is that, while Walpole is content to suggest that historical representations are necessarily incomplete and speculative, Reeve suggests that it is possible for them to claim a kind of authority if they meet rigorous standards of verification. Confidence in this possibility, nevertheless, remains subtly undercut by the figure of Zadisky, who bookends the fiction. Zadisky evokes the figure of Mahomet by way of the Near Eastern informant, thus bringing together ideas of imposture and skeptical observation: the narrator observes that the "Greek has a shrewd and penetrating aspect," observing his surroundings "with the penetration for which his countrymen have been distinguished in all ages" (136, 202). Of course, as the narrator points out, Zadisky is Greek-born, having been raised by "Saracens" in some nebulous region between Greece and Turkey, but converted to Christianity upon his capture by Sir Philip.

[332] Coykendall, "Gothic Genealogies," 472-3.
[333] Ibid., 455.

Despite his conversion and national origin, his upbringing by presumably Turkish Muslims, and his return at the end to north-central Ethiopia (he plans to "end his days" in a "monastery by the side of mount Libanus," 231) aligns him less with "his countrymen" in Mediterranean Europe and more with figures like Defoe's Mahmut, the Ottoman spy who similarly tries to see "with as many eyes as he can" (1. L. 16). The figure of Zadisky, then, like that of the spy, simultaneously represents a potential site of imposture and the means through which familiar surroundings can be "seen" anew, so as to destabilize traditional views. As a subsidiary figure, however, his function is less one of defamiliarization than to offer a subtle reminder that even the most verifiable historical claim—verifiable from within the parameters of feudal law, reason, and even supernatural intervention—can never reach the status of absolute certainty. That is, this "translated" character, in addition to gently reminding readers of the prevalence of convincing but potentially illusory accounts, also indicates that even in relation to things that feel "certain," it is always possible for new narratives to arise.

SHELTERING UNDER GENIUS, PRESERVING SPIRIT

As noted in the second section of this chapter, both Walpole and Reeve demonstrate the point that it is credible fiction's capacity to convince that forms the foundation of its realistic quality. Rather than create worlds that serve as literal copies of a past one, both experiment with the creation of life-like worlds, ones that give readers the experience of being in an environment that merely approximates the past.[334] Because of this turn to the past for its model, descriptions of the supernatural in early gothic fiction paradoxically serve as an index of its believability. To

[334] It is interesting to note that for both Walpole and Reeve the "past" is the far past—a period of time that occurs several centuries prior. For later writers, such as Eliot, the "past" becomes a particular unit that is more recent: the plot of *Adam Bede*, for instance, speaks of "visions of the past," that occur 60 years before the book's publication (3). This radical difference in what constitutes the "past" may simply be owing to Walpole and Reeve's participation in the larger Gothic revival movement, which took the medieval period as its focus.

fail to capture the past's "ancient errors and superstitions" is to fail at its believable re-creation in narrative. Of course, between Walpole's two prefaces, two conceptions of the gothic are floated: in addition to serving as, to use Reeve's succinct description, "a picture of gothic times and manners," the gothic also aims to serve as a picture of an "extraordinary" world filled with "mere men and women." Whether he succeeds or not, Walpole aims to depict what it would be like for the contemporary individual to suddenly find herself in an incredible world. Between the two conceptions, that is, Walpole advocates for the crucial role of imagination in the composition of fiction, framed as both central to the revival of past worlds and itself a feature of the literary past in need of revival. As already intimated, however, it is possible to take this association of ideas one step too far, as Reeve claims Walpole does in *Otranto*.

To briefly restate the terms of her argument, preserving the "keeping" in gothic fiction is crucial for Reeve: writers must maintain a delicate balance between the use of the marvelous, the rules of probability, and affect in order not to break fiction's "enchantment." The first two elements of Reeve's prescription are a perfect echo of Walpole's: for him, gothic fiction represents a "blend" of the ancient and modern romance, the former known for its imagination and improbability, and the latter for its "strict adherence to common life." According to Reeve, Walpole's overuse of supernatural descriptions—his failure to stay "within certain limits of credibility"—in *Otranto* violates his own norms leading to an "enchantment dissolved." The re-creation of actual worlds, that is, must draw from multiple narrative strategies with attention paid to their proportion. It is the result of what is essentially a tension between the attempt to follow an observable world as a model (the "adherence to common life" or "the manners of real life") and the drawing from one's own powers of creativity (the drawing from "powers of fancy" or "the marvellous"). Reeve's evaluation of Walpole hints at an important question that animates

the early gothic and, by extension, all fictions whose authors claim are about "real life" in some shape or form: how much originality can an imitation accommodate before it ceases to be one? When does a copy (of the world, of another text) cease to be a copy and become something else instead?

Walpole's impersonation of a translator in his first preface is arguably an attempt to sidestep this question. By gesturing toward conceptions of translation and imitation that already equate the act of copying with some degree of creativity on the translator's part, Walpole is applying dominant conceptions of the act of copying in the period to the production of credible fiction: to copy the world in fiction, that is, it is not merely to imitate observable phenomena, but to re-imagine it anew. Thus it is not that he skews too heavily in favor of imagination and improbability, but rather that he is placing a heavier emphasis on the creative imperative already inherent in an act of copying. Some of his descriptions may strike readers like Reeve as outside "certain limits of credibility" but Walpole suggests that they are the effects of his own ingenuity put in the service of providing what he terms a more "interesting" copy of the world. Of course, Reeve has a valid point: the image of an oversized helmet falling from the sky, or a sword large enough that it requires a hundred men to lift it, among the number of other clearly farfetched scenes of *Otranto*, is taking it too far (to put it lightly). Reeve acknowledges the importance of producing copies with "spirit" at the same time that she insists that this does not mean that anything is permissible. Despite the unrealistic quality of Walpole's work, however, the combination of his deployment of translation discourse and his stated intents in his second preface does demand an examination of these descriptions, however hard to believe, as part of a larger effort to "copy" "nature," as he frames it.

As already noted, Walpole's conflation of imitating the world and literary imitation is thrown into sharpest relief in the figure of Shakespeare; to follow this "brightest genius" or his works (and Walpole does mean both) is to follow both the "master of nature" and nature itself. But the mention of "genius," specifically, is central: the term comes to allude more pointedly in eighteenth-century England to a creative capacity marked by originality. Elizabeth Montagu captures this association of meanings in *An Essay on the Writings and Genius of Shakespeare* (1769), where she echoes Walpole's second preface in faulting Voltaire for not recognizing Shakespeare's genius. Montagu rejects Voltaire's assertion that Shakespeare's genius is of a lower degree compared to that of Pierre Corneille, offering her own precise definition: "when we speak of genius, we always mean that which is original and inherent, not any thing produced or derived from what is external."[335] If Montagu's definition seems to gesture toward the increasing opposition of meanings between genius as aptitude for originality and genius as something transferred from author to translator during the translation act, then Edward Young draws this opposition in even starker terms in *Conjectures on Original Composition* (1759). For him, imitations "only give us a sort of duplicate of what we had," an imitator being only a "transplanter of laurels," while an original is "of a *vegetable* nature; it rises spontaneously from the vital root of genius; it grows, it is not made."[336] It is important to stress, however, that while the concept of genius becomes more strongly linked with the idea of an author's imagination,

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[335] Elizabeth Montagu, *An Essay on the Writings and Genius of Shakespear* [sic], *Compared with the Greek and French Dramatic Poets* (Dublin, 1778), 237-8. Also cited in Kareem, 151. Montagu further writes: "Mr. Voltaire, in all his comparison he has made between these authors, has not taken into account that Shakespear has written the best comedy in our language…Where is there an instance among the ancients or moderns of one poet's uniting the sublime and pathetic, the boldest inventions of fiction, and the most just and accurate delineation of characters; and also possessing the *vis comica* in its highest perfection? The best French poets have been those who from ancients like the ancients writ; and who have aspired to the secondary praise of good imitators; but all our critics allow Shakespear to be an original" (238-9, emphasis in original).

[336] Edward Young, *Conjectures on Original Composition in a Letter to the Author of Sir Charles Grandison* (London, 1759), 10, 12. Emphasis in original.

unconstrained by what is "external," it does not yet reach the Romantic sense of originality as the sign of an unfettered, boundless, and individual imagination.

Citing what M.H. Abrams refers to as the poetics of the mirror, Ann Jefferson argues that the Enlightenment conception of genius paradoxically endowed it with a special mimetic capacity; because of what was seen as the keen observational powers of the "man of genius," he is able to create a "likeness" of the world distinct from that of the ordinary individual.[337] Jefferson links the idea of genius with "mimesis," but her discussion explicitly points to a realism not rooted in the imitation of observable models in the world; rather, the man of genius "spontaneously chooses nature" so that his descriptions express his "particular" way of seeing the world.[338] The world that the man of genius particularly observes, moreover, is the world closer to home. As already noted, the concept of genius becomes linked with a special capacity to express what is framed as a distinct national taste and identity,[339] an association of meanings that Walpole invokes when he accuses Voltaire of misunderstanding Shakespeare.[340] Montagu further links a capacity for originality with a special ability to capture national particularity: again referring to the premier English exemplar of a man of genius, she writes of Shakespeare that he "could represent the manners of the whole people, give the general temper of the times, and bring in view the incidents that affected the common fate of his country."[341] The man of genius is distinguished by his originality, but it is an originality nonetheless "born and

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[337] Ann Jefferson, *Genius in France: An Idea and Its Uses* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015), 23. In regards to the term "man of genius," Jefferson writes: "Women rarely figure in these debates where the masculine third-person pronoun is the norm (19)," an issue she addresses in Part IV of her book "Failure, Femininity, and the Realist Novel," 123-57. See also Christine Battersby, *Gender and Genius: Towards a Feminist Aesthetics* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989).
[338] Jefferson, 26.
[339] See Golinelli, "The Concept of Genius and its Metamorphoses in Eighteenth-Century English Criticism."
[340] See this Chapter, n. 293.
[341] Montagu, 56. Also cited in Golinelli, 200.

developed" in a particular environment and capable of expressing the "taste" of a particular people.[342]

If the particular observational prowess of the "man of genius" seems to subtly recall another keenly perceptive figure, it is likely not by accident. As argued in the second chapter, the figure of the foreign observer, embodied in literature by Mahmut and Usbek, was invoked in multiple discourses in the early eighteenth century to signify the estranged (and, thereby, particular) perspective especially for the purpose of recasting the familiar anew. This linkage between the foreign and a particularized form of observation is precisely what leads Montesquieu to claim that the observations of Usbek and Rica will always be found with "*le sentiment de surprise et d'étonnement*" ("the sentiment of surprise and astonishment") because they are, in a sense, transported "*dans un autre univers*" ("to another universe").[343] While I am not suggesting a direct line of influence, there is a likeness between the discourse of the foreign observer and that of the original genius that may partly be the result of their shared imbrication with the eighteenth-century discourse of translation. Whether he claims a total collapse of identity between him and his often foreign author, or whether he relies more on his own powers of originality, the translator is still distinguished by his ability to, as Dryden puts it, uniquely decipher what is "secretly in the Poet, or may be fairly deduc'd from him." A good translator sees what others do not through a quality of sensitive discernment that both the man of genius and foreign observer figure share.

Walpole's two prefaces, in fact, provide a snapshot of the transition from the figure of the foreign observer to the man of genius through the frame of translation. At first represented as the faithfully translated musings of "Onuphrio Muralto," the medieval Italian priest, *Otranto* is

[342] Golinelli, 200.
[343] See "Quelques réflexions sur *les Lettres persanes,*" 1.

quickly revealed to be the work of Walpole himself, who "shelter[s]" his "own daring" and "genius" under that of Shakespeare. As discussed above, to "shelter" under Shakespeare's genius here, while still described as a process of absorbing some particular quality attributed to him, is cast more as a re-creation of the set of principles and/or procedures that lead him to his original contribution, rather than an imitation of any aspect of the contribution itself.[344] That is, to follow Shakespeare's genius, which makes itself felt because it is the product of ingenuity, is also to follow one's own. For Walpole, the specific signs of Shakespeare's genius are both his mingling of tragedy and comedy and his use of supernatural descriptions,[345] two techniques that Walpole emulates or reproduces in *Otranto*. It is through this conceptual framework that Walpole's dual assertions that he is both "proud of having imitated…so masterly a pattern" and "enjoy[s] the entire merit of invention" (but only on condition that his work is "marked" with "genius as well as with originality") becomes intelligible (*CO*, xvi). To be a copy, in this case, is to be simultaneously an original.

To be a copy of Shakespeare's genius, moreover, is to represent reality in a particular and insightful way. While the idea that *Otranto* could stand as a representation of the observable world in some capacity was (and remains) farfetched for many, Walpole is able to make a case for his fiction by invoking these admittedly convoluted ideas about imitation and genius. Of course, as Reeve explicitly asserts, there are limits to this even for writers like herself who still profess some belief in Walpole's larger project. While Reeve does not use the term "genius" herself in the preface to *Baron*, she does gesture toward its importance to the gothic project by similarly summoning the figure of Shakespeare as noted above. By affiliating her fiction with

[344] Jefferson cites Kant's argument that the man of genius, despite creating his own precepts, cannot articulate the rules that have led to his own original work, to underscore how the identification of genius depends on the imitation of "the very principle of originality" by "a successor-genius if it is to exist at all" (14).
[345] Kareem, 151.

translations and imitations of Shakespeare, she calls forth a similarly blurred conceptual apparatus that is shaped by its conflation of the acts of imitating the world and imitating other literature. In her formulation, however, ideas about proportion and relative quantities become central: imagination and probability should work hand-in-hand, but with a "sufficient degree" of the former, and "enough of" the latter so that the story keeps "within certain limits," and so forth (*OEB*, v, vi). The world of *Baron* similarly places "mere men and women" in "extraordinary" situations, but Reeve imposes limits on the use of the "extraordinary" so as not to interfere with the story's believability. And, there are degrees of believability: if the story of *Baron* is read as a thematization of these ideas, then the obsession with verifying Edmund's identity could be seen as validating the idea of verifiable representation in a way wholly absent in *Otranto*. Theodore's claim to Otranto remains tenuous by the end, while Edmund's claim has been verified through the numerous "proofs" already noted. Even Zadisky, that mysterious figure who invokes ideas about imposture and counterfeiting, is banished from the vicinity of Lovel castle; while his presence at the end of the text draws the reader's attention once again to the absence of certainty when it comes to representations, Zadisky is safely sequestered out of sight. For Reeve, that is, some representations are more believable than others, and maintaining that balance between following the world and following one's own imagination is a necessary effort for writers who aim to re-create the world in narrative.

Of course, Reeve worried that her striving toward balance resulted in the loss of "spirit," a worry that Walpole only reinforced. For him, Reeve sacrifices "interesting situations"—what he claims the use of imagination enables in the second preface—for probability. If the preservation of "keeping" between different narrative strategies is fundamental to this new form of fiction, then Walpole suggests that Reeve has failed to preserve it. *Baron* may be believable—

as believable as any crime case rooted in factuality—but it lacks that spark that only imagination can facilitate. In other words, according to Walpole, *Baron* has failed to bring "real life" to narrative "life." If this charge contains a strong echo of Dryden's assertion in the preface to *Sylvae* that a "dull translation" is no better than the poet's "carcass," then the above discussion has demonstrated why this resonance emerges. Like the translation during this period, the credible fiction is meant to serve as a re-creation of the world in narrative for these writers, a form of imitation that, as both Walpole and Reeve note in their different ways, is a creative process that falls on the author's use of imaginative strategies to facilitate. While Walpole and Reeve's particular prescriptions for this new form of fiction are met with resistance, and even with self-doubt in the case of the latter, and while neither of them manage to find the "right" formula for fiction, they nonetheless further demonstrate how the discourse of translation was used by eighteenth-century writers to theorize about the nature of credible fiction: at once a copy and an original, it is that strangely composite thing that its writer aims to animate by attempting to capture creatively the "spirit" or "genius" of its source.

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