

1. Read the following passage and write a one-paragraph summary. (20%)**The Translator's Invisibility**

LAWRENCE VENUTI

The practice of translation is fraught with many problematic issues which the translator may confront in completing the task at hand, but which—because translation is foremost a practical activity—are likely to go unexamined, even unarticulated. Among these issues one demands particular attention because it seems to define the translator's situation and activity in contemporary Anglo-American culture (and no doubt elsewhere as well): this is what I shall call the invisibility of the translator. This somewhat melodramatic term refers to two related phenomena, one having to do with reader response to translations, the other with the criterion by which they are produced and evaluated. On the one hand, readers usually respond to the translation of a foreign text, whether prose or poetry, as if the text had been originally written in their language, as if it were not in fact a translation; on the other hand, a translation is judged acceptable (by editors, reviewers and readers) when it reads fluently, when the absence of any awkward phrasings, unidiomatic constructions or confused meanings gives the appearance that the translation reflects the foreign author's personality or intention or the essential meaning of the original text. What is so remarkable here is that both attitudes completely efface the translator's crucial intervention in the text: the more "successful" the translation, the more invisible the translator, and the more visible the author or meaning of the original text. The corollary drawn from these attitudes, and often asserted by translators themselves, is that the work of translation *should* be effaced, that the discovery of this work during the reading process is undesirable because it means that the translated text fails to meet the criterion of fluency.

The translator's invisibility is thus partly a strange effect of his manipulation of language, a self-annihilation that results from the very act of translation as conceived and practiced today, although undoubtedly it has also been fostered by the decline of foreign-language study since the late sixties. Translators, however, can only find this invisibility objectionable, not only because it constitutes a mystification of the entire project of translation, but also because it seems related to the low status that is still accorded to their work. Translators, with very few exceptions, receive minimal recognition. As Ronald Christ has recently noted, "many newspapers, such as *The Los Angeles Times*, do not even list the translators in headnotes to reviews, reviewers often fail to mention that a book is a translation (while quoting from the text as though it were written in English), and publishers almost uniformly exclude translators from book covers and advertisements." And then there is the economic exploitation that translators must endure, in some respects far worse than the treatment of such notoriously "unmarketable" authors as first novelists and poets. Translators are routinely alienated from the product of their labor through relations of production that more closely resemble those determining labor in such other sectors of the economy as the manufacturing and service industries. Standard contracts force them to surrender all rights of ownership in the translated text at least for as long as it remains in print and sometimes for the full term of the copyright, which is usually in the publisher's name. In addition, translators receive a pitifully low wage for a task that usually requires months of intensive intellectual labor of a very specialized nature: publishers continue to regard them as "workers-for-hire," paying them a flat fee based on the number of translated words and rarely allotting them a share of the income from royalties and from the sale of subsidiary rights to magazines and paperback publishers.

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2. Read the following job advertisement and write an essay of no more than 300 words to discuss your own opinion on translator's invisibility. For instance, to what extent do you agree with this job advertisement? To what extent would Venuti (dis)agree with this job advertisement? In your opinion, what makes a good translator? In the case of legal translation, do you think translators should be visible and liable for their (mis)translation? (80%)

Translators are like ninjas. If you notice them, they're no good.



Do you have what it takes to be a good translator?

The European institutions are looking for contract agents (CAST permanent FC IV) in the field of translation for the 24 official languages. Open for application as of 8 January 2019. (No deadline) For more information and application see: eu-careers.eu

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