XVIII. Alienating and Naturalizing

The German linguist, translation theorist and founder of modern Protestant theology and modern hermeneutics Friedrich Schleiermacher was the first to introduce the terms of alienating and naturalizing in his highly influential treatise "On the Different Methods of Translating". For Schleiermacher there are two ways available for the true translator:

> Either the translator leaves the writer alone as much as possible and moves the reader toward the writer, or he [sic] leaves the reader alone as much as possible and moves the writer toward the reader.

Schleiermacher's preferred strategy is the first, i.e. moving the reader toward the writer. This implies giving the reader "the same impression that he as a German would receive reading the work in the original language". It is achieved by following an "alienating" approach where the translator becomes highly oriented towards the language, content and author of the original text. This entails respecting and transferring the foreign elements in the text into the TL text. Interestingly Robert Adams puts it this way in his book Proteus, His Lies, His Truth:

> Paris cannot be London or New York, it must be Paris; our hero must be Pierre, not Peter; he must drink an aperitif, not a cocktail; smoke Gauloises,

not Kents; and walk down the rue du Bac, not Back Street. On the other hand, when he is introduced to a lady, he'll sound silly if he says, 'I am enchanted, Madame'.

For Venuti (in Munday, 2010:29), however, there are some consequences for adopting an alienating strategy:

1 if the translator is to seek to communicate the same impression which he or she received from the ST, this impression will also depend on the level of education and understanding among the TT readership, and this is likely to differ from the translator's own understanding;

2 a special language of translation may be necessary, for example compensating in one place with an imaginative word where elsewhere the translator has to make do with a hackneyed expression that cannot convey the impression of the foreign.

I remember once in my MA thesis on the different translations of Hamlet into Arabic, I translated King Claudius's question "Where are my Switzers?" into " أين سويسريوي؟" rather than "أين حرسي الخاص؟" following an alienating strategy and aiming to show that protection for important personalities at that time was provided from Swiss mercenaries. One of my examiners objected to my

translation saying it was quite unnatural and would be very much difficult for an actor playing the role to pronounce and for onlookers to understand.

The renowned translation theorist Lawrence Venuti takes up Schleiermacher's terms, renames them into foreignizing and domesticating and pushes them to further ends. Venuti was especially critical of the 'dangerous' levels of fluency used in the strategy of domestication. One important publication in which he discusses the issue is his book *The Translator's Invisibility*.

Text by Kadhim Al-Ali with quotations acknowledged.

Reading Guidelines:

Ideas are expressed both directly and indirectly. Naturally, readers have no problem with ideas directly expressed. With indirect ideas, we have to be careful about implications and insinuations. We have to notice the special vocabulary items used by the writer and his descriptive phrases.

Q.**I** Give the exact meaning of the following words first in English and second in Arabic: theology, hermeneutics, alienating, treatise, entails, oriented, compensating, hackneyed, mercenaries, onlookers, publications.

Q.**II** Derive as many words as you can from the following words: theology, introduce, move, reader, implies, achieved, hero, silly, depend, imaginative, personalities, fluency.

Q.**III** Give the opposites of the words below and use them in good English sentences of your own: first, influential, alone, highly, respecting, hero, differs from, objected, unnatural, critical, fluency.

Q.**IV** Answer the following questions briefly:

1. What is hermeneutics? How is it related to translation?

2. What are the two possible ways available for the true translator?

3. What is Schleiermacher's preferred strategy? How can it be achieved?

4. Do you agree that foreign elements in the text must be respected and transferred? Why?

5. What is the first consequence of adopting the alienating strategy? What does the impression depend on?

6. What is the second consequence? How does it work?

7. State precisely Venuti's criticism of fluency in translation.

Q.**V** Find a suitable equivalence for "hermeneutics" and translate paragraph 1.

Quote of the Day:

There are three grades of translation evils: 1. errors; 2. slips; 3. willful reshaping

Vladimir Nabokov