

***Domestication and Foreignization in the Revolt of the Young:
Essays by Tawfiq Al-Hakim***

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Abstract

The Revolt of the Young is a collection of essays originally published in 1984 by one of the most distinguished Egyptian writers of the twentieth century, Tawfiq al-Hakim. The English translation appeared in January 2015 done by the present researcher. Al-Hakim (1898-1987) muses on the cultural, artistic, and intellectual links and breakages between the old and the young generations. The original title of the book foreshadows the 25 January Revolution in Egypt (The Revolt of the Young: A Case of the Twenty-First Century). The paper shall use Lawrence Venuti's two basic strategies which provide both linguistic and cultural guidance "domestication and foreignization". The translator shall explain the decisions she took to deal with all the cultural specific words such as: "Jubbah, mouldid, fezzes", Arab authors who are unfamiliar to most foreign readers, for example, Abul ala-Maari or even Western and Asian writers and philosophers. Works like The Seven Mu'allaqat which are very well known to Arab readers may be quite puzzling to Western readers and they would not know why were they suspended on "Kabbah" in Mecca? The translator will explain her choices as to how she made her translation reader-friendly. This research tends to tackle the concept of justice in this book with special focus on the last chapter which takes place in a courtroom in the USA where the four main characters are searching for socio-political justice in their society.

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I found the Arabic copy of *The Revolt of the Young: The Case of the Twenty-First Century* which was published in (1984) amongst my mother's books at home and the title intrigued me. Having read it I immediately decided to translate it as I thought it deserved to be available in English for those who are interested in Arabic Literature. By the time the 25th January Revolution (2011) took place in Egypt I had already finished translating the book but was even keener on revising it and finding a publisher. The translation came out in January 2015 in New York. Roger Allen has written a "Foreword" to this book which adds more value to the translated work. This presentation will focus on Lawrence Venuti's concepts of domestication and foreignization to analyze my translation.

The book is a fascinating collection of essays for a number of reasons. First and foremost, it sheds so much light on this great pioneer figure in Arabic Literature. Al-Hakim was a prolific and an influential writer, as well as, a great thinker. He was truly interested in the future and the socio-political conditions in Egypt. A number of his works are concerned with the future such as: *A Journey to the Future* (1957) which he classifies as a 'prophetic play.' In 1980 he wrote another collection under the title of *Challenges of the Year 2000*. This interest in the future is undoubtedly apparent in this collection of essays. The clash between generations and the revolt of youth which loom large in this book have been two of my main concerns as a rebellious woman growing up in Cairo. A number of essays also reveal the tense relationship between the writer and his own father and his own son and how al-Hakim was able to resolve these tensions. Lastly, I believe that this book deserves to be in the limelight as it predicts the revolt of Egyptian and American young people socially, literary and politically in the Twenty-First Century. In Chapter nineteen he goes as far as to predict that the resurrection would happen by the hands of young people just like in the Egyptian myth of Osiris and Horus. I recall that some young Egyptian rebels, from April 6th movement, in a television interview in 2011, stated that they read al-Hakim's book *The Revolt of the Young* which inspired them.

In *The Revolt of the Young* one of the characters in the short story explains why the young carry out revolutions and the following is from the translated edition:

"Because they are the ones who will see the twenty-first century. They want to pass on to it a better society. That is the issue. We young people cannot permit this corrupt society to cross the threshold of the new century. We will do everything in our power to pave the way for the new century with new ideas, just as the French Revolution of the nineteenth century paved the way for new ideas...[too]"(ROY 106)

Some of the challenges in translating this book were al-Hakim's style, diction and syntax. One of the most difficult words I had to grapple with is in Al-Hakim's 'Introduction' where he was trying to differentiate between "revolution" and "upheaval;" the words in Arabic are "الثورة" and "الطوفان" Alhogah. I had to check the latter word in various dictionaries and ask most of the translators I know and the majority told me that "upheaval" would be the best equivalent in English. I agree it is but I am still not fully satisfied. The other words I thought of were; 'public disorder', 'commotion,' and 'turmoil'. I believe it is all the above but lacking a tinge of the Arabic colloquial word "Hoga".

The following extract is where the writer defines both terms in the source language (Arabic) and then I will provide the passage from the target language:

والفرق بين « الثورة » و « الهوجة » هو أن « الهوجة » تقتلع الصالح والطالح معا ... كالرياح الهوج تطيح بالأخضر واليابس معا ، وبالشجرة المثمرة والشجرة الصفراء جميعا . أما « الثورة » فهي تبقى النافع وتستمد منه القوة .. بل وتصدر عنه أحيانا ، وتقضى فقط على البالي المتهافت ، المعوق للحياة ، المغلق لنوافذ الهواء المتجدد ، الواقف في طريق التجديد والتطور . ولكن المسألة ليست دائما بهذه البساطة . فالثورة والهوجة



The presence of many adjectives and adjectival phrases in Arabic is ordinary but rather unusual in English prose so it was not easy to translate this part. But that is how I managed to do it.

The distinction between "revolution" and "upheaval" is that the latter sweeps up with it both the good and bad, just as the turbulent wind does with both green leaves and withered ones, the fruitful tree and the barren one. A "revolution", however, retains what is useful and derives strength there-of. It does away with what is useless, worn out, that which impedes vigor, shuts out fresh air, and stands in the way of renewal and development (ROY 1).

Another stepping stone that I had foreseen is his style, which has been described by some critics as elevated and abstruse classical Arabic.

In the following passage Al-Hakim employs an extended metaphor to compare Arabic literature to a garden as in the following lines:

عن السوراني في السوراني ...
ونحن — إذا جلنا اليوم في حديقة الأدب العربي الحديث —
وجدنا أشجارًا مملوءة بعصير الحياة ، يانعة بأزهار الفن ، لا
ينقصها إلا أن ننظر إليها بعين الرضا ، وأن نتخيل ما ستكون عليه
غداً من سموق وارتفاع ؛ فلا شيء يفسد الحديقة ويقفها ويقفها
مثل أن نرى دائماً أشجارها شجيرات ، لن تكون يوماً ضخمة
الجنوع وارقة الظلال !... يجب أن نروض عيوننا على أن ترى
الأشياء والأشخاص في غدها — لا في حاضرها وحده ، وأن
نعرف كيف نقرأ المستقبل من خلال سطور الحاضر !... إذا
استطعنا ذلك ، فما من شك أننا واجدون في مختلف فروع الأدب
أقلاماً ، سيكون لها من الصدارة والقيادة في الأعوام العشرة أو
العشرين المقبلة ، مثلما كان لأصحاب الصدارة والبروز في
العشرة أو العشرين عاماً الماضية !...

It was translated as follows:

Today, if we walked in the garden of modern Arabic literature, we will find trees filled with the sap of life and diverse flowers of art, needing only that we look at them with pleasure and imagine how tall they will grow in the future, for nothing could spoil or lay waste to this garden more than to always see its trees as small bushes which will never grow large or cast pleasant shade. We should be trained to see things and persons in perspective. We should accustom ourselves to see things as they will be in the future, not only in the present, and know how to read the future through the lines of the present. If we are capable of doing that, we would no doubt find new pens in the various literary fields which will come to the fore in the next ten or twenty years, exactly as was the case of the leading figures in literature of the past ten or twenty years (ROY 6).

In the English version I tried to be as accurate and true to the Arabic extract as I possibly could disregarding whether this would be a fluent translation or not.

Furthermore, in chapter five (p.46) al-Hakim's father quotes a Pre- Islamic poet

"بمن سم ويوطأ... بأن ياب يضرس كثيرة أمور فى يصان ع لم ومن"

was translated as: "And he, who does not work hard at many things/will be bitten by fangs and trampled underfoot by horses"(22).

Another example is in chapter ten the first sentence is rather a difficult one and it runs as follows:

"(66) "الشيطان سائقها - الخيول مطهمة - الحواشى مذهبة الألوان، زاهية مركبة الدني"

It was translated as "The world is a brightly colored carriage with gold borders – drawn by beautiful horses- driven by the devil."(36)

With Lawrence Venuti's concepts of 'domestication' and 'foreignization' in mind I will explicate which methods I used in my translation. I tried to adhere to Al-hakim's beautiful classical Arabic style which is full of metaphors, grand rhetoric, imagery and similes regardless of how odd or unusual this may seem in English. To begin with Venuti defines Domestication as a translation that

... is judged acceptable by most publishers, reviewers, and readers when it reads fluently, when the absence of any linguistic or stylistic peculiarities makes it seem transparent... in other words, that the translation is not in fact a translation, but the "original"...

The more fluent the translation, the more invisible the translator, and, presumably, the more visible the writer or meaning of the foreign text (1-2).

Indeed I had to remove hundreds of exclamation marks which Al-Hakim used so that the English text would be acceptable in the target language. He also used a great deal of ellipsis (...) to show that he was contemplating an issue or instead of using a

comma. I replaced most of the ellipsis with either a full stop or a comma. In addition, the publisher asked me to employ American Spelling and punctuation (they insisted on a comma before and) though I always write British English and I had to acquiesce as it was to be published in the USA. I did not like this one bit but that is the hegemonic power the publisher has over the translator. Therefore, on the one hand I tried to be invisible and on the other the use of archaic and high flown language at times may make me as a translator visible. To illustrate this point the Arabic sentence

"فبيء؟ تاخذنا الذى ال طريق هذا ما ويلك"

was translated as "Woe upon you! What is this path you are taking us along?"(37) Instead of using the more familiar expression; "Damn it! Where are you taking us? I used the more archaic expression: "Woe upon you...." To average American readers this expression may sound quite odd. It may also make the translator at times visible. Moreover, in translating a quotation from The Book of the Dead I resorted to the archaic form "thee, thy and thou"(ROY 87). Such words I believe affects the fluency as these words are not in every day English. Foreignization is something Venuti calls for; "so as to resist and change the conditions under which translation is theorized and practiced today, especially in English speaking countries"(17).

To Venuti foreignization means:

Foreignizing translation signifies the difference of the foreign text, yet only by disrupting the cultural codes that prevail in the target language. In its effort to do right abroad, this translation method must do wrong at home, deviating enough from native norms to stage an alien reading experience- choosing to translate a foreign text excluded by domestic literary canons, for instance, or using a marginal discourse to translate it (20)

By occasionally using archaic terms and high flown language to be faithful to Al-Hakim's grand rhetoric the translation seemed at times odd or foreignized. Moreover, there are many culture specific words in this book such as: "*Jubbah(garment), Kaftan(coat) are and fanous(lantern)*" (ROY 3) which I had to explain in footnotes. The word "*Moulid*" (religious festival) appears in transliteration in chapter 13 which I defined in a lengthy footnote (61). All the above Arabic words I used in the text as Venuti says, "Foreigniz[es]translation in English [which], in the interest of democratic geopolitical relations can be a form of resistance against ethnocentrism and racism, cultural narcissism and imperialism"(20). Such a strategy sends the readers abroad as Venuti believes (20).

Another stimulating element in this collection is al-Hakim's erudite style. In other words, there are myriads of references to Arab, Asian, and Western works and writers. Therefore, I decided to use footnotes to help the casual readers to know who these writers are. For example: he writes about Abul Ala al-Mari's book Saqt al-zand (The Tinder Spark) (ROY 11) and The Seven Mu'allaqat (ROY 21) therefore, I explained such works in footnotes. In chapter 8 Al-Hakim uses a quotation from the Chinese thinker Lin Yutang so I added a footnote on this writer too (30).

The other unusual aspect in this book is that Al-Hakim hardly ever mentioned the full citations he made use of in writing this book and he did not include a bibliography or

works cited. In his citations he usually refers to the author or/and title of the book but never the page number, publisher or the date which would be unusual for the Anglo-American or Western reader. But I decided to keep it the way he wrote it, except that I added the year of publication of most books mentioned by al-Hakim to make it more reader-friendly. Moreover, I added an index though there was no index in the Arabic version.

As for the cultural political aspects in al-Hakim's **The Revolt of the Young**, he states that young people have always been the sparks of most revolutions around the world. In modern age Egypt, the 1952 Revolution has been led by young army officers. In the twenty-first century, in Tunisia, Egypt, Syria, and many other Arab countries young people also played a major role in the so called "Arab Spring". They revolted against the totalitarian regimes of the older generations. Since 2010 until this day young people are still struggling socially and politically, to achieve freedom and social justice.

But why did the young Egyptian rebels fail to rule in 2011? Tawfiq Al-Hakim offers an answer - though he was referring to young people's revolt against De Gaulle's regime –

...young people have not formed their own strongholds yet, being new to their revolution and their own sense of self. They do not yet have clear organized ideas. It is like the onset of any revolution when the old strongholds are destroyed and it stands at a loss for some time not knowing what to do next....The more they rebel, the more the previous generation entrench themselves in their strongholds and the dividing gap between the generations become wider.

Hence the old strongholds are still ruling in Egypt.

This rebellious spirit in the young does not manifest itself solely in the Middle East, but it is inherent in many angry young men and women in the West too. During the last century in America there were many University students' protests, for instance, against Vietnam, which al-Hakim refers too in the last chapter entitled "The Case of the Twenty-First Century". This century as well witnessed various demonstrations in America and sit-ins called "Occupy Wall Street".

I believe as a translator I stand mid way between being invisible and visible. I used some elements to achieve domestication such as an acceptable American punctuation system, American spelling, an index and foot notes to make the translation reader friendly and fluent. But at times I was more concerned to adhere to Al-hakim's style and imagery that I sacrificed fluency to some extent for the sake of the source language. Hence, I resorted to high flown language, transliteration and Archaic English.

It is an inspiring book. Al-Hakim's analytic and at times visionary outlook into the past, present, and future is beyond a shadow of a doubt valuable.

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