The unheard dialogue between the author & the translator in Bahaa Taher's "*Love in Exile*"; a Case Study

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Abstract

The novel depicts distinct episodes that are based on actual people and incidents. The story stands in contrast to the real-life accounts that focuses on an unnamed Egyptian journalist who leaves his country and settles in the west, where he meets Brigitte, an Austrian tour guide whose story gradually becomes intertwined with his. Both seem to be loving and compassionate, and this relationship comes to serve as a means to juxtapose various notions of East and West relations, identity; ending up with untold feelings and sorrow. The study simply delves into how the translator was accurate in transferring the author's attempt of the price one has to pay for masking his inner thoughts and being silenced out of fear of being misunderstood.

Keywords; depression, untold feelings, Bahaa Taher, love in exile,

The novel *Love in Exile* is originally published in Arabic in 1995. The novelist, Bahaa Taher, stands out as a uniquely structured and profoundly grim author. He has earned a prestigious prize (The state Award of Merit) in literature which is considered as Egypt's highest for writing. The translator of *Love in Exile* is Farouk Abdel Wahab, the professional lecturer in Arabic at the University of Chicago. He has translated numerous Arabic works of fiction.

Love in Exile is clearly characterized as an uneasy view of the future, Still, within the disturbing events that are presented throughout the work,

one is able to sense the relationship between the narrator and Brigitte – that a loving union, even in exile, may well be the only manner to escape one's dreary reality. So the novel seems to suggest that exile may be a state of mind rather than one of being.

The purpose of this paper is to explore the invisible dialogue between the translator Farouk Abdel Wahab and the author of the novel Bahaa Taher. I intend to focus my thoughts on both the practical and the theoretical viewpoint that will be illustrated with literary examples taken from the translator's work. We will deal with Farouk's translation as a creative act which reflects the sensibilities and style compared with that in the original one of Bahaah Taher.

Farouk Abdel Wahab is a prolific translator of Arabic works. Thanks to his translations, that Bahaa Taher's wonderful novels have attracted attention in the west. Critics have called the translation "admirable" and "expert" (2007. P.3) as it has been lovingly translated and carefully edited. Farouk's translation preserves the Egyptian flavor of the stories by retaining a certain number of Arabic words. These words are italicized and can often be understood in context otherwise they are explained in a short paraphrase that refers mainly to customs or history. Abdel Wahab uses variety of Islamic Translations for the Islamic Expression that permeates Taher's text, substituting the English "God" with the Arabic "Allah" (AbdelWahab: 1995,39).

We can notice that Taher sometimes uses colloquial Egyptian Arabic, rather than purely classical Arabic in this novel mainly in the dialogue.

Actually, Abdel Wahab has made efforts to convey this style in a quite elegant style to seem like everyday conversation.

The tone of the translation is also appropriate to the particular texts. In *Love in Exile* the voice of the narrator comes through clearly as that of the depressed hero. The use of the word "and" so frequent in Arabic and often omitted in English. The translation occasionally includes a very long sentence or paragraph that could have been broken up. A few expressions receive heavy-handed translations such as "pretending to be lost in contemplation" (2004; p.23), "by defending these terrorists we are anti-semitic"(p.80), "we were arguing pro-forma" (p.107), "emigrate in God's big world?" (p.191), "as if following his brain of thought" (p.25). Generally, the translation flows well and captures the meaning as well as the tone of the story in Arabic.

Abdel Wahab uses a straight forward style in most of his translations that manages to convey the political explanations told by the main characters, Taher's pessimistic atmosphere and pre-occupied mind is highly reflected in Abdel wahab's translation as if both are writing in harmony with each other. Abdel Wahab transforms effectively Taher's regret about the political background of the Egyptian society in the late 1970's with the same penetrating, critical yet passionate eye. (AlSawry, 2007; p.5)

While raising moral, psychological and social issues, Abdel Wahab does not fall into a dialectic manner; his carefully judged choice of words and symbolic images reveal a great deal of attention to style as "why does Khalid want to be an angel whose purity shouldn't be sullied by just one

game of chess?'' There wouldn't be conflict in life or a crack in the soul, everything would be clean and easy. It's never happened that humans sprouted angels' wings." (2004; p.204)

The translation of *Love in Exile* by a prolific mediator and a modern Arabic translator reveals an accurate understanding of Taher's writings as they share the same cultural background. Whenever Abdel Wahab strays slightly from the original text he does so primarily to accommodate the idiomatic requirements of the English Language. This also happens whenever English cannot provide words capable of conveying the necessary impression, feelings, mood or sound, as in the original text the word "sharia" (Taher. 1995; p.222) known as the system of religious laws followed by Muslims, and the Arabic concept of the "the emancipation of women" in (p.223) differs from the global one, that refers to freeing one from social and political restrictions. Apparently, Abdel Wahab seems to be more inclined, as an Arab in mind, toward Taher's thought that reflect the Egyptian culture and to have a typically Egyptian flavour.

Love in Exile is considered as a relatively easy story to translate because it does not contain many idioms or colloquialisms difficult to render in another language. Rarely do we find allusions dependent on double meanings or symbolic significance that would require additional explanations by the translator. The target language fails Abdel Waheb, however, when he needs to choose English term for the word "yahzanoon" (p204) whereas the meaning of the English term is clear, it does not have the added value of the rhythmic nature of the Arabic word.

There are other examples where the word in translation is weaker in meaning than it's Arabic equivalent. For instance, "yasoon" (protect) is translated into "preserve" (2004; p.202). Another example is "yastarsel" (prolonged) which is translated into (long and flowing) (p203). In addition to skipping some words like "Hasylat Al Bareed" to "mail" only (p202). The translator encounters difficulties as English does not provide him with the right expressions "Al Limda" "Taal Jabaak", "Neboos Edena wesh wedahr" (Taher. 1995;p.104). Abdek Wahab chooses the expressions "I'd be very happy" for "Neboos Edena wesh wedahr", and the expression, "you should start saving right now" for "Taal Jabaak".The issue here is that the Anglophone reader is left unaware of the variations in tone that generally accompany this expression and determine to various degrees its significance.

An English translation from Arabic cannot express the precise relations between cousins, as well as their gender. Arabic is specific on these exact blood ties; the specificity carries also a cultural component traditionally attacked to the ties between the father's brother's children. Unless it is clarified or explained in parenthesis, the relation is missed . *Love in Exile* contains a significant number of local terms and symbolic names in the Egyptian traditions. Abdel Wahab successfully conveys the spirit of humiliation the protagonist experienced in his childhood days. He translated two important verbs that have been commonly used in the Arab world "yewalwel" (2004, p.234) to "wailing", and "Meqarfas" to "crouches" (Ibid). Both words have connotations that exceed the literal meanings. This apparent oversight reflects Abdel Wahab's keen interest to translate every Egyptian colloquial expression not only to its English equivalent, but also to the one that depicts the cultural layers of meanings.

One question that arises while examining the corpus of the translated work by the translator concerning the invisible dialogue used between him and the author in the choice of the words or idioms. Abdel Wahab proves his success in compromising between doing justice to the writer and presenting the reader with a piece of writing that is comprehensible and enjoyable.

Abdel Wahab to some extent adapted his translation to Taher's style and the novel remains faithful in meaning to the Arabic text, for example the colloquial response " ya agdaa baba" translated to "the best dad ever". Again the style of the translation, like that of the original, is colloquial yet dignified. Abdel Wahab rose to the challenge of making the dialogue sound natural. The expression "Toz" is translated "screw it all" (p.165). He is not afraid to use such expression which, for the most part, works well. Moreover, Abdel Wahab artfully translates Taher's unique metaphors: "my wings also were made of wax that melted in the sun of truth" (p.165).The main character describes the realization of truth by "it dawned upon me"(p.164).

Abdel Wahab appears to have no overriding conceptual framework for understanding Taher's story in the original , as he concentrates on a far more colloquial and literal translation that is correct in several times and doesn't lack the tension inherent in moments leading up to a compulsive act. Actually the translator tries had to follow the same steps of the author's work at the level of Lexicon, syntax and textual cohesion. Regardless of approach, we can't say that the translator is able to mediate fully the

historical background and the effects of the author's rich use of regional dialect and colloquialism.

Abdel Wahab views translation as a communicative act that requires a series of decisions, "to be effective as communication, translation requires a degree of co-ordination from those involved in the operation , whether as receivers (readers, listeners) or as senders (translator, mediators)" (2000; p.1414). This implies choices and decisions regarding overall translational strategies, including for example, decisions about possible omissions, additions or explanatory notes, about the physical presentation of the translated text, about the appropriate type of language to be used.

Here the relationship between the author and the translator is integrated exactly as Toury proposes a shift away from an exclusive orientation towards the source text as the adequacy measure for the target text, towards a primary concentration on the target text as a fact. From such a point of view, "scholars would be freed from the need to deliberate about the degree of equivalence never the total equivalence required, of course that a given target-text segment display with a given source-text-segment" (Toury. 1995;p.119) Instead, it becomes possible to view equivalence as the relationship that actually obtains between the target text and the source text.

Tytler discussed the idea that translators ought to be "in sympathy with the authors on whose texts they are working" (1791;p.113). And this is exactly the invisible dialogue that goes on between Taher and Abdel Wahab. Being well-versed in the language of the source, it helped Abdel Wahab to be familiar with the subject matter dealt with in the work in question.

Turning to a wider issues, Tytler offers his description of a "good translation" as "that in which the merit of the original work is so completely transferred into another language, as to be as distinctly apprehended, and as strongly felt, by a native of the country to which that language belongs, as it is by those who speak the language of the original."(129) From this description Tytler derives what he calls three "Laws of translation: (1) The translation should give a complete transcript of the idea of the original work; (2) the style and manner of writing should be of the same character as that of the original; (3) the translation should have all the ease of original composition."(p.143)

In chapter two Abdel Wahab doesn't convey the folkloric element of the original when he translated " Arafa to sabteya and Dalal to supply"(2004;p.22). It has reference to a specific cultural item which has not been translated, paraphrased or explained in footnote. Finally, we can conclude that the rhythm of the English provides an equivalent to Taher's elliptical manner, while at the same time not sounding either awkward or overly mannered. Abdel Wahab chooses his verbs carefully in order to characterize the actions of his figures precisely. Occasionally his English equivalents lack the richness and allusiveness of the original Arabic. Finally, a pretty well compromise between faithfulness to the Arabic and awareness of English stylistic demands is found in *Love in Exile* due to the invisible dialogue that shows good judgment in deciding where to stay very close to the Arabic and where to make small changes that cause the English to read more naturally.

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