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Translation as fraud

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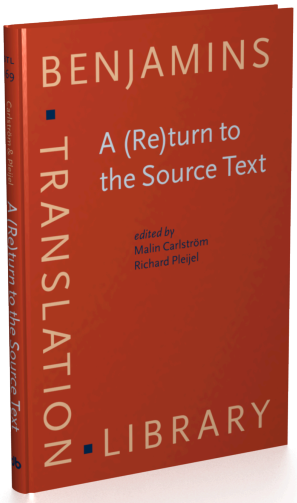

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Tracing the imagined original of a Russian pseudotranslation book series

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In this chapter, I analyze a Russian pseudotranslation book series as translations from imagined originals. Drawing on Toury's notion of assumed translation (2012) and Liu's (2019) focus on the metatextual characteristics of pseudotranslation, I aim to: (1) classify the book series, (2) establish how this type of pseudotranslation differs from translations with regular source and target texts, and (3) discuss the benefits and consequences of perceiving pseudotranslations as translations from imagined originals. Firstly, based on an analysis of paratexts, I classify the book series as a hoax or a marketing strategy. Secondly, I argue that the notion of "imagined original" forces the reader to pay attention to the pitfalls and inherent ambiguity of pseudotranslation, while also drawing attention to issues related to imagology and ethics.

Keywords: pseudotranslation, imagined original, source text, translation studies, imagology, ethics

1. Introduction

In 2022, Douglas Robinson published *The Last Days of Maiju Lassila*, a memoir-novel, labeled on the front cover as "a pseudo-translation by Douglas Robinson" (Robinson 2022). That is, the author, who is also the pseudotranslator, does not conceal the fact that the novel is a fake translation. On the back cover of the book, Robinson poses the rhetorical question "Is it still a hoax if the hoaxer declares the hoax up front?" and explains that it is an experimental memoir/novel/translation that "toys with our 'certainty' about reality" (Robinson 2022, back cover). Correspondingly, I would suggest that more traditional forms of pseudotranslation may draw attention to and make us question the epistemological uncertainties of translation. Commonly referred to as hoaxes, fakes, and frauds, pseudotrans-

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lations have a history of being excluded from literary curricula and literary historiography when their status is revealed (Baer 2019: 62–63). However, I argue that pseudotranslations, in defiance of their fraudulent nature, give rise to urgent questions related to the very essence of translation and particularly to the source/target dichotomy. In this chapter I will therefore discuss pseudotranslation, and specifically pseudotranslations seen as translations from *imagined originals* (Baer 2017: 131–132), based on a Russian pseudotranslation book series.

Between 2013 and 2014, a series of six crime novels by the unknown Swedish author Eva Khansen was published by the major Russian publishing house Eksmo, together with the smaller publisher Iauza. The series, entitled Tsvet boli (Color of pain), was part of the publishing house's book series Shvedskii BDSM detektiv (Swedish BDSM detective), in which a total of eight novels by three different authors, allegedly from Sweden (6 books), Norway (1 book) and Denmark (1 book), were published.[1] Marketed as a crossover between Swedish crime fiction author Stieg Larson's Millennium trilogy and E. L. James's Fifty Shades series, the first novel in the Tsvet boli series was described by the publishing house as "a unique project that rides the wave of the most sought-after literary trends today" (Eksmo 2013a).[2] With refined scenes and an intricate detective plot, the novel is said to be "the most impressive Swedish crime novel of recent years" (ibid.). However, the author Eva Khansen does not exist; the so-called Tsvet boli series consists of six elaborate pseudotranslations.

The novels will be analyzed by means of a combination of paratextual and textual analysis. When it comes to the paratextual analysis, which comprises the first editions of all six novels in the series, both peritexts (texts that are part of the same volume as the main text) and epitexts (texts that are spatially detached from the main text) are of relevance (Genette 1997). Peritexts may include, for example, review quotes, author biographies, publisher's blurbs, legal information about copyright holders, and indications of the translator's name. As I am specifically interested in how the publisher markets the novels as translations, and how the allegedly Swedish author is introduced to Russian readers, I will limit the analysis of epitexts to include only what Kathryn Batchelor calls *industry created paratexts*, defined as "paratexts with senders who are authorized by the text-producers to produce paratexts for the text in question" (2018: 157). All industry created epitexts of relevance for this analysis are published online, on the publisher's website; they

1. In this chapter, the Library of Congress transliteration style for Russian has been used.

2. All quotes and examples from the material analyzed have been translated from Russian into English by me and are in this chapter only provided in translation due to space limitations. Original quotes are available upon request.

consist of an author biography and descriptions of the first and second novel in the series, published shortly after their initial release (Eksmo n.d-a, 2013a, 2013b).

The textual analysis covers the three first novels in the series and was performed by means of software-aided close reading. For this purpose, the novels were OCR-scanned and imported to NVivo, a software for qualitative data analysis, in which thematic codes were assigned to relevant segments throughout the reading process. The software is essential for the analysis stage, as it creates an overview of all codes, and makes it easier to divide them into parent or child codes if necessary, and ultimately to see patterns in the material analyzed.

The aim of the analysis is threefold: (1) to classify the Tsvet boli novel series according to established types of pseudotranslation (see Section 2), (2) to establish how this type of pseudotranslation differs from translations with regular source and target texts, and (3) to discuss possible benefits and/or consequences of perceiving pseudotranslations as imagined originals or source texts.

The remainder of this chapter is organized as follows. Section 2 provides a theoretical introduction to pseudotranslation, a survey of different types of pseudotranslation, and a discussion of pseudotranslation and imagology — an important topic, since pseudotranslation builds on representations of the imagined source culture. This is followed by a brief publication history of the Tsvet boli series, as well as the paratextual analysis and classification, in Section 3. Sections 4 and 5 contain the results of the textual and paratextual analyses, as well as a discussion of the implications of these results in relation to relevant theory. The chapter ends with a discussion of the results and a conclusion in Section 6.

2. Pseudotranslations as translations of imagined originals

2.1 Background and theoretical framework

In an article published in 1981, Gideon Toury defined pseudotranslations as "texts which are regarded as literary translations though no genuine STs exist for them, hence no actual TT-ST relationships" (1981: 19). Based on this definition, it could be asked why pseudotranslations — fake translations — should be analyzed within the field of translation studies at all. The answer becomes more evident within the target text-oriented approach Toury introduced in *Descriptive Translation Studies and Beyond* (1995), in which a slightly revised definition explains that pseudotranslations are "texts which have been *presented as* translations with no corresponding source texts in other languages ever having existed" (Toury 1995: 40; emphasis added). The difference between these two definitions is that the latter considers the agency of those responsible for the pseudotranslation and

the fact that it is a conscious choice to frame an original work as a translation. However, the significance of pseudotranslation for translation studies is perhaps most clearly defined in relation to the notion of *assumed translation*, which, in the revised edition of *Descriptive Translation Studies and Beyond* (2012), is defined as follows:

> all utterances in a [target] culture which are presented or regarded as translations, on any grounds whatever, as well as all phenomena within them and the processes that gave rise to them. (Toury 2012: 27)

Using this approach instead of trying to define translation in a precise way has the advantage, according to Toury, of shifting the focus from what translation is to what it is expected to be "under one or another set of specifiable conditions" (2012: 27). Therefore, texts that *pretend* to be translations also fit into the notion of assumed translation. Thus, as texts that pretend to be translations, pseudotranslations may offer an insight into how members of a community perceive translations in general, and how they perceive translations from a specific source culture in particular (Toury 2012: 52–54). That is, pseudotranslations are generally connected to the expectations of the reader and build on the target culture's assumptions about a hypothetical source text and source culture, which do indeed make them a significant area of research within translation studies. Additionally, as pointed out by Brian Baer, it is important to remember that those responsible for pseudotranslations obviously saw translation as adding value to a text (2019: 62–63). Hence, even when exposed, pseudotranslations may provide interesting materials for translation research and should not be excluded from literary historiographies and anthologies. In order to highlight the importance of pseudotranslations for translation studies, Baer suggests that the concept of pseudotranslation needs to be re-conceived "not as fake but as translations of an 'imagined' original" (Baer 2017: 131–132).

In my view, there are two difficulties involved with regarding pseudotranslations as translations of imagined originals, both of which may be discussed in relation to the previously mentioned notion of *assumed translation*, which comprises the following three postulates: (1) the source text postulate, (2) the transfer postulate, and (3) the relationship postulate (Toury 2012: 28). Taken together, the three postulates specify that an assumed translation may be defined as:

> any target-culture text for which there are reasons to tentatively posit the existence of another text, in another culture/language, from which it was presumably derived by transfer operations and to which it is now tied by a set of relationships based on shared features, some of which may be regarded — within the culture in question — as necessary and/or sufficient. (Toury 2012: 31)

Interestingly, Toury's treatment of pseudotranslation in relation to assumed translation and the three postulates has been criticized by Theo Hermans, according to whom there is no need to make a case for the legitimacy of pseudotranslations as objects of study within translation studies (1999: 50). Instead, he finds that Toury's way of approaching pseudotranslations in relation to the notion of assumed translation "creates a pseudo-problem," since fictitious translations "are not translations," and hence have no source texts, no transfers and no relationships (Hermans 1999: 51). In other terms, Toury's three postulates do not only direct attention towards something that does not exist, but also back towards the source text and source culture. Therefore, Toury's definition and framework of pseudotranslation is well suited for the analysis performed in this chapter, in which I specifically study pseudotranslations as translations of imagined originals. To conclude, if related to the notion of assumed translation, and seen as a translation of an imagined original, a pseudotranslation may be defined as:

> a target-culture text for which there is an *imagined* text, in another *imagined* culture/language, from which it was presumably derived by transfer operations and to which it is now tied by a set of relationships based on shared features, some of which may be regarded — within the culture in question — as necessary and/or sufficient. (Toury 2012: 31; emphasis added)

This brings me back to the two problems I mentioned earlier. The first problem is related to the source text postulate, and the fact that the existence of a source text implies the existence of a source language and a source culture. While translating from an imagined source text might seem a rather innocent activity, it becomes more problematic when an imagined source culture is involved. I will elaborate further on pseudotranslation in relation to manipulation and stereotypical representations of the source culture in Section 2.3 below.

The second problem is related to the transfer and relationship postulates. Since an imagined source text is an abstract phenomenon, it only exists as a concept in the mind of the pseudotranslator. Consequently, the transfer is also conceptual and will depend on how detailed a vision the pseudotranslator has of the imagined source text. This step is crucial, since pseudotranslation entails that the pseudotranslator must have a foot in each culture, inventing the transfer at the same time as authoring the work. In this sense, a pseudotranslation is both a source text and a target text, the relationship between the two becoming an inherent feature of the pseudotranslation. Because of this ambiguity, Jane Qian Liu describes pseudotranslation as "the most dramatic setting in which the foreign culture and the domestic culture conflict with each other" (2019: 400). She also describes pseudotranslation as "the most radical form of refraction," which is clearly shown in the following statement:

> [N]o one strives harder than the author of the pseudotranslation to incorporate foreign elements into his/ her work, and nowhere is the domestic culture more strikingly present than in the milieu of pseudotranslation, which is fraught with authorial intention. (Liu 2019: 400)

Liu pinpoints here what I see as the main difficulties of pseudotranslation, namely, how to separate the imagined source culture from the target culture, how to consistently relate to the intended reader of the source text, and finally, how to produce transfers that make the resulting pseudotranslation resemble actual translations.

When it comes to the intended reader, it is reasonable to assume that, when dealing with popular fiction, an author's intended reader *in most cases* would share their cultural and temporal context. This is also why Venuti (2009, 2019), for example, suggests that translations require recontextualization "according to intelligibilities and interests in the receiving culture" (Venuti 2019: 1).

In the article referred to above, Liu analyzes pseudotranslations in relation to their intertextual links with other translated texts, emphasizing the metafictional nature of pseudotranslation (2019). Constructing her framework on the basis of previous work on intertextuality by Gérard Genette (1997) and Basil Hatim (1997), Liu suggests that pseudotranslation forms links to existing translations on the *generic, discursive*, and *textual* levels. Since Liu's framework harmonizes with Toury's previously discussed notion of assumed translation and focuses on the aspects of interest in this analysis, specifically how pseudotranslations deliberately attempt to mimic existing translations, the same levels of analysis will be used in this chapter. Liu explains that on the generic level, translations engage intertextually with authentic translations in how they aim to adopt "the specific norms and stylistic characteristics of literary translation," which may include peritexts, such as the name of a translator and a source text title (2019: 393). However, the generic level also concerns other genre-related aspects, such as the way in which the story is told and how the plot develops (398). The discursive level has to do with thematic rather than formal connections between the pseudotranslation and authentic translations. According to Liu, such connections allow pseudotranslation to "borrow the cultural capital of translated works and the foreign works behind them" while it also may have its own political agenda (ibid.). That is, pseudotranslations may be produced with the purpose of promoting a specific political principle or ideology associated with translations from a specific source culture (398–399). On the textual level, pseudotranslations may, according to Liu, be influenced by or borrow words, phrases, and passages from authentic translations (393, 395). This may be related to Toury's assumption that pseudotranslations are legitimate objects of research within translation studies, since they

adhere to target culture expectations of what a translation looks like. In my analysis, however, it was also relevant to pay attention to when the pseudotranslations *fail* to appear as actual translations. Therefore, on the textual level I have also included allusions, intertextual references, Russian cultural phenomena, stereotypical representations, and the use of proper names, focusing on how these features give rise to different types of *interferences* and *distortions*, that is, segments in which the pseudotranslations analyzed fail to behave as would be expected of a translation.

In the analyzed novels, distortions occur when the perspective is distorted; it becomes clear that the novel is not written for a Swedish intended reader. Swedish culture is treated from the outside, as something foreign, and Swedes are described as "them" rather than "us." An interference, conversely, is when the Russian culture makes its presence felt in the text, and when Russian cultural phenomena become part of the narrative.

2.2 Reasons for pseudotranslation

As indicated in the introduction to this chapter, pseudotranslation is often discussed as something strange and artificial, which, according to Stephen Kellman is far from the truth: "If there are reasons — such as vanity or commerce — to disguise a text's origins in translation, there can also be reasons to claim that a text is a translation when it is not" (Kellman 2010: 15). In this section, these reasons are in focus. By means of a survey of previous research, I will review possible reasons for — or uses of — pseudotranslation. Firstly, Toury explains that pseudotranslations may offer "a convenient and relatively safe way" of introducing new types of literature into a culture (2012: 48). Liu provides an example of this use of pseudotranslation from Chinese literature, which, at the turn of the twentieth century, was in crisis (2019: 289–290). Toury's second use of pseudotranslation is when innovativeness is sought "on the level of the individual," for example when an author wants to turn a fresh page in their literary production (2012: 49). Thirdly, Toury mentions cases where pseudotranslation plays an important role in establishing specific sectors or genres of non-canonized literature, which may even be considered as inappropriate (2012: 51). An example of this is provided in Anikó Sohár's study on how fantasy and science fiction were established in Hungary through a combination of real translations and fictitious translations (1998).[3]

3. In relation to her material, Sohár finds it necessary to differentiate between fictitious translation and pseudotranslation, the former being cases where an author acts as the translator of a foreign novel and provides fictitious bibliographical data, and the latter when an English pen name, sometimes in combination with a fictitious English title, is used (1998: 40).

Importantly, pseudotranslation may also be part of so-called "culture planning," which implies that changes in the literary polysystem are imposed from above, as might be the case in totalitarian regimes (Toury 2012: 51). To some extent, this was the case in the Soviet Union, where not only pseudotranslation but also translation more generally was part of culture planning (Witt 2011: 154). However, Susanna Witt emphasizes that it is not easy to make distinctions between culture planning activities imposed from above, and those initiated from below by authors pursuing individual goals (2011: 154).

A fourth reason briefly mentioned by Toury (2012: 48) and further discussed by Tahir Gürçağlar (2014) is Julio-César Santoyo's (1984: 50–51) understanding of pseudotranslation as a framing device or narrative technique (1984: 50–51). A fifth reason for the use of pseudotranslation is provided by André Lefevere, who suggests that not all pseudotranslations are innovative, challenging, or subversive. Instead, there are also examples of mere hoaxes perpetrated by authors in need of money or who want to "show up their colleagues" (Lefevere 2000: 1123). Sabine Strümper-Krobb emphasizes the marketing aspect embedded in this reason, and notes that pseudotranslation may:

> [make] fake product interesting and sometimes inventing a whole "brand," in many cases in combination with the fiction of an author and a story surrounding the discovery, retrieval and reconstruction of the original source.
>
> (Strümper-Krobb 2018: 199–200)

Lefevere's "reductive approach" in calling pseudotranslations "mere hoaxes" is criticized by Tahir Gürçağlar, who argues that commercial goals are not to be ignored, and that it is always important to separate between cause and effect (2014: 519).

Tahir Gürçağlar's discussion of pseudotranslation includes three additional reasons, the first of which — the sixth on my list — is that pseudotranslations make it possible for writers to hide under the veil of translation in cases where they do not want to be associated with the work in question, for example because of the subject matter or genre, or in order to be able to express critical views on their own culture (2014: 519). The seventh reason is that pseudotranslation may be used to promote a specific language as a cultural language in a multilingual culture (Tahir Gürçağlar 2014: 520). This was the case in South Africa in the late nineteenth century, where a pseudotranslation of a travel novel in Afrikaans was used in order to promote Afrikaans as a cultural language (Naudé 2008). The eighth reason, also provided by Tahir Gürçağlar, is that pseudotranslation may be used by those in power to legitimize their position (Tahir Gürçağlar 2014: 520). Finally, a unique type of pseudotranslation that originates from Soviet Ukraine prisons in the 1970s–80s is described by Valentyna Savchyn (2021). These were origi-

nal works written by prisoners of conscience, smuggled out disguised as translations to family and friends to avoid censorship (2021: 260). However, this type of pseudotranslation is different from those mentioned above in that they never functioned as translations within the Ukrainian literary system (ibid.). To summarize, according to previous research, pseudotranslation may be used:

1. to introduce innovations in a safe way (including as a tool for culture planning);
2. when innovativeness is sought "on the level of the individual" (including as a tool for culture planning);
3. for establishing specific sectors or genres of non-canonized literature (including as a tool for culture planning);
4. as a narrative technique;
5. as a hoax or marketing strategy;
6. as disguise, when an author does not want to be associated with the work in question (e.g., due to the subject matter);
7. to promote a new cultural language;
8. to legitimize a position of power;
9. to avoid censorship.

In Section 2.3, I will, based on the analyses described in Sections 4 and 5, attempt to classify the Tsvet boli series in relation to these uses of/reasons for pseudotranslation.

2.3 Pseudotranslation, manipulation, imagology

According to Toury, pseudotranslation "always implies a deliberate act of subordination, namely, to a culture which is considered prestigious, important, or dominant in some way" (2012: 50). Consequently, those responsible for the pseudotranslation wish to "impart to the new text part of the prestige of the 'donating' culture *as it is seen in the eyes of the persons-in-the-'domestic'-culture*" (ibid.; emphasis added). Toury emphasizes here the way in which pseudotranslation manipulates the target culture's reception of the text, through the prestige of the donating culture. This is not the type of manipulation I will focus on in this section. Instead, I want to draw attention to how pseudotranslation may manipulate the image of the imagined source culture, and how it may give rise to misconceptions about a literature, culture, or nation — aspects of relevance within the framework of imagology.

Imagology has its roots in comparative literature and flourished in literary studies in the 1970s and 80s. After being abandoned within comparative literature, towards the end of the twentieth century it began to influence neighboring dis-

ciplines "in which its insights and preoccupations were being re-invented" (Leerssen 2007: 24). Defining image as "the mental silhouette of the other," Manfred Beller explains that literary imagology "studies the origin and function of characteristics of other countries and people," with a particular focus on how they are presented in works of literature, plays, poems, travel books, and essays (Beller 2007: 7). Within translation studies, imagology focuses on how such characteristics are mediated through translation selection and agency, on the one hand, and linguistic shifts and manipulations on the other (Flynn et al. 2016: 2–4). Imagology has been studied by Yolanda Rodríguez Pérez in relation to pseudotranslation in a chapter that focuses on Dutch translation and pseudotranslation of Spanish literature in the seventeenth century (2016: 38). According to Rodríguez Pérez, pseudotranslations are particularly interesting since they "attempt to match the existing images and expectations of their readers, while engaging with contemporary discourses" (2016: 37). By means of imitations of the Spanish picaresque novel, the pseudotranslator G. De Bay managed to arouse fascination for the old enemy, Spain, while at the same time conveying a negative image of the country (2016: 50–51).

Another article that illustrates how pseudotranslations can convey cultural stereotypes is Demmy Verbeke's analysis of two English seventeenth-century publications supposedly translated from Dutch (2010). Building on already established stereotypes of Germany and the Low Countries as "heavy-drinking nations," these publications not only exploited previous representations, but also continued to inform the views of English readers (2010: 188).

As illustrated by the above examples, pseudotranslation may be connected to pre-existing stereotypical images of the imagined source culture. It therefore becomes relevant to mention stereotypical representations of Sweden in general, and Russian representations of Sweden in particular. Common representations of Sweden include the Social-Democratic idea of the *folkhem* (home of people), and an idyllic society "where solutions for different problems were sought by mutual cooperation" (Rühling 2007: 248–249). According to Lutz Rühling (2007: 250), the idyllic image has been disseminated by Carl Larsson's paintings and Astrid Lindgren's children's books — including in film versions by Olle Hellbom. This stereotypical image is particularly strong in Russia, where Astrid Lindgren's fame is immeasurable. Her character Karlsson from *Karlsson på taket* ('Karlsson on the Roof') has a place in the heart of every Russian, thanks both to the translated books and to a series of immensely popular domestic cartoons by Boris Stepantsev. According to Rühling, the Swedish reputation for sexual freedom has faded, but I suggest that it still is valid in Russia, conserved in the expression *Shvedskaia sem'ia* (Swedish family), which roughly translates as "collective housing with free sexual habits" (*NEs ryska ordbok* n.d.). Other common stereotypical repre-

sentations of Sweden include economic prosperity and large international companies, but also "successful sportsmen and acclaimed pop singers" (Rühling 2007: 248–249).

Interestingly, polls by the Russian Levada Center have established that Swedish literature plays an important role with regard to the image and appreciation of Sweden in Russia (Zorkaia 2015). Lately, crime fiction by authors like Sjöwall/Wahlöö and Henning Mankell has also started to influence the stereotypical image of Sweden (Rühling 2007: 250). When it comes to Russia, this influence is very strong. Translations of socially critical Swedish crime fiction, particularly by left-wing authors, was used in the Soviet Union as a means of influencing the image of Sweden (Podlevskikh Carlström 2022). By means of translation selection and ideological paratextual framing, the Communist Party promoted a dark image of Sweden as a country where the citizens were crushed by the capitalist state (2022: 167). In post-Soviet Russia, Swedish crime fiction has increased in popularity, especially in the early twenty-first century, following the so-called *deckarboom* (boom in Swedish crime fiction); in addition to the previously mentioned Sjöwall/Wahlöö and Mankell, work by authors such as Liza Marklund, Camilla Läckberg, Stieg Larsson, and Johan Theorin continue to influence the Russian image of Sweden today (Berglund 2017; Podlevskikh Carlström 2023). Interestingly, a recent analysis of the Russian reception of Swedish crime fiction in the period 2010–2021 indicates that more traditional, positive images of Sweden (e.g., as prosperous and democratic) are often used ironically in literary reviews, in contrast to the crimes described in the novels. Furthermore, the crime fiction novels reviewed do seem to impact the critics' image of Sweden. (Podlevskikh Carlström 2024: 117–118).

3. The Tsvet boli series: Plot and publication history

3.1 The plot of the book series

The main character of the novels in the series is Linn Lindberg, a university student who, in the first novel, *Tsvet boli: krasnyi* (The color of pain: red), is hired by Anna Svensson, the owner of an investigative online publication, to help investigate a series of mysterious murders with links to BDSM. Suspicion falls on Lars Johansson, an eccentric young millionaire who is an expert in *shibari*, a type of Japanese rope bondage used in the murders. However, Johansson turns out to have an alibi for the first murder, as his servant Sven can confirm that he spent the day in question in his castle on an island in the Stockholm archipelago. Svensson, who intends to publish a news article about the murders, does not believe in

Johansson's innocence, and suspects that his servant is lying to protect him. She therefore hires a group of students and gives them various assignments regarding Johansson and his acquaintances. Linn Lindberg is given the task of contacting the secretive Johansson on the pretext that she wants information about the Vikings for her thesis. Lindberg is familiar with the subject, as her grandfather was a well-known Viking expert, and she manages to get invited to Johansson's castle. For various reasons, Lindberg stays in the castle for a longer period of time than intended, and starts an intimate relationship with Johansson, even though she still suspects him of the mysterious murders of women. In the end, it is revealed that the murders were linked to Johansson's dark past and that they were carried out by Anna Svensson herself, who turns out to be one of Johansson's former BDSM partners, previously known as Paula. After making an unsuccessful attempt to stage her own death, Paula escapes the police.

In the next two books of the series, Linn Lindberg continues to search for Anna/Paula, solving crimes with links to Lars's past, and to a secretive, sadistic, Stockholm-based BDSM network. The mystery line of the second novel, *Tsvet boli: chernyi* (The color of pain: black) revolves around immigrant women who are kidnapped and murdered by the BDSM network for the purpose of filming brutal snuff videos, while the romance line continues to follow all the ups and downs of Lars Johansson and Linn Lindberg's complicated love life. The story depicts both Linn and her friend Britt's private efforts to locate Anna/Paula and the official investigation by police officers Dag Vanger and Frida. The third novel, *Tsvet boli: belyi* (The color of pain: white), depicts the aftermath of the murders previously committed, including the murder of Anna/Paula, and the continuing efforts to identify and catch the so-called "Master," who is the leader of the BDSM network. All three novels are set in Stockholm, Sweden. The love lines in all three novels are told from the first person point of view, while the parts of the narratives that describe the police work are instead told from the third person point of view.

3.2 Publication history

The Tsvet boli series consists of the following six novels, here listed in the order of publication: *Tsvet boli: krasnyi* (Khansen 2013c), *Tsvet boli: chernyi* (Khansen 2013b), *Tsvet boli: belyi* (Khansen 2013a), *Tsvet boli: barkhat* (Khansen 2014a), *Tsvet boli: shelk* (Khansen 2014c), and *Tsvet boli: lateks* (Khansen 2014b). The hard cover editions of the novels were published between April 1, 2013, and December 12, 2014. That is, all six novels were published within 15 months, and the first three novels came out within just over three months. The titles of the novels share the series name Tsvet boli, followed by the name of a color or a fabric: *krasnyi* (red), *chernyi* (black), *belyi* (white), *shelk* (silk), *barkhat* (velvet), and

lateks (latex). For the sake of simplicity, in the analysis section I will refer to the novels using the short forms of the English titles, as indicated in Table 1.

Table 1. The publication of the six novels in the Tsvet boli series

Title	Short title	Type	Pages	Publication date	First print run
Tsvet boli: krasnyi (The color of pain: red)	Red	Hardcover	544	2013-04-01	10 000
Tsvet boli: krasnyi (The color of pain: red)	Red	Paperback	480	2014-06-17	10 000
Tsvet boli: chernyi (The color of pain: black)	Black	Hardcover	416	2013-07-03	10 000
Tsvet boli: chernyi (The color of pain: black)	Black	Paperback	416	2014-07-04	10 000
Tsvet boli: belyi (The color of pain: white)	White	Hardcover	352	2013-10-15	11 000
Tsvet boli: belyi (The color of pain: white)	White	Paperback	288	2014-08-12	3000
Tsvet boli: barkhat (The color of pain: velvet)	Velvet	Hardcover	448	2014-02-26	11 000
Tsvet boli: barkhat (The color of pain: velvet)	Velvet	Paperback	384	2014-11-05	4000
Tsvet boli: shelk (The color of pain: silk)	Silk	Hardcover	320	2014-08-01	7000
Tsvet boli: shelk (The color of pain: silk)	Silk	Paperback	288	2014-12-01	4000
Tsvet boli: lateks (The color of pain: latex)	Latex	Hardcover	320	2014-12-12	5000
Tsvet boli: lateks (The color of pain: latex)	Latex	Paperback	288	2015-04-14	3000

Information about all editions listed in Table 1 was still available on the publisher's webpage as late as April 2025 (Eksmo n.d.-b), although they are currently listed as out of stock. In addition to the hardcover and paperback editions, the novels have subsequently been published as eBooks and as eAudiobooks; however, no information about publication dates for these is available on the publisher's webpage. Both eAudiobooks and eBooks continue to be available for sale in several major Russian online bookstores (e.g. Ozon, LitRes) as of April 2025, as

well as in some Western online bookstores (Google Books). New reader reviews continue to appear.

The fact that a book framed as a translation lacks information about the translator's name and the source text title is unusual, and attentive readers started to suspect that the novels were pseudotranslations rather quickly. When the Moscow News interviewed Alexander Koshelev, the head of the publisher Iauza, about the first novel in the series in 2013, he admitted that the novel was written by a Russian author who "didn't really want to go public because of the content of the book" (Neumeyer 2013). The explanation provided by Koshelev suggests that the publication ought to be classified as the sixth type of pseudotranslation, namely the need to hide behind a fictitious translation; however, for several reasons, I do not consider this explanation to be credible. I will return to this matter in the discussion in Section 6. Interestingly, recently published reader reviews indicate that the novels in the Tsvet boli series are still being read as translations from Swedish.

4. Results: The generic and discursive levels

In this section, I will provide the results from the analyses of the generic and discursive levels. While the generic level deals with how the novels analyzed connect intertextually to the genre of translation, the discursive level instead focuses on thematic aspects of the narrative, and on the fact that the texts may advocate for an ideological agenda associated with translations from a specific source culture or may have their own political agenda.

4.1 The generic level

4.1.1 *Peritexts*

While most Western publications provide all information regarding an edition on the so-called copyright page, or edition notice (placed on the back of the title page), Russian publications separate the information related to a specific edition over two pages: *oborot titul'nogo lista* (the back of the title page), also referred to as *kontrtitul*, and *kontsevaia titul'naia stranitsa* (end title page), placed in the end matter, after the main text. According to the latest Russian standard for publication data, GOST P 7.0.4–2006, information related to the source language and translation may be placed on the title page, on the back of the title page, or on the end title page (Federal'noe agentstvo po tekhnicheskomu regulirovaniiu i metrologii 2006).

The front covers of all six editions include the following peritexts: author name, book title, and review quotes from supposedly Swedish newspapers. In total, 23 review quotes are used to market the book series, with each novel in the series having between 3 and 5 review quotes on the front cover (see Appendix 1).

An analysis of the review quotes reveals that 14 of them focus on the genre and the fact that the novel is an innovative mixture between crime fiction and romance novel. For example, a quote from a review in the fictitious magazine *Malmö Se och Hoer* claims that "Thanks to Ava [Sic] Khansen, female readers no longer have to choose between a detective story and a novel about love: her books are both!" (Khansen 2013b:front cover). Five of the review quotes inform the reader that this is either the best Swedish literature available today, or the best Swedish crime fiction since Stieg Larsson died. For example, a review quote from the equally fictitious *Svensk Expressen* states that: "This novel proves once again that Swedish crime fiction is #1 in the world today!" (Khansen 2013b:front cover). Finally, four reviews relate the novel in question to Stieg Larson's Millennium trilogy and E. L. James's Fifty Shades series. An example is the following quote from the fictitious publication *Stockholm Expressen*:

> Eva Khansen's bestsellers are a precious fusion of a Swedish detective with an erotic novel! If Stieg Larsson had time to read "50 Shades of Grey," his "The Girl with the Dragon tattoo" would have a new tattoo — in the color of pain…
>
> (Khansen 2014a:front cover)

The foreign newspaper names in combination with the contents of the review quotes frame the novels as translations. The review quotes come from 18 different magazines and newspapers; however, none of the alleged publications exists, and some of the names of the publications are either misspelled or deviate from Swedish language rules. That is, all review quotes are fabricated by the Russian publishers.

Neither the back of the title page nor the end title page of the six books contains any information related to source language, source text title, source text publisher, or translator. Instead, the end title pages list three different editors (editor-in-chief, fiction editor, and technical editor), a proofreader, and, in the three first books in the series, two individuals responsible for the series design.

4.1.2 *Epitexts*

While there is no biographical information about the author in the peritext, the publisher's website contains an author bio, which was still available in April 2025 (Eksmo n.d.-a). According to this, Eva Khansen is a Swedish author born in 1977, who studied at Uppsala University, "the oldest university in Scandinavia" (Eksmo n.d.-a). During her studies, she supposedly specialized in philology, art history,

and theater studies, in which she became an expert. The bio further claims that she now lives in Stockholm with her husband and two children. Finally, the bio contains a statement about the popularity of the novel series: "Thanks to the versatility of these works, critics and readers put Eva Khansen in the list of the best modern European authors. Interest in the work of the writer does not fade" (Eksmo n.d.-a).

Two promotional texts about the first two books in the series were published on the publisher's website in 2013 (Eksmo 2013a, 2013b). Apart from providing summaries of the plot, both texts mention Stieg Larsson, either comparing Eva Khansen's novels with his work, or indicating that Larsson has shown the world that Swedish crime fiction is of good quality. Both texts also compare the erotic scenes in Khansen's novels to those in E. L. James's Fifty Shades series. In one text, the publisher claims that Eva Khansen's novel — due to its explosive mixture of crime fiction and open sex scenes — has been called "the most impressive Swedish detective novel of recent years" (Eksmo 2013a). Both texts also describe the novels as "unique projects" that respond to the latest global trends. Both texts include descriptions of the Swedish capital, Stockholm: while the first text claims that Stockholm is a city where passions run high, and the city "partly loses its usual tourist gloss and appears before the readers in a halo of mystery," the other instead states that the story takes place "against the intriguing background of modern Stockholm" (Eksmo 2013a, 2013b).

4.1.3 *Generic connections to translations in the main text*

As indicated above, generic connections to previous translations occur not only in the paratexts of pseudotranslations, but also in the way in which the story is told and how the plot develops. Firstly, the use of colors in the titles, in the sense that the colors are shades of pain, links the novels to E. L. James's Fifty Shades series.[4] The same goes for the novels' explicit sex scenes, in which Lars challenges Linn — just as Mr. Gray challenged Anastasia Steele in *Fifty Shades of Gray* — to try new things, to dare to show desire and to try bondage and BDSM. Furthermore, both Lars Johansson and Mr. Gray are rich, with dark secrets in their past, including mistresses with poor morals. Thus, the titles and the romance/intimate lines of the novels are primarily connected to translations of an American book series. However, since sexual openness is part of a common Russian stereotype of Sweden, it is not far-fetched that an erotic pseudotranslation is alleged to have been translated from an original Swedish work.

4. Although not relevant to the investigation conducted in this chapter, it is worth pointing out that the titles also evoke associations with Krzysztof Kieslowski's Three Colors trilogy, which includes *Three Colors: Blue* (1993), *Three Colors: White* (1994), and *Three Colors: Red* (1994).

The detective line of the novels has more in common with previous Swedish crime novels translated into Russian. Firstly, Linn Lindberg is drawn into a journalistic investigation by the owner of an investigative internet publication. Here, the connection to Stieg Larsson's Millennium trilogy is obvious: Mikael Blomkvist worked as a journalist for the magazine *Millennium*, and, together with Lisbeth Salander, he was engaged in journalistic investigations of crimes. Another aspect that results in strong generic connections to the Millennium trilogy is the setting of the novels. Larsson's novels are fiction, but they describe real places in Sweden, especially Stockholm. The portrayal of Stockholm is authentic, and the international success of the trilogy even contributed to increased tourism (Hübenette Högberg, 17 May 2009). Today, several companies offer guided tours of Stieg Larsson's Stockholm, where, for example, you pass Bellmansgatan 1, where Mikael Blomkvist lived. Interestingly, the novels in the Tsvet boli series have been referred to in reviews as "Stockholm guidebooks." They focus heavily on where the characters live, discuss differences between different areas of Stockholm, and give the names of all the streets, cafes, and restaurants the characters visit. This is illustrated in Example (1):

(1) Reflecting on the inhabitants of SoFo, I ran past the beautiful Norska Kyrkan and headed for my favorite staircase. Tourists are rare in this area, they are attracted to Gamla Stan, and if on this side, they prefer Södermalmalmstorg (funny, now they demand to return its old name — Ryssgården, 'Russian farmstead') near Slussen, central Götgatan with the market and a mass of stores, and now Stieg Larsson's adored Maria-torget Square and St. Paulsgatan.

As this example demonstrates, the many proper names will sometimes make the text inaccessible to readers who do not speak Swedish or have little knowledge of Stockholm. Furthermore, in the original Cyrillic text the proper names are generally merely transcribed in Cyrillic, rather than translated, which makes it even more challenging.

The sections of the novels that focus on the work of the police officers are reminiscent of Sjöwall/Wahlöö's police procedurals. The work of the police officers in the Tsvet boli series is narrated in the third person, and describes the police officers' conflicts with their superiors, how they deal with difficulties in the investigation, and their conversations with the coroner, as well as their private lives. Thus, both the plot and the way in which the story is told connect the three novels to previously published translations. To summarize, there are generic connections to both Swedish and American novels published in Russian translation. Importantly, these novels represent bestsellers on the Russian market. That is, on this level the marketability of the product — specifically the connection to bestselling

crime fiction — seems to be of higher priority than connections to specifically Swedish crime fiction.

4.2 The discursive level

As discussed above, Liu suggests that on the discursive level, pseudotranslation may relate to a political principle or ideology associated with translations from a specific source culture, but that they may also have their own political agenda. This seems to be the case with the novels in the Tsvet boli series. Importantly, the sections of the novels that follow the main character are first-person narratives, told by Linn Lindberg, a Swedish student. By allowing Linn to have critical opinions about aspects of Swedish society, the novels can criticize Sweden from the inside. This type of societal criticism is illustrated by Examples (2)–(4):

(2) While walking to Boffils båge, I was thinking about my attitude towards gays, lesbians, transvestites, and other people. I am definitely homophobic. Nowadays this is unacceptable for a normal Swedish woman, and even more so for a journalist. It has to be fought against, and I have honestly tried. […] I'm straight, which in Sweden (Stockholm anyway) will soon be considered a disease. (Red)

(3) Soon it will be necessary to organize parades of straight people as a counterbalance … In winter, in the most inopportune weather, so that unhappy, frozen married couples drag their roaring children by the hands in jackets with inscriptions on the back: "Daughter" or "Son". Now it seems nonsense, but I think it's a matter of the not so distant future. If there are kindergartens and schools where the concepts of "boy" or "girl" have been abolished, why not go further? (Red)

(4) When will mankind find that golden line where there is no tilt to either side? Scandinavia is closest to this, we have learned not to make a fetish out of gender problems … As long as there is no tilt to the other side, such a danger exists with the abolition of the words "mom" and "dad". (Black)

As demonstrated in the above examples, the protagonist of the series criticizes Swedish gender policy, the use of gender-neutral pronouns in preschools, the LGBTQ movement, and gay parades — topics that were also picked up by the Russian state news media in the 2010s in exaggerated and biased reports and articles.

In a way, this may be related to Swedish crime fiction in the Soviet Union, where only texts written by left-wing and communist authors who criticized aspects of Swedish society were translated into Russian. That is, by means of restrictive selection, translated literature became a means of influencing the image of Sweden among Russians. However, while Swedish crime fiction has traditionally criticized Swedish society from a left-wing perspective, the protagonist of the

Tsvet boli series instead expresses views that are more closely associated with right-wing politics. Linn's opinions on Swedish gender politics also differ from what is considered conventional, or politically correct, in Sweden, and would be rather surprising to encounter in published Swedish crime fiction.

Another aspect related to the discursive level concerns one of the literary subjects of the second novel. To a relatively large extent, the novel deals with immigrants and asylum seekers in Sweden, as well as problems related to immigration — topics that were also discussed in the Russian state media in the 2010s. As far as immigration is concerned, Linn Lindberg does not have any negative opinions; rather, she thinks it is good that immigrants have the possibility of coming to Sweden if they cannot stay in their home countries. The fact that an allegedly Swedish crime fiction novel deals with the subject of immigration is not strange, but it is interesting that it is yet another subject that has been in focus in the Russian state news media reporting on Sweden.

A final aspect related to the discursive level is how the novels refer to the "target" culture, Russia. In the first novel, it is revealed that Linn's father is going to marry Tat'iana, a young Russian woman, and eventually move to Russia; in the second book he tells Linn that he and Tat'iana are expecting a child; and in the third novel he has already moved to Russia. As a result, Russia is mentioned in passing on a few occasions, and always in combination with stereotypical representations. In three instances, Russia is represented as *dalekaia* (distant), on two occasions as *dalekaia i strazhnaia* (distant and scary), and finally, on one occasion, as *zasnezhennaia* (snow-covered). Interestingly, these stereotypical representations reflect the Russian pseudotranslator's perception of the image of Russia in Sweden. But when expressed by an alleged Swedish author, they will be accepted as authentic by a Russian reader of the pseudotranslation.

5. Textual level: Interferences and distortions

This section contains the results of my analysis of the textual level, separated into the two categories of interferences and distortions. As previously explained, interferences are segments in which the Russian culture — the target culture of the imagined source text, and the source culture of the pseudotranslation — makes its presence felt in the text, and where Russian cultural phenomena interfere with the narrative. Distortions are related to the perspective of the narrative and focus on instances where, for different reasons, it becomes clear that the novel is not written for a Swedish intended reader. Swedish culture is treated from the outside, as something foreign, and Swedes are described as "them" rather than "us."

5.1 Interferences

Interferences occur on the textual level in relation to three different aspects: allusions and intertextual references to Swedish literature, the use of titles, and formal/informal address.

As stated above, Swedish literature plays a major role in relation to the Russian image of Sweden; in particular, Astrid Lindgren and her character Karlsson are central features of the Russian literary system. In Sweden, however, Karlsson is a less popular character than, for example, Pippi Longstocking and Emil of Lönneberga. Furthermore, Stieg Larsson's Millennium trilogy became bestsellers in Russia and, as mentioned above, have also influenced the view of Swedish literature among Russians. In the first three novels of the Tsvet boli series, there are several allusions and intertextual references to Lindgren and Larsson. This is illustrated by Examples (5)–(8):

(5) Of course, it is wonderful that an ordinary journalist could afford an apartment in such a place. But nobody cares about the inconsistency, just as nobody cares about the lack of a real address on Karlsson's roof. The guides for some reason decided that Karlsson lived in a red house opposite the sculpture of George with the serpent on Köpmangatan, and even the author was not able to change anyone's mind. (Red)

(6) – He was invited out of the blue. I was so proud of Lars that I literally swelled up like Karlsson. (Black)

(7) – Karlsson lived on this roof… Or does he still? No matter, thousands of lenses are pointed at the red roof. Tourists are special people, they believe everything they are told. (Black)

(8) Of course, they take tourists to the house on Dalagatan, where Astrid Lindgren lived, show Vasaparken, where she and her Pippi loved to stroll with friends … (Black)

In the first example in this category, Example (5), the protagonist mentions both the address of Mikael Blomkvist's apartment (the main character in Larsson's Millennium trilogy) and deliberates on the correct address of Karlsson's roof. Both the sixth and seventh examples illustrate the use of allusions to Karlsson on the Roof, while Example (8) refers to the author Astrid Lindgren's apartment in Stockholm and her childhood surroundings.

Obviously, these allusions and intertextual references — connected to stereotypical representations of Sweden — are used to create an authentic Swedish atmosphere. However, references to Karlsson on the Roof and Astrid Lindgren are not particularly common in Swedish crime fiction.

The next type of interference is when Russian cultural phenomena interfere with the narrative. The first aspect of this is the difference between Russian formal and informal "you." Whether informal *ty* (you) or formal *vy* (you) should be used in Russian is dependent on both the age and the social role of the person addressed. People of a higher social status, strangers, and older people are addressed using formal *vy*, while friends and close family are addressed using the informal *ty*. When you have become acquainted with a person in Russian, you can agree to switch to informal address. There is no equivalent to this in Sweden, where, before the 1960s, it was acceptable to address people with a combination of titles such as *herr* (Mr.) *fru* (Mrs.), and *fröken* (miss) plus surname (*Nationalencyclopedin*. n.d.). However, formal "you," using a plural personal pronoun, has never been used in the same way as in Russia. By the end of the 1960s, the use of titles had been abolished in Sweden, and since then people have mostly referred to each other using first names and informal "you." In today's Swedish — probably due to the influence of other languages — you sometimes hear the use of formal "you" in shops or restaurants, as a polite address to strangers (ibid.), for example. However, the use of titles is extremely rare and would give an archaic impression. In Russia the use of the titles *gospodin* (Mr.) or *gospozha* (Mrs.) is not obligatory, but it is still more common than the use of the corresponding titles in Sweden. Examples of interferences related to formal/informal address and titles are provided in Examples (9)–(13):

(9) Anna was waiting for us and opened the door immediately when the intercom rang.
– Please. Let's switch to "you," it's more convenient to work that way. If you both don't mind.
– No, no, for some reason we said cheerfully in one voice, although I didn't really imagine how I would address Anna, who was almost our mother, informally. Maybe later, someday. (Red)

(10) – Lars, I'm so glad Linn is with you. – I'm so glad! – Lars's eyes were doing their usual little dance. – But let's use first names, okay? Otherwise I feel like an old bore. (Red)

(11) – Fru Maria? This is Frida, the inspector you met. (Black)

(12) – Fru Olaison, I'm asking you not to do anything else. I'll call you tomorrow. (Black)

(13) – Martin didn't suspect Fru Hunter and after asking about her husband, he let her go home. (White)

As illustrated by Examples (9) and (10), the characters not only use informal and formal "you," but they also reflect upon the use of these forms of address. Examples (11)–(13) instead exemplify how the Swedish title *fru* is used, both in combination with surnames and first names. Interestingly, this use of titles is common in translated popular literature from English, French, and German, which here might have influenced the pseudotranslator's perception of translated literature on a general level.

5.2 Distortions on textual level

In this section I will illustrate different ways in which the perspective is distorted, and where Swedish culture is described from the perspective of an outsider.

5.2.1 *Outside perspective and stereotypical representations of Swedes*

The author of the Tsvet boli series often emphasizes the fact that a character is Swedish, or that products or brands are Swedish. In some instances, this is perfectly fine, for example in relation to the main character's best friend Britt, who has a father with Italian roots and a Swedish mother, but who has grown up in California. In her descriptions of Britt, Linn often emphasizes the differences between Swedes and Americans, and Sweden and the U.S., whereby it becomes natural to point out that Britt, for example, likes Swedish chocolate. However, there are also several instances, such as those provided in Examples (14)–(19), where the author highlights the nationality of a character without reason:

(14) Fika is a sacred thing for Swedes; not breaking for coffee at least twice a day is not being Swedish. (Red)

(15) So be it, the Swedes are a tolerant and patient people… (Red)

(16) Neither Jen nor Jakob could even look at the female body, but they called the police. They were law-abiding Swedes… (Black)

(17) Dag walked towards Bergman's office, muttering to himself: – Have the Swedes forgotten how to kill each other intelligently? Hanging, drowning, suffocation… instead of ordinary pistols and rifles. (Black)

(18) But if Swedish women are up to something, there's no stopping them! (Black)

(19) Swedes are reserved people and do not welcome such a game of fate; they usually do not need adrenaline in large quantities, especially women. Therefore, BDSM in Stockholm is mostly practiced by men. (White)

As illustrated by Examples (14)–(19), the Swedish character is described here from the perspective of an outsider. In Example (16), for instance, two homeless men

have found the body of a murdered woman and called the police. The narrator justifies their responsible behavior with the fact that they are "law-abiding Swedes." The use of the adjective "Swede" is unnecessary in a book set in Sweden, intended for a Swedish reader. A similar situation occurs in Example (17), where the police officer Dag Vanger, who is Swedish, comments on the new murder methods used by "Swedes," a nationality he apparently does not consider his own.

Examples (18) and (19) come from the sections told by Linn Lindberg in the first person, and the excerpts are representations of her thoughts. Linn is Swedish, but she clearly describes Swedes from an outside perspective, which seems very strange in these allegedly Swedish novels. In addition to depicting Swedish nationality from the outside, the above examples also give rise to stereotypical representations of Swedes.

5.2.2 *Outside perspective and stereotypical representations of Sweden*

The final type of distortion in perspective that occurs in the novels is similar to the one described in the previous section but deals with the country of Sweden rather than the Swedish nationality. This is illustrated in Examples (20)–(24):

(20) In Sweden it is not in fashion to formalize a relationship, who cares if the ceremony took place in the Town Hall? (Red)

(21) Swedes always have newborn puppies examined and only keep those without aggressive tendencies. This way you can pet any dog without fear of it biting your hand. There are simply no aggressive dogs in Sweden. (Black)

(22) In Sweden, people do not have curtains on their windows, they live in the open. If you see closed windows, you can be sure that foreigners are living there. (Black)

(23) In Sweden, as in Denmark and Norway, few people stand out from the crowd. People are not a gray mass, but standing out from the crowd is not considered nice. I am not talking about individualism, rather the opposite, each person is their own universe, but demonstrating how your own universe is different from your neighbor's is not something you do. Similarly, being rich is not accepted. (Black)

(24) It is almost impossible to become poor or rich in Sweden. The poor will not be allowed to be poor by the social services, which are ready to support everyone at an acceptable level, even the worst idlers, and the rich — by the tax service. […] Lars is rich because he's a foreigner. His Swiss citizenship and Swiss bank accounts allow him to pay taxes there. (Black)

As illustrated by the examples above, the narrator describes Swedish cultural phenomena, traditions, and customs in a stereotypical way, as if they were something unknown or foreign. Here the outside perspective is apparent, and it becomes clear that the pseudotranslator does not have a Swedish intended reader in mind.

6. Discussion and conclusions

In this chapter I have attempted to analyze a Russian pseudotranslation book series as translations from imagined source texts. In order to do so, I have defined pseudotranslation in relation to Toury's notion of assumed translation, but I have also focused on the metatextual characteristics of pseudotranslations — based on a framework suggested by Liu — and how they are associated with other translated literature on the generic, discursive, and textual levels. Firstly, I will attempt to answer the question of how the pseudotranslations in the Tsvet boli series ought to be classified. As mentioned above, I do not find Koshelev's explanation of why the novels were published as translations to be credible. The reasons for this are: (1) the rapid phase of publication; (2) the fake biography; (3) the fake review quotes. To clarify: if they indeed were written by a Russian author who did not want to reveal their name due to the genre and subject matter, it is highly unlikely that all six novels would have been published within 15 months. Nor would it have been necessary to invent a biography and fabricate quotes from reviews published in fictitious newspapers. Furthermore, the analysis pertaining to the generic level provides several indications of the novels having been produced with a focus on marketing, such as the obvious allusions to Stieg Larsson's Millennium trilogy and E.L. James's Fifty Shades series. That is, based on previous research and the analysis performed in this chapter, I would instead argue that the Tsvet boli series can be categorized as being motivated by the fifth reason for pseudotranslation (see Section 2.2), that is, pseudotranslation used as a hoax or a marketing strategy. However, this does not make the analysis of the book series less relevant. Even as a hoax or marketing ploy, the series may shed light on how this type of pseudotranslation differs from more traditional forms of translation and may clarify whether it is fruitful to talk about them as imagined source texts — questions I will attempt to answer now.

In order to establish how the pseudotranslations analyzed differ from regular source and target texts, I have related pseudotranslation to the notion of assumed translation and the three inherent postulates, which emphasizes the transfer between imagined source and target text, as well as the relationship between them. By means of an analysis separated into the three levels generic, discursive, and textual, I have illustrated that the ambiguity of pseudotranslation in this case

gives rise to obvious interferences from the Russian culture — the native culture of the pseudotranslator — as well as distortions of the perspective, specifically in how the narrator refers to the intended reader of the novels. As previously mentioned, the transfer between an imagined source text and a pseudotranslation can only take place on a conceptual level, which means that the resulting text at the same time constitutes both source and target text, which was an evident feature of the novels analyzed in this chapter. The analysis revealed that the pseudotranslator failed to properly separate the imagined source culture from the target culture, to relate in a consistent way to the intended reader of the novel (supposedly a Swedish reader), and, finally, to produce credible transfers. The interferences from Russian cultural phenomena and the distorted perspective in relation to Sweden and Swedes thus echo Liu's definition of pseudotranslation as "the most dramatic setting in which the foreign culture and the domestic culture conflict with each other" (2019: 400). That is, in relation to the textual level and the transfer and relationship postulates, I find that seeing pseudotranslations as translations from imagined source texts forces the reader to pay attention to the pitfalls and inherent ambiguity of pseudotranslation. Furthermore, when analyzed in this way, pseudotranslation may provide insights into how we conceptualize the idea of the source text in general. As texts that "perform" translation by imitating and forming intertextual connections to existing translations, pseudotranslation indicates that our concepts of source texts are filtered through cultural and ideological lenses, which, in pseudotranslation, where these lenses are exaggerated or mimicked, are laid bare.

Furthermore, the analysis shows that pseudotranslation give rise to ethical questions, as the novels analyzed contain an abundance of stereotypical representations of Sweden and Swedes, which may be related to the source text postulate. I previously described this postulate as particularly problematic since translating from an imagined source text implies the existence of an 'imagined' source language and culture. Of course, in most cases the source culture is a real country or language area, but influenced by the pseudo-translator's imagination, stereotypes or agenda. Based on the current analysis, I find that Baer's take on pseudotranslation may have positive consequences. To clarify, seeing pseudotranslations as translations from imagined source texts and source cultures directs the attention towards questions related to imagology, as well as the ethics of pseudotranslation. The large number of stereotypical representations of Sweden and Swedes, but also questionable discursive elements in the novels, make the project appear ethically unacceptable. It forces one to question who has the right to represent a culture, and for what purpose.

The final aspect I would like to address in this conclusion is whether it is possible that these novels were written with an ideological agenda, specifically to rep-

resent Sweden in a certain way. After a close reading of the three novels in the Tsvet boli series, I do not find this to be credible. Instead, it seems more credible that the novels were written by a Russian native speaker, who regularly reads or listens to Russian state media, and consequently has been influenced by this official Russian image of Sweden.

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Appendix

Table 1. Front cover paratexts (review quotes) used to market the Tsvet boli book series

Review quote	Alleged source	Novel
"The most impressive Swedish detective since Stieg Larsson passed away!"	*Svensk Nyheter*	Red
"No matter what the prudes say, this novel is not about vice, but about the abysses of love."	*Uppsala Expressen*	Red
"Mix 'The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo' and '50 Shades of Grey' in just the right proportion — and enjoy a taste of tenderness and pain!"	*Böcker för alla*	Red
"In this novel, Stockholm is not just a crime scene, but the third side of a 'love triangle'. Such a Stockholm — a city of sin, sensuality and violent passions — Swedish literature has never known before!"	*Öppna TV Stockholm*	Red
"A frighteningly frank, delightfully sensual erotic detective novel!"	*Svenska magasin för kvinnor*	Red
"This novel proves once again that the Swedish crime fiction is #1 in the world today!"	*Svensk Expressen*	Black
"In this erotic detective story, passion intertwines with crime so intimately that love is colored by pain…"	*Stockholm amatör avläsningar*	Black
"A story that began as a novel about gaining sexual experience becomes more detective-like with each page…"	*Göteborg Vitterhetsuänner*	Black
"Thanks to Ava [Sic] Khansen, female readers no longer have to choose between a detective story and a novel about love: her books are both!"	*Malmö Se och Hoer*	Black
"The new triumph of Swedish crime fiction, which has conquered the world!"	*Stockholm Kuriren*	White
"Who better to understand the psychology of a brutal serial killer than a woman initiated into the mysteries of the forbidden world of BDSM?"	*Svenska magasin för kvinnor*	White
"In this erotic detective story, love rhymes with pain, passion with crime, and pleasure with deadly risk…"	*Göteborgs Dagblad*	White
"Exciting! Sensual! Delightful! A love detective of the highest caliber!"	*Gotlands Expressen*	White
"This book deserves the award for Best Scandinavian Detective as much as J. Nesbø's novels!"	*Sveriges TV tjänst*	Velvet

Table 1. *(continued)*

Review quote	Alleged source	Novel
"Eva Khansen's bestsellers are a precious fusion of a reference Swedish detective with an erotic novel! If Stieg Larsson had time to read '50 Shades of Grey', his 'The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo' would have a new tattoo — in the color of pain…"	*Stockholm Expressen*	Velvet
"Eva Khansen has no equal in the love detective genre, but in her new novel she has outdone herself!"	*Svensk Litterär marknad*	Velvet
"A luxurious and sensual, like precious silk, erotic detective novel!"	*Litterär marknad*	Silk
"There's no way you'll guess the main villain until you turn the last page!"	*Stockholm Nyheter*	Silk
"Eva Khansen's new erotic detective proves: there's nothing sexier than mortal danger. Nothing turns you on like a chill. The best aphrodisiac is to follow the trail of a brutal killer, gasping with terror and excitement!"	*Göteborgs amatör avläsningar*	Silk
"If there are more amateur sleuths and BDSM fans in the world, blame it on Eva Khansen! When you finish reading this book, you'll find yourself wishing you could take a whip yourself or put your wrists in handcuffs…."	*Svenska magasin för kvinnor*	Silk
"If you've read the novels of Stieg Larsson and Jo Nesbø, this book is for you! If you are not shocked by the frankness of '50 Shades of Grey' — read this book!"	*Oppna TV Stockholm*	Latex
"This novel has earned the honor of standing on the same bookshelf as *Fifty Shades of Grey* and *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo*. Ava [Sic] Khansen's heroine will not yield to Lisbeth Salander and Anastasia Steele in either love or the investigation of brutal murders."	*Svensk Litterar marknad*	Latex
"A luxurious erotic detective novel that you will read ravenously, making a thousand guesses and making sure you're wrong again…"	*Goteborg Vitterhetsuanner*	Latex