The Thousand and First Author: Thomas-Simon Gueullette's Repeating Fictions

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> C'est un des plus jolis de tous ces Recueils, intitulés Mille & un. Je les ai sous les yeux [...] Je conseille à mes Lecteurs de lire toujours l'imitation moderne, de préférence à l'original & aux vieilles Traductions.[1]
> —Paulmy d'Argenson (316-17)

In his praise for Thomas-Simon Gueullette's *Mille et un Quart-d'heure, Contes tartares* (*The Thousand and One Quarters of an Hour, Tartar Tales*, 1715-17), Paulmy d'Argenson evokes one of the more scandalous notions in evaluating translations: the possibility that a reader could prefer a translation to an original. Gueullette's is a peculiar case because his activity was not solely translation proper, but also pastiche. His first collections of tales appear to be renditions of original manuscripts into French, and the prefaces adhere to the conventions followed by the translators of his time. Yet, over the course of his career, he reveals that the initial pretense of translation had been a charade and that his storytelling method really consisted of gathering disparate materials and assembling them within a new frame.

Gueullette's tales drew from texts of dizzying geographic and temporal scope. Carmen Ramirez notes that, in addition to various plays and classical Greco-Roman works, other sources for the *Quart-d'heure* alone include Christian lore, fables, the *Gesta romanorum*, the *Centes Nouvelles nouvelles* and related Italian works, tales of chivalry, the *Pantchatantra*, the Talmud, the Qur'an, travel narratives, Barthélemy Herbelot's *Bibliothèque orientale*, Herodotus, Ovid, and fairy tales (Ramirez 194-95). The frame tales and prefaces were clearly inspired by the wildly successful *Mille et une nuits, Contes arabes* (*A Thousand and One Nights, Arab Tales*, 1704-17) of Antoine Galland and the *Mille et un jours, Contes persans* (*A Thousand and One Days, Persian Tales*, 1710-12) of François Pétis de la Croix, and the titles of Gueullette's collections place them directly in the line of the "thousand and one" lineage.[2] Yet Gueullette's

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revisionary methods are closer to those of the "*belles infidèles*," or the "beautiful but unfaithful" translators of Greco-Roman classics into French, as well as the *salonnières* such as Marie-Catherine d'Aulnoy, whose fairy tales were often radical rewritings of Italian sources. Gueullette thus brings the overt mediation of the *belles infidèles* and the *salonnières* into dialogue with the more scholarly and putatively faithful approach of the French orientalists.

Gueullette's career as a *conteur* describes its own narrative arc as he gradually provides insights into his storytelling process. His first collection, *Soirées Bretonnes: Nouveaux contes de fées* (*Breton Evenings: New Fairy Tales*, 1712) begins with a translator's preface claiming that the stories were derived from a Breton manuscript. Most of the tales, however, are actually rewritings of stories from the *Voyages et aventures des trois princes de Serendip* (*The Travels and Adventures of the Three Princes of Serendip*), which appeared in French translation from 1610, in turn based on an Italian translation, attributed to Cristoforo Armeno, of a Persian source. The authen-

ticity of this Italian translation has itself been subject to debate, and it is unclear whether Armeno ever even existed. The sources for Gueullette's collections of tales are thus deeply embedded in the story of pseudotranslation and its relation to the portayal of the exotic in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century France.

By imitating orientalists' work, which conformed to scholarly as well as literary standards that adjusted representations of other cultures to meet readers' expectations, Gueullette relativized their projects by relocating them within a fictional frame. The paratexts—including prefaces as well as titles, footnotes, and illustrations—to his collections of tales progressively reveal that the reproduction of prefatory formulae provides implicit commentary about the French tradition of translation. Pseudotranslations, according to David Martens, provide venues for such critique: "À travers une mise en œuvre factice des caractères formels de la traduction et de ses protocoles paratextuels conventionnels, ces supercheries posent la question de l'identité de la traduction en ironisant à plaisir, et en mettant ainsi en question certaines des propriétés caractéristiques du type de textes auquel ils feignent d'appartenir" (195-96).[3] Gueullette's corpus marks a pivotal point between scholarly orientalist translation from the beginning of the eighteenth century and the patently fictional translations such as Voltaire's *Zadig* (1747) and Marie Antoinette Fagnan's *Kanor, conte traduit du sauvage* (*Kanor, Tale Translated from the Savage*, 1750) that proliferated mid-century. It is possible to trace this development of the relation between copy and original by examining the changes in how Gueullette presented himself, first as a translator and then as an author. His is a curious instance of pseudotranslation, which Gideon Toury has indicated employs a "disguise mechanism" (5), insofar as Gueullette progressively lowers the mask.

I will first identify some of the various traditions that had an influence on Gueullette's work and that he directly or indirectly addresses in the authorial remarks on his own texts. I then discuss the concept of pseudotranslation and provide an overview of two literary hoaxes of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century

before proceeding to examine Gueullette's five collections of *contes* chronologically. The first collection begins with an *avertissement*, which translates as "notice" but could also be a "warning," and the clues that point to Gueullette's game become less subtle in his comments for later collections. Emily Apter has indicated that pseudo-translations question the "extent to which all translations are unreliable transmitters of the original, a regime, that is, of extreme truth" (167), and that "all translators are to some extent counterfeit artists, experts at forgeries of voice and style" (167). Gueullette imitates the orientalists, the *belles infidèles*, and the French *conteurs* so as to exhibit the various recombinations possible in and inherent to storytelling, all the while dispelling the illusion of a definitive source text.

Gueullette's Predecessors: The *Belles Infidèles*, the *Salonnières*, and the Orientalists

The term *belles infidèles* was coined by French lexicographer Gilles de Ménage in response to the translations of Nicolas Perrot d'Ablancourt (1606-64). He remarks on the latter's French versions of the classics of antiquity: "Elles me rappellent une femme que j'ai beaucoup aimé à Tours, et qui était belle mais infidèle" (qtd. in Horguelin 76).[4] This method of translation applied generally to the rendering of Greco-Roman works to conform to French sensibilities of the seventeenth century. This approach was implicated in the valorization of French as a literary language on par with Latin and Greek, and by the time of Louis XIV, interest in style became the prevailing concern of translators, most of whom were writers and poets in their own right and thus invested in producing works of literary merit.

Respecting order and harmony were priorities for Ablancourt, who believed that these, rather than slavish devotion to the order and wording of the source, were in fact more conducive to the clear expression of a text's overall message. The notion of the free translation serving to better convey the sense of the original was also a theme for François de Malherbe (1555-1628), another practitioner of the methods associated with the *belles infidèles*. In the preface to his 1616 translation of Livy, he articulates his reasons for straying from a literal approach to translation:

> Si en quelques autres lieux j'ai ajouté ou retranché quelque chose, comme certes il y en a cinq ou six, j'ai fait le premier pour éclaircir des obscurités, qui eussent donné de la peine à des gens qui n'en veulent point; et le second, pour ne tomber en des répétitions, ou autres impertinences, dont sans doute un esprit délicat se fût offensé. Pour ce qui est de l'histoire, je l'ai suivie exactement et ponctuellement; mais je n'ai pas voulu faire les grotesques, qu'il est impossible d'éviter quand on se restreint dans la servitude de traduire de mot à mot. (Malherbe 464)[5]

Malherbe thus presents an alternative to the "faithful" model that treats the copy as servile to the master. Later, with the Quarrel of the Ancients versus the Moderns, authors who identified with the latter moved even further away from the tradition of

imitating the Greco-Roman classics that had dominated French letters throughout the seventeenth century in order to explore the possibilities of the French language and literary legacies.

Aligned with the Moderns were the authors of the first French *contes de fées*, such as Perrault as well as many of the *salonnières*, or aristocratic women who told variations of stories to one another in their Parisian salons. Like the *belles infidèles*, they did not follow their sources to the letter. In the concluding lines of "L'Adroite princesse" ("The Adept Princess," 1696), Marie-Jeanne L'Héritier de Villandon claims to have heard the tale when she was a child and writes, "Je vous avouë que je l'ay brodée, & que je vous l'ay contée un peu au long" ("I confess to you that I embellished & lengthened it"; L'Héritier de Villandon 298). Another *salonnière*, Marie-Catherine d'Aulnoy, drew inspiration from the Italian authors Giovanni Francesco Straparola (1480-1557) and Giambattista Basile (1566-1632). In the *avertissement* to her *Histoires sublimes et allégoriques* (*Sublime and Allegorical Stories*, 1699), Henriette-Julie de Murat writes, "La premiere que j'ai pris les idées de quelques-uns de ces Contes dans un Auteur ancien intitulé *les Facecieuses nuits du Seigneur Straparolle*, imprimé pour la seizième fois en 1615 […] Les Dames qui ont écrit jusques icy en ce genre, ont puisé dans la même source au moins pour la plus grande partie" (ii).[6] Tellingly, Gueullette's first admission to borrowing material likewise relates to a tale by Straparola: the story of the three hunchbacks, which ultimately morphs into a tale from Galland's *Nuits* with other details taken from *Serendip*.

Although the French orientalists revised their materials heavily, they were less forthcoming about their digressions from source texts than the *salonnières* or the *belles infidèles*. For his *Nuits*, Galland initially worked from a Syrian manuscript, and later from other sources, including oral accounts from a monk from Aleppo named Hanna Diab. The *avertissement* that he provides, however, does not clue the reader into the complexities of his source material and rather gives the impression of a more or less seamless whole. In the second volume of the *Nuits*, Galland confessed to having made minor adjustments to conform to readers' tastes:

> Le lecteur ne trouvera plus à chaque nuit: *Ma chère soeur, si vous ne dormez pas, etc.* Comme cette répétition a choqué plusieurs personnes d'esprit, on l'a retranchée pour s'accommoder à leur délicatesse. Le traducteur espère que les savans lui pardonneront l'infidélité qu'il fait en cela à son original, puisqu'il a d'ailleurs si religieusement conservé le genre et le caractère des contes orientaux, qu'il a rendu par-là son ouvrage digne de leur bibliothèque. (Galland aij)[7]

Yet, despite Galland's claims of having followed the original text "religieusement" except for these minor changes, Jean-Paul Sermain has noted that Galland's work is far more than just translation. He calls the *Nuits* a Franco-Arab text that "greffe sur le conte arabe des éléments de langue, de culture et de littérature française, et par là, *felix culpa*, elle devient hybride" ("grafted elements of the France's language, literature, and culture onto the Arab tale, which then became, *felix culpa*, a hybrid"; 18). Scholars such as Sermain and Georges May have praised Galland for fashioning

a unique work of art, while others such as Muhsin Mahdi have reproached him for misleading readers and claim that rather than improving upon the material, he actually degraded it.[8]

Pétis was a contemporary of Galland's and likewise a scholar and diplomat. The publication of his *Jours* followed closely on the heels of the success of Galland's *Nuits*, and the paratextual material situating the *Jours* shares many similarities with Galland's work. Just as Galland announced that he had eliminated the repetitive element of Dinarzade asking her sister Scheherazade every night for a new tale, Pétis claimed to have dispensed with the dialogue from the frame tale, which he indicated was not a part of the essential narrative and "ne sert qu'à la faire languir et qu'à ennuyer le lecteur" ("only serves to leave the reader languishing and bored"; Pétis 8). The preface explains that his *Jours* are based upon a Persian collection that Pétis received from a dervish named Moclès, yet there is no evidence of such a Persian manuscript. Recent scholarship has demonstrated that the *Jours* were actually based on an Ottoman Turkish source from the fifteenth or late fourteenth century, itself derived from a Persian collection acquired for the Royal Library in Paris by none other than Antoine Galland.[9]

The justification for editing material to keep the reader sufficently entertained, as had been the case with the *Nuits* and the *Jours*, likewise appears in Gueullette's *Soirées*: "Au reste, je n'ai pas cru devoir les séparer par soirées, ni mettre les réflexions qui sont à la fin de chacun de ces contes, comme cela est dans l'original. La simplicité de ces discours auroit certainement ennuyé le lecteur qui prendra plus de plaisir à lire ces contes sans interruption" (*Soirées* XV).[10] Gueullette's mimicking of the orientalists brings the authenticity of the latter's statements into question. While the general public may not have been aware that Galland and Pétis revised their sources, Gueullette was certainly attentive to the conventions and conceits of the translator's prefaces from Ablancourt to Murat to Pétis, as well as the counterfeit translations that are the subject of the following section.

Masquerading the Exotic in the Court of the Sun King

L'Espion Turc (*Letters Writ by a Turkish Spy*), which includes its own preface relating the fortuitious discovery of letters left behind by an Ottoman spy in the court of Louis XIV, is one of literature's most brazen hoaxes. In 1684, the work appeared in Italian as a translation by Giovanni Paolo Marana, who presented it in person to Louis XIV as a translation from the Turkish. However, the translation charade did not last long. Pierre Bayle (1647-1706), for example, was inclined to consider it an ingenious fiction, concluding, "Peu importe que ce soit un Turc ou un Genois qui nous parlent, pourvû qu'ils nous donnent un bon livre" ("It doesn't matter whether it is a Turk or a Genoese who is speaking, as long as the book is a good one"; 20). This is an early demonstra-

tion of the attitude that developed throughout Gueullette's career and culminated in the *avertissement* to his final collection, *Mille et une heures, Contes peruviens* (*A Thousand and One Hours, Peruvian Tales*, 1733), in which the author states that "Mes Heures sont d'ailleurs si pleines de vérités utiles, qu'on ne peut guéres les mettre au rang des mensonges" ("my hours are so full of useful truths that they can hardly be put on the same level as lies"; *Heures* iv).

Another instance of a pseudotranslation from the reign of Louis XIV is Jean-Paul Bignon's *Les aventures d'Abdalla, la traduction complette du manuscrit Arabe trouvé à Batavia par M. Sandisson* (*The Adventures of Abdalla, the Complete Translation of the Arabic Manuscript found in Batavia by Mr. Sandisson*, 1712-14), which was a more successful hoax than *L'Espion Turc*, perhaps because it appeared at the same time as Galland's and Pétis's works. Bignon (1662-1743), who was a preacher and writer, also happened to be the librarian at Versailles. The *avertissement* to the work contains a description of how Bignon received the manuscript, along with a letter from one "Monsieur de Sandisson." Bignon includes the letter as a kind of preface. He mentions that he provided commentary where needed in order to explain foreign terms or concepts, which points to the potential value of the text as instructive. He also describes his editing practices and the struggles he encountered rendering the work into French, claiming that his attempts to remain faithful to the text were not entirely successful: "Mais je ne sçai si c'est par prévention, ou si en effet les histoires orientales, lorsqu'on les déguise, perdent de leurs graces, mes essais ne m'ont point paru réussir. J'ai donc cru qu'il falloit prendre le parti mitoyen, d'adoucir certains endroits, & d'expliquer les autres par de courtes notes" (Bignon ii).[11] This overture to fidelity gave Bignon's work a sense of authenticity, and can perhaps explain why the entry for it in the *Catalogue des livres imprimez da la Bibliothèque du Roy* (*Catalogue of Printed Books in the King's Library*), dating from 1750, still marks it as a translation (*Catalogue* 32).

Ann Duggan and Donald Haase note that Bignon presented his *Abdalla* as a translation, even though it was actually his original work, and that Gueullette wrote the *Quart-d'heure* "in a similar vein" (748). Jan Herman also notes that these stories "furent considérés comme des contes réellement traduits de l'arabe" ("were considered as tales really translated from the Arabic"; 90). The elegy for Gueullette that appeared in the *Necrologue of Famous Men* (*Nécrologue des Hommes Célèbres*) reads: "Le génie et le tour des contes orientaux, tels que les *Mille et un jours*, les *Mille et une nuits*, et sont imités si heureusement dans ces prétendus *Contes Tartares* que beaucoup de personnes les ont crus traduits, comme les autres d'après des originaux persans ou arabes" (qtd. in *Gueullette* 2055).[12] Gueullette's fictional framing of his tales, indebted in particular to the model established by Galland, thus successfully conveyed a sense of authenticity, at least initially, for a large number of readers.

Thomas-Simon Gueullette's New Frames for Countless Originals

Gueullette, unlike Galland and Pétis, was not a scholar by profession, but rather a magistrate who was also a man of letters. The material for his tales came from his extensive reading, in particular the *Bibliothèque orientale, ou dictionnaire universel contenant tout ce qui regarde la connoissance des peuples de l'Orient* (*Oriental Library, or Universal Dictionary Containing Everything Relating to the Knowledge of the Peoples of the Orient*, 1697), the title of which suggests a patently Eurocentric enterprise, insofar as the "connoissance" to which it refers is presumably that of orientalist scholars from Europe. In this era of classification and categorization, Gueullette's increasingly obvious methods of plagiarizing and rewriting showcase the role of received ideas in the conceptualization of the exotic.

The paratexts to Gueullette's collections progressively reveal that the reproduction of prefatorial formulae provides implicit commentary on the French tradition of translation. The *avertissement* to Gueuellette's first collection of tales, the *Soirées*, claims that the tales were derived from an original manuscript, though in actuality this manuscript never existed. It begins: "Ces fabliaux ou contes que je donne au public, sont traduits d'un manuscrit très ancien dont me fit présent, il ya quelques années, Monsieur de B..., président au parlement de Bretagne. Ils sont intitulés dans l'original SOIRÉES BRETONNES" (*Soirées* 17).[13] Remarkably, the "original" title that he indicates is in French, rather than Breton; and the stories, most of which are derived from *Serendip*, are themselves set in "l'Arabie Heureuse" ("Arabia Felix"). There is thus very little that is Breton about the tales, apart from the title.

The frontispiece to the first edition of the *Soirées* presents an alternative narrative of the transmission of the tales, drawing the concept of the original even further into an overtly fictional sphere. The engraving depicts a young woman with a sceptre handing a book marked with the cramped title "Soirées Bretone" to a boy in regal dress and Roman sandals. The title is misspelled and there is a small letter "s" above the word "Bretone," as if an afterthought. The image features a fusion of Antique and Early Modern elements, with the young boy, overseen by Minerva, in a French-style hat with a plume in it. The woman with the sceptre is most likely the princess Aliénore described in the *avertissement*, which explains that the Breton people narrated the tales of the *Soirées* to Aliénore in order to cure her of her melancholy. This is another variation on the theme of tales having originated in order to cure a royal character—in the *Nuits*, Scheherezade's stories reform the misogynist king Sharyar and in the *Jours*, the tales teach the princess of Kashmir to trust men. However, in contrast to the *Nuits* and *Jours*, this tale of a narrative cure allegedly took place at an extradiegetic level insofar as, according to the *avertissement*, it provided the actual circumstances for the telling of the tales. In other words, where Scheherezade is clearly a fictional character, Aliénore is allegedly not. The line between fact and fic-

tion becomes blurred and grows even more indistinct in the paratextual material for Gueullette's subsequent collections of tales. The claim to authentic translation appears increasingly suspect, with implications that previous narratives relating to how Gueullette and others obtained the tales are themselves at least in part fictional.

In his subsequent collection, the *Quart-d'heure* (1715), Gueullette begins with a dedication to the duke of Chartres. In contrast to the *Soirées*, here Gueullette claims ownership of the work when he states that he hopes the duke will take a break from his serious occupations in order to look at what he calls "mon Livre" ("my book") (*Quart-d'heure* Dedication). His praise is directed more at the father than the duke himself, though he indicates that it would be no surprise to him if the duke were to inherit the merits of his father, the king. This dedication therefore invites reflection on the relationship between the "master," or the king, and a successful "copy," or the duke, who, of course, would not be an exact replica of his progenitor, though invested with many of the same commendable qualities. In the dedication, Gueullette further elaborates on the theme of imitation by comparing himself to minor painters:

> Mais, Monseigneur, je sens que je m'éleve un peu trop, c'est à des plumes plus délicates que la mienne, à faire de tels Panégyriques; il n'appartenoit qu'au seul Appellès de peindre Alexandre; & je dois, en imitant la retenuë des autres Peintres de son tems, me contenter d'admirer en secret les éclatantes actions du Prince qui vous a donné le jour, sans risquer de les défigurer par des loüanges trop peu dignes de lui. (*Quart-d'heure* Dedication)[14]

This dedication provides valuable insights into Gueullette's view of his role vis-à-vis master artists, which in the case of his *Quart-d'heure* would be the authors whom he imitated and often even technically plagiarized. His characterization of his admiration as done in "secret" seems less of a commentary on the nature of his esteem of the king, whom he here quite overtly praises, than on his particular manner of honouring his predecessors: the invisible imitation, reconfiguration, and rearrangement of their various texts.

Though the first volume of the *Quart-d'heure* does not have an *avertissement*, Gueullette makes his presence known from the beginning in the form of footnotes, which take up nearly half of the first page. The first entry happens to be for the word "Dervish," which is likewise the seventh word in Pétis's *Jours*: "Nous devons ces Contes au célèbre Dervis Moclès [...] Il étoit Chef des Sofis d'Ispahan" ("We can thank the famous dervish Moclès for these tales [...] He was the head of the Sufis in Ispahan"; 73). This, in turn, is followed by a footnote on the first page of the preface to the *Jours*, which explains how the dervish took Indian tales and translated them into Persian, changing the name from *Alfarage Bada Alschidda* ("*Joy after affliction*") into *Hezaryek-Rouz* ("*The Thousand and One Days*") "pour donner à son Ouvrage un air original" ("to give an original air to his work"; 74). Gueullette's dervish in the *Quart-d'heure* does not find tales but rather an abandoned baby boy. He then gives the infant to new parents, who name him Shems-Eddin, and he grows up to become the king of Astrakhan. When Shems-Eddin goes blind, a doctor recalls a cure from an ancient manuscript and sets off in search of it while his son entertains the king

with tales for a quarter of an hour every day. This establishes the frame tale for the collection.

Where the dervish Moclès finds and renames the manuscript of the *Jours*, the dervish of the *Quart-d'heure* finds a boy, who then gets a new name. There is an additional trace of Pétis's influence on Gueullette's *Quart-d'heure* with a footnote for the word "dervis." The entry is derived word-for-word from *Le Grand dictionnaire historique ou Le mélange curieux de l'histoire sacrée et profane* (*The Great Historical Dictionary or the Curious Mixture of Sacred and Profane History*), with the exception of the last clause in reference to those who live in solitude:

> Les Derviches ou Dervis, sont des Religieux Mahometans. Ils affectent tous de paroître modestes, humbles, patients, & charitables, ils ont les jambes nuës, l'estomac découvert, & quelques-uns se brûlent encore avec un fer chaud pour éxercer leur patience. Ils sont profession de pauvreté, de chasteté & d'obeissance, mais s'ils n'ont pas assez de vertu pour se contenir, ils peuvent obtenir la permission de sortir de leur Monastere, il y en a des solitaires à peu près comme nos Hermites. (*Quart-d'heure* 2)[15]

The final clause draws the reader into a kind of complicity with the author of the footnote in its use of the first-person possessive adjective in the plural, establishing a definitive line between the subject and object of representation. It is also notable that the entry calls the authenticity of the dervishes' comportment into question by noting that they "affect to appear" devoted, while some of them are in fact not virtuous enough to sustain the charade. This comparison both establishes distance, insofar as it establishes a polarity between "us" and "them," as well as proximity, by making parallels between Western and Eastern ascetics.

Gueullette's footnotes throughout the work signal his constant mediation, even though these are not properly "his," but rather garnered from another source. Thus far, and in contrast to the collections that follow, Gueullette portrays himself as a faithful transmitter of stories. In light of his statements in later prefaces, it is telling that this is, as with some of his dervishes, only an affectation. This ambiguous nature of authenticity and illusion is underscored by the fact that Gueullette introduces himself not as a translator but as an author, yet in his *avertissement*, the implication remains that an original source exists:

> L'on a sans doute attendu de moi un Ouvrage d'aussi long cours que les Contes Arabes ou Persans. Je m'imagine voir le Lecteur surpris & fâché peut-être, de trouver dans ce Volume, le dénouëment d'une Histoire qu'il n'esperoit qu'après un nombre considerable d'autres avantures. Cette petite colere auroit son mérite, puisque ce seroit une marque que cette lecture ne l'auroit pas ennuyé; mais il est bon de rendre raison de mon travail. Quoique ce Livre soit intitulé *Les Mille & un quart-d'heure*, pour peu que l'on y fasse attention, on connoîtra que je n'ai point eu dessein de rapporter tous les histoires qui ont été racontées au Roi d'Astracan. (*Quart-d'heure* 304)[16]

Gueullette continues to align himself with Galland and Pétis by referring to Arab and Persian tales, and also by addressing the matter of boredom that appeared in the prefaces to the *Nuits, Jours*, and *Soirées*. Gueullette also suggests that there is an orig-

inal; he claims to have left out nine hundred quarter-hours, as if they already existed, particularly with the verb "rapporter" ("to relate"). Yet, the final word of the volume is "Auteur," highlighting his role in the creation of the work: "Heureux si le Lecteur y a pris autant de plaisir que l'on peut se flatter que Schems-Eddin en a reçu, & si la brieveté de l'Ouvrage est le seul défaut que l'on puisse reprocher à l'Auteur" (*Quart-d'heure* 304).[17] In the first edition, this avertissement appears at the end of the third and final volume as a kind of apology. Its situation at the end of the collection, rather than at the beginning, plays with the temporal elements implicated in the notion of *avertissement* ("notice"), which usually precedes a text. Likewise, the copied material in the footnotes clues the reader to the fact that these tales are hypertexts with multiple originals, thereby defying a simple original-copy comparison, as with a more traditional translation.

This kind of non-linear, tentacular system of intertextuality and metatextuality becomes even more pronounced with Gueullette's *Aventures merveilleuses du mandarin Fum-Hoam, contes chinois* (*The Marvelous Adventures of the Mandarin Fum-Hoam, Chinese Tales*, 1723). This is Gueullette's third collection, thus marking the mid-point of the corpus. It is distinct from the two that precede it in that there is neither a time signature nor a preface, and these conspicuous absences serve to accentuate this non-linearity. The dedication takes on unique aspects that further bring into question what the object of representation is and who exactly is representing it. Although Gueullette's Chinese tales do not contain an *avertissement*, the paratexts provide insight into the type of cultural relativism characteristic of Montesquieu's *Lettres persanes*, which appeared just a few years earlier in 1721. The Chinese tales are dedicated to "Madame la Premiere Presidente de la Cour des Aydes," and the dedication includes footnotes that explain French phenomena rather than foreign ones, implicating the dedication and encyclopedic details about France into the full narrative program of the collection. It is startling, for example, to find that the first footnote (*a*) of the dedication appears after the word "Hommes" and serves to explain Madame la Première Presidente's lineage, thereby rendering her an object of study along with the dervish of the *Quart-d'heure* and Tongluck, King of Gannan, whose royal genealogy appears in footnote (*a*) to the first part of the Chinese tales.

This dedication puts the paratexts into a relativist dialogue with the *contes* themselves. The frame narrative dramatizes the fluidity of identity: a mandarin comes every day at the time that the queen of China takes her walk, so as to tell her of the different adventures he has experienced with the various physical incarnations of his soul. In his self-described Borgesian analysis of Gueullette's *Aventures*, Perrin refers to the theme of metempsychosis to establish the relationship among Gueullette's *contes* and their sources as being non-hierarchical and claims, for example, that Straparola "a emprunté le meilleur des *Piacevoli Notti* à ses *Mille et Un Quarts d'Heure*; François Béroalde de Verville a trouvé dans ses *Soirées Bretonnes* le cœur de l'intrigue de son *Histoire véritable ou le Voyage des Princes fortunés*; Gautier de Costes de La Calprenède a littéralement recopié dans ses *Sultanes de Guzarate* les

deux meilleurs récits de son propre *Cléopâtre*" (36).[18] This logic is derived from the notion that certain tales are universal and timeless, on the one hand, and that their newest incarnations influence the character of their previous ones, traditionally known as "sources" or "originals."

In the *avis* to the *Sultanes de Guzarate, contes mongols* (*Sultanas of Gujarat, Mongolian Tales*) (1732), Gueullette reveals that he had borrowed from Straparola for his *Quart-d'heure*. He notes that his variation on Straparola's tale of three hunchbacks was "habillé à la Tartare, & extrêmement different de ce qu'il est dans l'Original" ("styled in the Tartar fashion and extremely different from what it is in the original"; *Sultanes* 4-5). Just as Ablancourt had translated liberally "pour éclaircir des obscurités" ("to shed light on that which was unclear"; Malherbe, preface) so too does Gueullette portray his work as rescuing tales that may have otherwise languished in the darkness. Gueullette concedes that the transmogrification of such materials may be objectionable, but also considers that this is a way of giving the stories new life:

> plusieurs de nos Auteurs Romanciers n'ont pas dédaigné de puiser dans ces sources, alors très peu connuës, des Histoires, dont quelquefois même ils n'ont fait que changer les noms. Je ne dis pas ceci pour le leur reprocher, au contraire, j'estime que nous leur avons beaucoup d'obligation d'avoir tiré, pour ainsi dire, ces ouvrages de l'obscurité; à leur exemple, si l'on reconnoît quelque fond de mes Histoires, je crois que l'on aura autant d'indulgence pour moi que l'on en a eu pour ces Messieurs. (*Sultanes* 3-4)[19]

Gueullette keeps the sources of the stories in his *Sultanes* to himself, but valourizes his use of them insofar as he saves them from oblivion. This notion is in keeping with Perrin's interpretation of the metempsychosis that is especially pronounced on the thematic level of the *Aventures*.

Gueullette's variation on Straparola's hunchback tale in his *Quart-d'heure*, "Les Trois Bossus de Damas" ("The Three Hunchbacks of Damascus") ends in Baghdad, where Straparola's story takes on a twist borrowed from the *Nuits*. Like their Italian counterparts, Gueullette's hunchbacked brothers resemble one another so closely that even their parents have trouble telling them apart. They are all intent on inheriting their father's fortune; as the two younger brothers remain by his side, the eldest sets out into the world and goes through a series of unsuccessful stints before finding steady employment. When his employer dies, the eldest hunchback marries his widow. His brothers hear of his success and come one day when he is away on business. Though her husband had instructed her not to ever admit his brothers into the house, the widow is swayed by their flattery and imprecations, and gives them food and lodging; when the eldest brother returns, she must quickly hide them and desperately leads them to a place where her husband will not find them. When she returns to find the brothers dead, she hires a man to throw the bodies into the river. In Straparola, this man is a professional corpse-bearer, but in Gueullette he is introduced as a porter, or "portefaix" (*Quart-d'heure* 230), anticipating the metamorphosis of the tale into "Le Portefaix et les trois Dames" ("The Porter and the

Three Ladies") from the *Nuits*. The widow pretends there is only one body to dispose of, and when the man returns after depositing the first corpse into the river, she presents the second body and demands to know why it is still there. In confusion and dismay, he slings it over his shoulder and makes his way back to the river. As he returns to collect from the widow, he encounters the eldest hunchback and believes he is the same dead man coming back to life a third time. He deals him a fatal blow to the head and throws him into the water to join his brothers.

In Gueullette's version, the porter believes that one man is dead and has come back to life thanks to magic, though it is really just a part of the widow's trick. While Straparola leaves the brothers to their watery grave, Gueullette resuscitates them. After the porter takes his leave of the widow, he meets a slave, a fisherman, and a merchant who lead him to a house. The affiliation of this story with Galland's "Le Portefaix" becomes even more explicit when the narrator informs the reader that the merchant is really the Caliph Watik-Billah in disguise, who, "suivant l'exemple d'Aaroün Arrechid son ayeul se promenoit assex souvent de nuit dans Bagdad, pour voir ce qui se passoit, & juger par lui-même si l'on étoit content de son Gouvernement" (*Quart-d'heure* 240).[20] The character of Harun al-Raschid, based on a caliph from the eighth century, appears throughout Galland's *Nuits*, including "Le Portefaix," in which he and his vizier come across the house where the inhabitants are entertaining the porter. Gueullette also interpolates details from another tale from the *Nuits*, "Les Trois Pommes" ("The Three Apples"), which begins with the caliph offering money to an impoverished fisherman to cast his nets one more time before going home and giving them whatever he catches. In the *Nuits*, the caliph and his vizier find the body of a butchered woman in the chest caught by the fisherman's nets. In Gueullette's variation, the fisherman makes three catches, each of which brings in one of the hunchbacked brothers. At the house to which the three men have brought him, the porter retells the story from his own point of view, with scathing remarks about the widow. He describes the three instances of throwing the hunchbacked corpses into the river, and here the narrative slips into a *mise-en-abyme* with its repetition of this previously thrice-repeated episode. Yet the hunchbacks, rescued by the fisherman from the abyss, sputter out water as well as *eau-de-vie*, and it comes to light that they are not dead, only dead drunk. The hunchbacks instantiate Gueullette's aims of resuscitating stories; they, like many of his sources, find new life as he crosses them with other tales.

In addition to confessing that he borrowed material from Straparola, Gueullette also overtly acknowledges the French orientalists as inspiration. In the *avis* to the *Sultanes*, he notes that "Messieurs Galland, & Pétis de la Croix, ou du moins ceux qui leur ont prêté leur plume pour rediger & écrire les Contes Arabes, Persans & Turcs, paroissent avoir épuisé la matiere, & il semble qu'il n'y ait plus qu'a glaner après eux" (*Sultanes* 2).[21] Gueullette emphasizes the uncertainty of the relationship that Galland and Pétis have with their sources, wondering whose pen it was precisely that was responsible for their *Nuits* and *Jours*. This has two primary and interrelated effects

that are central to my interpretation of Gueullette's role in the history of the oriental tale: first, this portrayal of Galland and Pétis likewise reflects on Gueullette himself and underscores the fact that though he may be an author, his materials do not refer to a definitive original and have undergone some degree of mediation. Second, his use of the words *rédiger* ("compose") and *écrire* ("write") cast Galland and Pétis not as translators, but as writers.

Gueullette finally abandons the conceit of faithful transmission entirely with his Peruvian tales from 1733. While he begins his dedication by stating that, after losing sight of the north star, he was "réduit à traverser des mers immenses: & après une longue navigation, je me suis trouvé au Perou" ("reduced to crossing vast seas, and after a long trip, I found myself in Peru"; *Heure* i), he makes it clear in the paragraphs that follow that his journeys were only textual:

> N'allez pourtant pas vous imaginer, Madame, que j'ai été chercher dans l'autre Hemisphere le privilege de débiter des fictions. Malgré le proverbe, *a beau mentir qui vient de loin*; ce n'est plus la mode d'aller chercher ce droit au-delà des mers. Mille Auteurs de ma connoissance l'ont acquis sans sortir de leur cabinet. (*Heure* iii-iv)[22]

Gueullette distinguishes himself from the authors of travel narratives, themselves not always reliable, and assumes the right to create fictions from the comfort of his desk. Significantly, he knows of a thousand, which implies that he is the thousand-and-first, he who begins a series anew by amassing what preceded him. Borges has said of the title *The Thousand and One Nights*, "there is something very important: the suggestion of an infinite book. It practically is. The Arabs say that no one can read *The Thousand and One Nights* to the end. Not for reasons of boredom: one feels the book is infinite" (567). The *avertissement des libraires* (bookseller's notice) to Gueullette's last collection of tales provides the final word on Gueullette's *contes*. This notice claims that the origins of the tales are not of the booksellers' concern; their interest is only in publishing the tales. The theme of the manuscript in need of a new home thus reappears, though the responsibility is not the translator's, but the booksellers':

> Il nous suffit de dire pour le présent que la copie de ces deux volumes des *Mille & une Heure*, nous étant tombé entre les mains, nous avons cru pouvoire mettre sous presse un Livre, qui pouvoit figurer dans les cabinets avec les Contes Arabes, Persans & Tartares. Il nous a paru que le dessein des Auteurs étoit le même. […] tous ont eu recours aux évenemens merveilleux, afin de surprendre & d'attacher le Lecteur: tous ont revêtu leurs narrations des ornemens qu'ils ont trouvé les plus convenables. (Gueullette, *Heure* v)[23]

The booksellers intimate that the *Hours* were the fruits of a man "fertile en fictions" ("fertile in fictions"; Gueullette, *Heure* v) who is in the company of other "Authors" who had shed light on Arabic and Persian customs. This last word by the booksellers also suggests that Gueullette is passing the baton to new copyists for the next reprisal of the "thousand and one" theme.

In conclusion, Gueullette's career as a storyteller provides its own plot about his

relationship to his sources. With *Soirées Bretonnes*, he presented rewritings of stories primarily derived from *Serendip* within a Breton frame. His pose as a translator, which involved mimicking the French orientalists Pétis and Galland, "pose [...] la question de l'identité de la traduction" ("bring(s) into question the identity of translation"; Martens 195), specifically in terms of the orientalists of eighteenth-century France. His reproduction of these translators' paratextual formulae is one element of the "disguise mechanism" of pseudotranslation evoked by Toury, who also indicated that innovation could enter into a literary tradition undercover. With Gueullette, this innovation is the explicit hybridization and recontextualization of tales from widely different origins. In so doing, Gueullette exposed the subjective mediation in the transmission of texts from one culture to another.

Notes

1. "It is one of the prettiest of all the 'Thousand & One' Collections. I have them in front of me... I still advise my Readers to read the modern imitation, in preference of the original & the old Translations." Unless otherwise noted, all translations are my own.

2. His first collection, *Soirées bretonnes : Nouveaux contes de fées* (printed only in 1712) was followed by *Les Mille et un Quart-d'heure, contes tartares* (1715 (Vol. I-II), 1717 (Vol. III-IV), reprinted in 1723, 1724, 1730, 1737, 1753, 1778, 1780, 1783, 1785), *Les Aventures merveilleuses du mandarin Fum-Hoam, contes chinois* (1723, 1725, 1728), *Les Sultanes de Guzarate, contes mongols* (1732, 1733, 1736, 1749, 1765, 1782), and *Les Mille et une heures, contes péruviens* (1733, followed by an expanded version in 1759). See *Thomas-Simon Gueulette; édition critique établie sous la direction de Jean-François Perrin*, for complete editorial histories for each of the collections of tales.

3. "Through the feigned implementation of formal elements of translation and its paratextual protocols, these hoaxes bring into question the identity of translation by generating ironies ad libitum, thereby challenging certain properties characteristic of the type of text to which it pretends to belong."

4. "They remind me of a woman in Tours whom I loved very much, and who was beautiful but also unfaithful."

5. "If in other places I added or subtracted something, as was certainly the case on five or six occasions, I did the first so as to shed light on that which is unclear and could pose problems that would be entirely undesirable for some; and the second so as to avoid repetitions or other impertinences that would doubtlessly offend a delicate sensibility. I followed the storyline exactly and accurately, but I didn't want to create the grotesqueries that it's impossible to avoid when one restricts oneself to the servitude of translating word for word."

6. "I took the idea for several of these Tales by an ancient Author entitled *The Facetious Nights of Lord Straparola*, printed for the sixteenth time in 1615 […] The Ladies who have written in this genre thus far have, at least for the most part, drawn from the same source."

7. "The reader will no longer find at every night: *My dear sister, if you aren't sleeping, etc.* As this repetition has shocked several intelligent persons, it has been omitted to accommodate their delicacy. The translator hopes that scholars will forgive him for the infidelity to his original in this regard, because he has otherwise religiously retained the style and character of oriental stories, making his work worthy of their libraries."

8. For Mahdi's scathing critique of Galland, see "The Sources of Galland's *Nuits*." He himself has his fair share of critics; see Dobie.

9. See Marzolph.

10. "For the rest, I didn't think it was necessary to separate them by evenings, nor put the reflections that are at the end of each of the tales, as in the original. The simplicity of this discourse would certainly have bored the reader, who will take greater pleasure in reading these tales without interruption."

11. "Yet I don't know if it was a matter of prevention or if in fact oriental stories lose all of their charm when they are disguised; my efforts didn't seem to succeed at all. I therefore believed that it was necessary to take the middle road, to temper at certain points, & to explain others with short notes."

12. "The genius and the device of oriental tales such as *The Thousand and One Days* and *The Thousand and One Nights* are imitated so successfully in these so-called *Tartar Tales* that many people thought they had been translated, like the others, from Persian or Arabic originals."

13. "These *fabliaux* or tales that I give to the public are translated from a very ancient manuscript which Monsieur de B..., president of the parliament of Brittany, presented me with a few years ago. Their original title is *Soirées Bretonnes*."

14. "Yet, your grace, I sense that I somewhat overestimate myself, and that it is for finer nibs than mine to compose such Panegyrics; it was only Appelles who was to paint Alexander; and I, in imitation of the retinue of other Painters of his time, must satisfy myself with secretly admiring the brilliant feats of the Prince who gave you life and not disfigure them with praise not worthy of him."

15. "The Dervishes or Darveshes are members of the Mahometean religion. They all affect to appear modest, humble, patient, & charitable and their legs are naked and stomachs are bare, & some still burn themselves with a hot iron to exercise their patients. They make a profession of poverty, chastity, and obedience, but if they are not virtuous enough to contain themselves, they may obtain permission to leave their Monastery, and some of them are solitary and somewhat like our hermits."

16. "Surely, a work as lengthy as the Arab or Persian tales had been expected of me. I can imagine the reader's surprise and perhaps anger at finding in this volume the conclusion to a Story that had been expected to follow a considerable number of adventures. This irritation would not be without merit, insofar as it would be a sign that the reader had not been bored. Yet there is a sound reason for my effort: though the book's title is *The Thousand and One Quarter Hours*, the attentive reader will recognize that I had no intention of relating all of the Stories that had been told to the King of Astrakhan."

17. "All the better if the reader took as much pleasure with them as Shems-Eddin must have, & if the brevity of the work is the only failing that can be attributed to the Author."

18. "borrowed the best of the *Facetious Nights* from his *Thousand and One Quarter-Hours*; François Béroalde de Verville found the core plot for his *Authentic Story or the Voyage of the Fortunate Princes* in his *Breton Evenings*; Gautier de Costes de la Calprenède literally recopied the two best tales of the *Sultanas of Gujarat* in his own *Cleopatra*."

19. "several of our Novelists have not shied from drawing on what were little-known sources of Stories, sometimes only changing the names. I do not say this to reproach them; on the contrary, I believe that we are obliged to them for having rescued, so to speak, these works from obscurity; following their example, if such bases for my Stories are recognized, I think that I will be treated with the same indulgence as these men have been."

20. "following the example of Harun al-Rashid his ancestor, would often walk at night in Bagdad to see what was going on & judge for himself if people were satisfied with his rule."

21. "Messieurs Galland, & Pétis de la Croix, or at least those who loaned them their pen to compose & write the Arab, Persian, & Turkish tales seem to have exhausted the material, & it seems that all that can be done now is to glean after them."

22. "Yet do not go imagining, Madame, that I went looking in the other hemisphere for the privilege to create fictions. Despite the proverb 'cows far away have long horns,' people don't go looking for this right overseas anymore. I know of a thousand authors who have acquired it without leaving their

study."

23. "Here, we find it suffices to say that the copy of the two volumes of *The Thousand and One Hours* has fallen into our hands and that we believed we could publish a book that may appear on bookshelves alongside the Arabic, Persian, and Tartar Tales. It appears to us that the authors' design has been the same […] They have all employed marvelous events so as to surprise and engage the reader. They have all decorated their narratives with ornaments that they found to be the most suitable."

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