

- (2) by the way the translated texts are typically read in the target culture:

A translated text, whether prose or poetry, fiction or nonfiction, 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, giving the appearance that it reflects the foreign writer's personality or intention or the essential meaning of the foreign text – the appearance, in other words, that the translation is not in fact a translation, but the 'original'.

(Venuti 2008: 1)

Venuti (1998: 31) sees the most important factor for this as being 'the prevailing conception of authorship'. Translation is seen as derivative and of secondary quality and importance. Thus, English-language practice since Dryden has been to conceal the act of translation so that, even now, 'translations are rarely considered a form of literary scholarship' (Venuti 1998: 32).

9.1.2 Domestication and foreignization

Venuti discusses invisibility hand in hand with two types of translation: domestication and foreignization. These practices¹ concern both the choice of text to translate and the translation method. Their roots are traced back by Venuti to Schleiermacher and his 1813 essay 'Über die verschiedenen Methoden des Übersetzens' (Schleiermacher 1813/2012, see [Chapter 2](#) of this book). Venuti sees **domestication** as dominating British and American translation culture. Just as the postcolonialists are alert to the cultural effects of the differential in power relations between colony and ex-colony, so Venuti (2008: 15) bemoans the phenomenon of domestication since it involves 'an ethnocentric reduction of the foreign text to receiving cultural values'. This entails translating in a transparent, fluent, 'invisible' style in order to minimize the foreignness of the TT. Venuti allies it with Schleiermacher's description of translation that 'leaves the reader in peace, as much as possible, and moves the author toward him'. Domestication further covers adherence to domestic literary canons by carefully selecting the texts that are likely to lend themselves to such a translation strategy (Venuti 1998: 241).

On the other hand, **foreignization** 'entails choosing a foreign text and developing a translation method along lines which are excluded by dominant cultural

values in the target language' (ibid.: 242). It is the preferred choice of Schleiermacher, whose description is of a translation strategy where 'the translator leaves the writer in peace, as much as possible and moves the reader toward [the writer]' (Schleiermacher 1813/2012: 49). Venuti (2008: 15–16) follows this and considers foreignizing practices to be a 'highly desirable . . . strategic cultural intervention' which seek to 'send the reader abroad' by making the receiving culture aware of the linguistic and cultural difference inherent in the foreign text. This is to be achieved by a non-fluent, estranging or heterogeneous translation style designed to make visible the presence of the translator and to highlight the foreign identity of the ST. This is a way, Venuti says, to counter the unequal and 'violently' domesticating cultural values of the English-language world.

In *The Scandals of Translation*, Venuti links foreignization to '**minoritizing**' translation. One of the examples he gives of a minoritizing project is his own translation of works by the nineteenth-century Italian novelist Iginio Ugo Tarchetti (1839–1869) (Venuti 1998: 13–20). The very choice of works to translate is minoritizing: Tarchetti was a minor writer, a Milanese bohemian who confronted the literary establishment by using the standard Tuscan dialect to write experimental and Gothic novels that challenged the moral and political values of the day. As far as the language is concerned, the minoritizing or foreignizing practice of Venuti's translation comes through in the deliberate inclusion of foreignizing elements such as modern American slang. These aim to make the translator 'visible' and to make the readers realize they are reading a translation of a work from a foreign culture. Venuti (ibid.: 15) gives the extract shown in [Box 9.1](#) as an example of what he means by this approach.

Box 9.1

Nel 1855, domiciliatomi a Pavia, m'era allo studio del disegno in una scuola privata di quella città; e dopo alcuni mesi di soggiorno aveva stretto relazione con certo Federico M. che era professore di patologia e di clinica per l'insegnamento universitario, e che morì di apoplezia fulminante pochi mesi dopo che lo aveva conosciuto. Era un uomo amatissimo delle scienze, della sua in particolare – aveva virtù e doti di mente non comuni – senonche, come tutti gli anatomisti ed i clinici in genere, era scettico profondamente e inguaribilmente – lo era per convinzione, ne io potei mai indurlo alle mie credenze, per quanto mi vi adoprassi nelle discussioni appassionate e calorose che avevamo ogni giorno a questo riguardo.

In 1855, having taken up residence at Pavia, I devoted myself to the study of drawing at a private school in that city; and several months into my sojourn, I developed a close friendship with a certain Federico M., a professor of pathology and clinical medicine who taught at the university and died of severe apoplexy a few months after I became acquainted with him. He was very fond of the sciences and of his own in particular – he was gifted with extraordinary mental powers – except that, like all anatomists and doctors generally, he was profoundly and incurably skeptical. He was so by conviction, nor could I ever induce him to accept my beliefs, no matter how much I endeavored in the impassioned, heated discussions we had every day on this point.²

(Venuti 1998: 15)

Among the elements of this extract which Venuti considers to be distinctive of **foreignization** are the close adherence to the ST structure and syntax (e.g. the adjunct positions in the first sentence), the calques *soggiorno* as *sojourn*, *indurlo* as *induce him* and the archaic structure *nor could I ever* instead of *and I could never*.

9.1 Exploration: Foreignization

Look at the extract in [Box 9.1](#) and identify more foreignizing features in the English TT.

In other passages (see *ibid.*: 16–17), Venuti juxtaposes both archaisms (e.g. *scapegrace*) and modern colloquialisms (e.g. *con artist*, *funk*), and uses British spellings (e.g. *demeanour*, *offence*) to jar the reader with a ‘heterogeneous discourse’. Venuti is happy to note (*ibid.*: 15) that some of the reviews of the translation were appreciative of this ‘visibility’. However, other reviews attacked the translation for not following what, in Venuti’s terms, would be a fluent translation practice.

Importantly, domestication and foreignization are considered to be not binary opposites but part of a continuum, and they relate to **ethical choices** made by the translator in order to expand the receiving culture’s range:

The terms ‘domestication’ and ‘foreignization’ indicate fundamentally *ethical* attitudes towards a foreign text and culture, ethical effects produced by the choice of a text for translation and by the strategy devised to translate it, whereas the terms like ‘fluency’ and ‘resistancy’ indicate fundamentally *discursive* features of translation strategies in relation to the reader’s cognitive processing.

(Venuti 2008: 19)

This relationship, operating on different levels, might be depicted as follows (Figure 9.1):

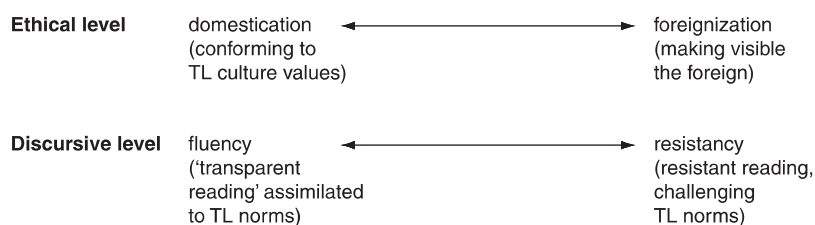


Figure 9.1 Domestication and foreignization: ethical and discursive levels

Although Venuti advocates foreignizing translation in this book, he is also aware of some of its contradictions. It is a subjective and relative term that still involves a degree of domestication since it translates a ST for a receiving culture. Indeed, foreignization depends on the dominant values of the receiving culture because it becomes visible precisely when it departs from those values. However, Venuti stoutly defends foreignizing translations. They ‘are equally partial [as are domesticating translations] in their interpretation of the foreign text, but they tend to flaunt their partiality instead of concealing it’ (2008: 28). In addition, Venuti (*ibid.*: 19) emphasizes the ‘culturally variable and historically contingent’ nature of the domestication and foreignization. Just as we saw with the discussion of descriptive studies (Chapter 7), the values associated with these terms, reconstructed from close textual analysis or archival research, vary according to external sociocultural and historical factors.

Venuti’s general premises about foreignizing and domesticating translation practices, and about the invisibility of the translator and the relative power of the publisher and the translator, can be investigated in a variety of ways by:

- comparing ST and TT linguistically for signs of foreignizing and domesticating practices;
- interviewing the translators about their strategies and/or researching what the translators say they are doing, their correspondence with the authors and the different drafts of a translation if available;
- interviewing the publishers, editors and agents to see what their aims are in publishing translations, how they choose which books to translate and what instructions they give to translators;
- looking at how many books are translated and sold, which ones are chosen and into which languages, and how trends vary over time;
- looking at the kind of translation contracts that are made and how 'visible' the translator is in the final product;
- seeing how literally 'visible' the fact of translation is, looking at the packaging of the text, the appearance or otherwise of the translator's name on the title page, the copyright assignation, translators' prefaces, correspondence, etc.;
- analysing the reviews of a translation, author or period. The aim would be to see what mentions are made of the translators (are they 'visible'?) and by what criteria reviewers (and the literary 'élite') judge translations at a given time and in a given culture.

9.2 Exploration

See the ITS website for further discussion of Venuti's work on invisibility.

9.1.3 Antoine Berman: the 'negative analytic' of translation

Questions of how much a translation assimilates a foreign text and how far it signals difference had already attracted the attention of the noted French theorist, the late Antoine Berman (1942–1991). Berman's *L'épreuve de l'étranger: Culture et traduction dans l'Allemagne romantique* (1984), translated into English as *The Experience of the Foreign: Culture and Translation in Romantic Germany* (1992), preceded and influenced Venuti. The latter himself produced an English translation of the prominent article 'La traduction comme épreuve de l'étranger' (Berman 1985), in English entitled 'Translation and the trials of the