

Table of contents

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Pages v–x of

On Translator Ethics: Principles for mediation between cultures

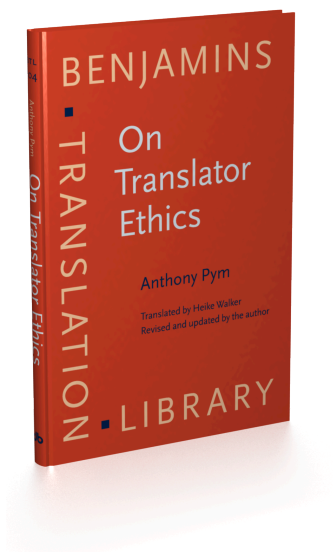
Anthony Pym

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The duels began, but since the ground was already littered with carcasses and corpses, they could only move with difficulty, and when they could reach each other, they had to use insults. The important thing was the degree and intensity of the insult, since depending on whether it was mortally offensive, just wounding, medium or light, a different response was required, lest implacable hate be passed down to future generations. So the important thing was to understand each other, which is no easy thing between Moors and Christians, with so many languages on both sides. If you were insulted and could not understand it, what you could do? You just had to accept it, and perhaps be disgraced for life. So at this stage of the fight, in came the interpreters. They were fast-moving troops, with light weapons, some mounted on horses; they spun around, catching insults on the fly and immediately rendering them into the language of the recipient. – Khar as-sus! – Dung worm! – Mushrik! – Sozo! – Mozo! – Escalvao! – Marra! – ¡Hijo de puta! – Zabalkan! – Etrons! Both sides had tacitly agreed that the interpreters should not be killed.

Italo Calvino, *Il cavaliere inesistente* (our translation)

Table of contents

| | |
|---|----|
| Acknowledgements | XI |
| Introduction | 1 |
| CHAPTER 1 | |
| In-between | 13 |
| The risks of rereading Schleiermacher | 13 |
| Binarism in translation theory | 14 |
| Metaphors and their strategies | 16 |
| Belonging or “the finest line” | 17 |
| <i>Blending</i> and related terms | 21 |
| The good translator according to Schleiermacher | 24 |
| The exclusion of <i>Blendlinge</i> | 26 |
| The logic of “either/or” | 29 |
| Translators as <i>Blendlinge</i> | 30 |
| Update: Venuti reads Schleiermacher | 32 |
| CHAPTER 2 | |
| Messengers | 37 |
| The tale of Sperthias and Bulis | 38 |
| Things and life in Herodotus | 39 |
| Survival, happiness, and individualism | 44 |
| Jacobi defends the Spartans | 45 |
| Hegel responds | 48 |
| The response to the satrap | 49 |
| Xerxes’ decision | 51 |
| Elements for an intercultural decision | 53 |
| Why the translator is more than a messenger | 56 |
| Update: Mona Baker and the purity of the cause | 57 |

CHAPTER 3

Professionals?

61

- The translation form 61
- Responsibility as the basis of ethics 67
- Translators' responsibility within their own space 68
- This space calls for a particular ethics 69
- The translator is not just anybody 70
- Three spaces for the exclusivity of the translator 72
 - Translation: the act of translating 74
 - Translation: a completed text 74
 - Concretized translation: a text received as such 75
- Responsibility in a historical example 76
 - Responsibility to the matter 76
 - Responsibility to the client 77
 - Responsibility to the profession 79
- Update: Professionalism in an age of democratic technology 81

CHAPTER 4

Interveners

87

- Context and agency 87
- The four causes 89
 - Favoring the source 91
 - Favoring purpose 93
 - Favoring form 95
 - Favoring the translator 97
- Responsibility and multiple causation 100
- The ideal moment 101
- Should I translate? 102
- An ethics for translators, in the plural 103
- Update: Translation Sociology and the revolutionary subject 104

CHAPTER 5

Missionaries

109

- What is not negotiable 109
- The importance of Nida 110
- Three critics 112
 - A Bible translator complains 112
 - A poet complains 116
 - An academic complains 118
- All things to all people 120

| | |
|---|-----|
| Involvement | 122 |
| Conclusions in partial defense of Nida | 123 |
| Update: Spivak and doing more than translate | 124 |
| CHAPTER 6 | |
| Agents of cooperation | 133 |
| A question of effort | 133 |
| Collective effort | 135 |
| A model of cooperation | 136 |
| The limits of cooperation | 139 |
| Transaction cost analysis | 140 |
| Translation as a transaction cost | 142 |
| The cost of translation and the importance of cultural stakes | 143 |
| Translation as a means of controlling transaction costs | 144 |
| Translation cost and knowledge-use | 145 |
| Transaction costs and ethical aims | 146 |
| Trust as a cost-saving measure | 146 |
| Respect for the other | 147 |
| Happiness | 147 |
| Negative ethics and the reduction of misunderstandings | 148 |
| Answers to some basic questions | 150 |
| Does the translator negotiate? | 150 |
| How much should the translator charge? | 151 |
| Whose side is the translator on? | 152 |
| Translation and language learning | 153 |
| Again: the interests of the translator | 156 |
| Fear of commerce | 157 |
| Update: The risks of seeking cooperation through intervention | 159 |
| CHAPTER 7 | |
| Principles for translator ethics | 165 |
| AFTERWORD | |
| The passing of generations and the widening of translation | 169 |
| References | 173 |
| Index | 183 |

