

Schleiermacher on Foreignizing Translation, Literature, and Philosophy

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This article begins with a sketch of a revolutionary new “foreignizing” method of translation that Herder and Schleiermacher invented, including some differences between their versions of it. It then argues that the appearance that Herder applies the method to translating literature whereas Schleiermacher applies it to translating philosophy is misleading since Schleiermacher is as much concerned with literature as Herder had been, only adding a concern with philosophy. Moreover, it argues against valorizing the case of translating philosophy more strongly than Schleiermacher does or even quite as strongly as he does. Finally, the article turns to the controversial question how well Schleiermacher’s official methodology and his Plato translations agree. It is argued that when the former is properly understood they agree remarkably well.

Keywords: Schleiermacher, Translation, Literature, Philosophy, Meaning.

1. Foreignizing Translation

As I have argued in previous work¹, Herder, especially in his *Fragments on Recent German Literature* (1767/8), and Schleiermacher, especially in his *On the Different Methods of Translation* (1813), were the principal inventors of a new method of translation that has since come to be known as the “foreignizing” method (in contradistinction to the “domesticating” method, paradigmatically represented by the French “belles infidèles” tradition). Moreover, their versions of it are superior to more recent versions descended from them, such as those of Antoine Berman and Lawrence Venuti, especially in retaining instead of renouncing the concept of meaning and the principle that accurately reproducing meaning is a central goal of translation.

Let me sketch their new method briefly². The method rests on revolutionary breaks with two common assumptions of the Enlight-

¹ See especially: Michael N. Forster, *After Herder: Philosophy of Language in the German Tradition*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2010, ch. 12 and Id., *Foreignizing Translation and Chinese*, «The Journal of Chinese Philosophy», 50 (2023) 3, pp. 225-42.

² For a fuller account, see the two works cited in the preceding note.