

## TRANSLATION AND TEXT

Even though no one seems likely to deny that communication is the primary aim and function of a translated text, today we are far from thinking that translating is a simple communicative act. In contemporary translation theory informed by Continental philosophical traditions such as existential phenomenology and poststructuralism, language is constitutive of thought, and meaning a site of multiple determinations, so that translation is readily seen as investing the foreign-language text with a domestic significance. Translation never communicates in an untroubled fashion because the translator negotiates the linguistic and cultural differences of the foreign text by reducing them and supplying another set of differences, basically domestic, drawn from the receiving language and culture to enable the foreign to be received there. The foreign text, then, is not so much communicated as inscribed with domestic intelligibilities and interests. The inscription begins with the very choice of a text for translation, always a very selective, densely motivated choice, and continues in the development of discursive strategies to translate it, always a choice of certain domestic discourses over others. Hence, the domesticating process is totalizing, even if never total, never seamless or final. It can be said to operate in every word of the translation long before the translated text is further processed by readers, made to bear other domestic meanings and to serve other domestic interests.

Seen as domestic inscription, never quite cross-cultural communication, translation has moved theorists towards an ethical reflection wherein remedies are formulated to restore or preserve the foreignness of the foreign text. Yet an ethics that counters the domesticating effects of the inscription can only be formulated and practiced primarily in domestic terms, in domestic dialects, registers, discourses, and styles. And this means that the linguistic and cultural differences of the foreign text can only be signalled indirectly, by their displacement in the translation, through a domestic difference introduced into values and institutions at home. This ethical attitude is therefore simultaneous with a political agenda: the domestic terms of the inscription become the focus of rewriting in the translation, discursive strategies where the hierarchies that rank the values in the domestic culture are disarranged to set going processes of defamiliarization, canon reformation, ideological critique, and institutional change. A translator may find that the very concept of the domestic merits interrogation for its concealment of heterogeneity and hybridity which can complicate existing stereotypes, canons, and standards applied in translation.

When motivated by this ethical politics of difference, the translator seeks to build a community with foreign cultures, to share an understanding with and of them and to collaborate on projects founded on that understanding, going so far as to allow it to revise and develop domestic values and institutions. The very impulse to seek a community abroad suggests that the translator wishes to extend or complete a particular domestic situation, to compensate for a defect in the translating language and literature, in the translating culture. As Maurice Blanchot argues, the very notion of community arises when an insufficiency puts individual agency into question. The ethically and politically motivated translator cannot fail to see the lack of an equal footing in the translation process, stimulated by an interest in the foreign, but inescapably leaning towards the receptor. This translator knows that translations never simply communicate foreign texts because they make possible only a domesticated understanding, however much defamiliarized, however much subversive or supportive of the domestic.

- Venuti Lawrence. *The Translation Studies Reader*. 2nd ed. Routledge 2004. pp 469.

**1. According to the essay, what is the primary aim and function of a translated text?**

- A) To convey domestic intelligibilities and interests
- B) To facilitate cross-cultural communication
- C) To inscribe foreign texts with domestic meanings
- D) To build a community with foreign cultures

**2. What does the essay suggest about the concept of "community" in translation?**

- A) Community arises when individual agency is questioned
- B) Community is an irrelevant consideration in translation
- C) Community is built solely on domestic values and institutions
- D) Community compensates for defects in foreign cultures

**3. According to the essay, what is the limitation of translations in communicating foreign texts?**

- A) They eliminate linguistic and cultural differences
- B) They fully represent the foreignness of the text
- C) They convey only a domesticated understanding
- D) They promote stereotypes and canons in translation

**4. In the context of the essay, what is meant by the term "domesticating process"?**

- A) The act of translating foreign texts into domestic languages
- B) The reduction of linguistic and cultural differences in translation
- C) The selection of specific discourses and styles in translation
- D) The inscription of foreign texts with domestic intelligibilities

**5. What is the ultimate limitation of translations, according to the essay?**

- A) They can never fully convey foreign texts
- B) They perpetuate stereotypes and standards
- C) They fail to address linguistic and cultural differences
- D) They offer a partial and domesticated understanding

Answer 1: B) To facilitate cross-cultural communication

Answer 2: A) Community arises when individual agency is questioned

Answer 3: C) They convey only a domesticated understanding

Answer 4: D) The inscription of foreign texts with domestic intelligibilities

Answer 5: D) They offer a partial and domesticated understanding