

A translation word for word is not worthy of being heard!

Together with Bojana Piškur and Vladan Jeremić, I was given the demanding role of a moderator of the two-day event dedicated to the Workers' Inquiry project conceived by a group of women working at the Reina Sofia museum in Madrid, a prominent, critically-oriented institution, progressive in a pamphlet-like manner. This event, held with the support of Cultural Centre REX and numerous guests active in the local cultural and art scene, was meant to provide a cultural and political interpretation of the *Workers' Inquiry* in the local community. The workshop served as a stimulus to localize Marx's *Workers' Inquiry* (i.e. the translation of Marx's 1880 questionnaire used for the purpose of conducting a survey of the institutional setting of Reina Sofia's oppressed cognitariat) in order to conduct a survey of the working conditions in the local cultural community and establish more universal parameters for the examination of the status and position of the contemporary working class.

From the point of view of methodology and as demonstrated by this workshop, it is hard to expect that an activity such as conducting a workers' inquiry focusing on the community of cultural workers and wider society would occur in a spontaneous and self-explanatory way, without a concrete task that would be elaborated in advance and well-structured and of course without the necessary preparations – field research of the topic, acquiring a good insight into the context and the circumstances of Marx's inquiry, a detailed review of the strategies and policies of "translation", all of which accompanied the survey at Reina Sofia and who knows what else...

In the absence of the "preparatory activities", the whole discussion seemed slightly chaotic – questions without answers flew left and right and equally did unjustified points of view, while the moderators kept attempting, unsuccessfully, to sum it all up somehow into a meaningful whole and provide directions of sorts... The famous question "What does it do?... And it won't work" was in the air... a kind of strike and refusal to perform the task under the heavy cloud of vagueness... At the same time, the willingness to remain in the same room was still present, as a reflex of the need to do something, to arrive at some conclusion, despite the fact that the original aim was thrown into doubt multiple times.

Looking at the events that took place "In the Engine Room" (that was the title of the two-day workshop), from a certain distance, I would say that confusion, disorder and chaos are sometimes an integral part of the goal.

During this or a discussion on the topics of similar complexity that is structured differently in some way or another, it would be necessary to ask the questions posed by Walter Benjamin in his famous essay *The Task of the Translator*. Namely, the question is whether it is a piece of writing that is translatable in the first place in some assumed present moment and who would be a suitable translator among all of its "readers"? Without answers to these questions, motivating a group of cultural workers to make a new *Workers' Inquiry* would be nothing more than a reflection of an opportunistic "institutional coercion" (either through moderators who are highly professional in performing their task at all costs or through Cultural Centre REX, as an institution that has once again exceeded its production and programme quota or ultimately the participants in the panel discussion who obey unquestioningly).

The conclusion of the guests from Madrid, Bor, Novi Sad, Ljubljana and Belgrade that was left unsaid, but was nonetheless reached, could be summed up in the following slogan stating that *Workers' Inquiry* does not lend itself to literal interpretation. A translation word for word is not worthy of being heard!

ⁱ The phrase, spoken by Donald Duck, originates from the end sequence, before the closing credits of *The Mouse Factory*, a Walt Disney Productions television series that ran from 1972 to 1974 and was popular on TV Belgrade in the early 1980s. (Translator's note)