

Speech by Haruki Murakami

I am very grateful to have been chosen to receive the Japan Foundation Award for 2012. At the moment, I am living and working abroad and must apologize for being unable to attend the award ceremony in person. I want to thank the Foundation for their understanding and for arranging to read this brief talk in my absence.

I debuted as a novelist at the age of thirty and have been writing fiction in a wide variety of forms ever since. A quarter century has gone by since my works began to be translated and published abroad. Whenever I go to foreign countries and find people reading my books, I feel both surprised and struck by a deep sense of gratitude. I myself have been a passionate translator of foreign literature over the years, and one of my greatest joys is to see my own works being accepted abroad in a kind of exchange for my translation work.

One function accomplished by the task of translation is to demonstrate the ability of culture to manifest its power beyond the borders of a specific area and a specific period of history. For example, when I read Kafka's *The Castle* as a boy, I became totally immersed in the world of that novel, and an early twentieth-century nameless Czech country town felt, above all, *real* to me.

The purpose of storytelling is to transport things from a reality that exists apart from the here-and-now reality and, by doing so, to recreate a realer, more vivid reality in the here-and-now. This principle remains unchanged in all countries in all ages, and precisely because of that, a good story *can* be translated and is *worth* translating. This is what I believe.

In this real world of ours, there exist geographical borders. I don't know whether or not I should add "unfortunately" to this statement, but in any case, these borders between nations do exist. At times, they give rise to friction and to political problems.

In the world of culture, too, there exist borders. But unlike geographical borders, these borders between cultures can be crossed quite easily by us if only we make up our minds to cross them. Though language and lifestyle may differ from one culture to the next, it is possible for us to share each other's stories across cultures on an absolutely equal footing.

I don't know if these cultural border crossings can eclipse our geographical borders. I am fully aware that there are many reasons to be less than optimistic on that score. But each of us has been granted the inherent right to dream, and it is also the significance of a truly fine story that it helps people to have good dreams. I want to go on having these dreams by both translating and being translated.

Thank you.