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TRADUTTORE TRADITORE: IS IT POSSIBLE TO TRANSLATE ANCIENT GREEK TEXTS?

Abstract: The culture of Ancient Greek literature is very different from our modern one. As its medium, the Ancient Greek language is incomprehensible outside the general context of Greek civilisation. Any translation of an Ancient Greek text is to some extent false, or at least artificial, and it cannot express the special character of the reality of the original. Selected translations of passages from Homer, Herodotus and Aeschines illustrate the incompatibility of the ancient and modern styles of narration. The study of the language of literature in relation to the reality it represents is advocated as a possible solution to this problem. Readers are also recommended to make the effort to study the ancient originals instead of reading the texts in translations, which can never be flawless.

Keywords: translation, ancient Greek, Homer, Herodotus, Aeschines

It is best to admit that language is primarily a vocal actualisation of the tendency to see realities symbolically, that it is precisely this quality which renders it a fit instrument for communication and that, in the actual give and take of social intercourse, it has been complicated and refined into the form in which it is known today (Sapir 1985: 15).

This statement by Edward Sapir might now seem a cliché (but it should be remembered that he wrote it originally in 1933) and anyone who deals with language (philologists, translators, literary critics) in his/her profession is aware, more or less consciously, of the complex relationships between language and reality. In the most obvious terms, language is a part of culture, and it can only express what is known and understood within the culture that uses the language. A text produced in a particular culture contains an understanding of and symbolises a reality that is characteristic for that culture. It is a statement that applies only to its culture and, at times, speaks of a reality foreign to other cultures. Thus each translation must go

beyond simple lexical equivalents for a text written or pronounced in a foreign language; above all, however, it is everything that is suggested by the dictionary meaning of the Latin word *translatio*: “the action of moving an object to a different location” (and perhaps the most remarkable of all the other senses listed in dictionaries is the very literal and down-to-earth “to pour something into another vessel” – a true metaphor when compared to “to restate in another manner...”).

Λόγος δυνάστης μέγας ἐστίν, wrote the sophist Gorgias in the fifth century BCE in a terse commentary on the role of the word in Greek culture. Even this short maxim presents a problem in translation due to the broad and hazy scope of the meaning of the term *logos*, which, in Gorgias, acquires a sense different than in Plato’s dialogue *Protagoras*. What Gorgias meant was, above all – yet not exclusively – poetry and its potential to arouse pleasure and pain in the audience. He saw similarities between the word’s impact on the receiver and that of charms (*goeteia*) and magic (*mageia*). He spoke of people that are overcome with enthusiasm (once again in the Greek sense of the word) at poetry. For *enthousiasmos* is man’s possession by a deity; man becomes *entheos* by having god (*theos*) in him/herself. This is a state that can be imparted by Dionysus (wine and Dionysian mysteries), Apollo (poetic and prophetic inspiration) and Eros (the passion of love). According to Gorgias, the word *logos* can have the same effect.

Gorgias himself was no practitioner of poetry. Yet he was a teacher of rhetoric, which he understood as the art of persuasion; its aim was to make the listener thoroughly enchanted by the speaker and unable to ponder the rationality and the quality of the latter’s arguments, so that the listener could do nothing but yield to the power of the spoken word. Yet the word transforms the speaker as well as the listener: “But whenso he uttered his great voice from his chest, and words like snowflakes on a winter’s day, then could no mortal man beside vie with Odysseus.” (*The Iliad* III: 220).

This characterisation of Odysseus follows a description of Agamemnon, whose figure towers above the other chiefs; the King of Ithaca seems at first insignificant in comparison. It is his speech that changes him. When he does not speak he creates no impression whatsoever; nor is his bearing accordingly regal.

In all subsequent Greek culture, Odysseus served as a symbol of rhetoric and persuasion. As performed by him, much as by the sophists and the rhetors of the fifth century BCE, the word became an instrument of *Peitho*: “persuasion,” “argumentation,” “obedience.” As early as Hesiod’s *Opera* 73 and *Theog.* 349, *Peitho* is personified as a goddess, a companion or, in-

deed, a daughter of Aphrodite. The concept and the goddess alike suggest imposition or enslavement and forced obedience: the verb *peitho* itself, being in the mediopassive voice, means “I am obedient” or even “I surrender.” Aphrodite imposes obedience with the enchantment of love, often dangerous and insidious; she is not to be trifled with; and there is no one who could reject her *ergo* with impunity. The word has very much the same effect: everyone surrenders to the power of the word.

For a long time, Greek culture was the living spoken word. In the fifth century BCE, Classical culture was still very much oral; the only controversy is when and to what extent it acquired a semi-oral character, and when it eventually transformed into a culture of writing and reading (see: Havelock 1986). In fact, the spoken word preserved its dominant position throughout Antiquity; more often than not, texts were read aloud. Those written and published even when bookmaking workshops (producing papyri, obviously), stores specialising in selling books and private libraries already existed were made with listeners, not readers, in mind. In Athens, Herodotus read (or recited?) his work to others; Thucydides, critical of his great predecessor, rejected stories made for entertainment and pleasure and promoted the greatness of his own *oeuvre*; he, too, expected that the reception of his work would come through listening rather than reading (*καὶ ἐς μὲν ἀκρόασιν...* I 22,4).

This is why no present-day contact with the literature of the Ancients, be it epic or melic, tragedy or prose (including its rhetorical variety), can provide any idea of the function, the conditions and the way a work was received in Antiquity. The most important fact here was that the impact of any text was meant to be closely connected with a gracious tone. It seems that the Muse Calliope (the “sweet-voiced”) was the patron of all verbal art.

This places the translators of Greek poetry in an even more difficult situation – if indeed not in a hopeless one. What idea can one have of the translation of a song when one ignores the melody? And this is exactly the case with Greek drama and melics. All the works were performed with music; nay, they simply *were* works of music and every poet was, by the same token, a composer. And we know pitifully little about ancient music, although a few studies do shed some light on the subject (West 1992). Few translators are aware that Greek poetry is inextricably connected with melorecitation or singing, and that Greek drama featured truly operatic arias, *Sprechgesang* and choral parts not unlike those found in opera. One might also question the very sense of rendering the character of a work produced and rooted in an entirely different cultural reality into

any modern language. In the fifth century BCE, no average (or even fairly well-educated) Athenian ever bothered with the text of a drama. What he witnessed was a great musical show, with text only serving as the libretto (or even less: a script). Are librettos truly so significant to the audience of an opera? Do opera-goers truly concentrate on the *word*? The poetry of the Ancient Greeks is an exceptional phenomenon that is best described as performance art; transposed into our world, it loses its essence, it turns into something entirely different...

This problem has been addressed by Jerzy Łanowski, a great expert on Greek literature and a renowned translator of Euripides. He never tired of stressing that translating Ancient literature is an enormous challenge, it is “the threshold of a different and hermetic world of culture” (Łanowski 2005: 38). Unlike those of modern cultures, the translator of ancient literature must attempt to transpose the text from a closed culture, and a dead one at that, to his/her own. Yet, at the same time, the translator must convince his contemporary reader that the translated work deserves its status; in short, that it is great poetry, and that to read it is to experience pure aesthetic pleasure. As such, the translation must remain “beautiful” through entirely different means. No one could reproduce the metre of Antiquity in Polish poetry; the task itself would be nonsensical in view of the differences between Greek or Latin and present-day Polish. How is one to render the exquisiteness of the original’s hexameter or the mastery of its iamb? Jan Parandowski decided to render the *Odyssey* in prose and his translation is, above all, evidence of the great stylist’s perfect Polish; but his version of “Tell me, O Muse, of that sagacious man, who, having overthrown the sacred town of Ilium, wandered far” (*Męża głos, Muzo, wielce obrotnego, który zburzył święty gród Troi, a potem wiele wędrował*) provides no sense of the tone of the two hexametric lines as recited by the aoidos:

Ἄνδρα μοι ἄειπε, μούσα, πολύτροπον, ὃς μέλα πολλὰ
πλάγχθη, ἐπεὶ Τροίης ἱερῶν πτολ...εθρον ἄπερσε

Attempts at translation in verse can fare even worse. Parandowski was undoubtedly correct when he wrote in his analysis of another passage: “in verse translations, the crucial hexameter is either lost or reduced to almost nothing” (Parandowski 1998: 11).

In the Preface to his translation of Euripides, Łanowski devoted much space to discussing the problems and the challenges facing the translator of an ancient work, and the inescapable and frustrating incompatibility be-

tween a “beautiful” and a “faithful” translation (Łanowski 2005: 35–44). He tried to produce a text that would be both pleasant to read and playable on stage; this is why he eschewed isometry, as he could see the artifice (and the off sound) of a masculine thesis (a one-syllable word concluding a line) serving as the counterpart of the iamb. He thought that huge iambic passages – “hundreds of lines with accents on the final syllable” – would be “unbearable in silent reading, let alone in recitation” (Łanowski 2005: 39). He was well aware that his version of Euripides could be accused of a lack of philological fidelity, and he confessed to this dilemma: “one has is tempted to abandon one’s work, for the simple reason that this is a hell of a job” (Łanowski 2005: 37). Thus a translator of Greek poetry should be both a poet and a philologist; the problem, however, is that even when the twain meet in one person, the conflict between them is no less certain.

Translations of prose are not much simpler a task. As we have mentioned, here, too, the focus was on the living and spoken word, on the tone of the phrase, and reciting the text amounted to a performance. This is perfectly illustrated by the charming literary image in Plato’s *Phaedrus*. Socrates’ young interlocutor holds a scroll with a speech by Lysias and, according to the philosopher, wishes to learn it by heart. In the end, he reads it aloud to Socrates to impress his older friend. A speech is to be read aloud, not in silence.

Nonetheless, one can reconcile oneself to the fact that an ancient literary text functions differently in modern culture. After all, Aristotle himself read tragedies and analysed their texts rather than their performance on stage; in the famous passage of his *Poetics* that lists the six constitutive elements of tragedy, he placed the *opsis* (spectacle) and *melopoiia* (song) last. He saw *mythos*, or the plot, as the most important element, claiming that “without action there cannot be tragedy” (1450a). Thus, especially in translations of prose, the events presented or described – or “actions,” to use Aristotle’s term – must simply be told. This, however, is no easy task. The translator must struggle with syntax and a whole set of concepts alien to the contemporary reader. Syntax, in turn, has its own semantic function: a Greek author mindful of his *lexis* would deliberately use the right turns of phrase *and* their combinations, and a meticulous word order in a sentence was an element of the entire composition. Let us follow Janusz Domański (1992: 18–33) in a presentation of this problem in the *prooimion* to Herodotus’ *History*.

The work begins:

Ἡροδότου Θουρίου ἱστορίας ἀπόδεξις ἦδε, ὡς μίτε τὰ γενόμενα ἐξ ἀνθρώπων τῷ χρόνῳ ἐξίτηλα γένηται, μίτε ἔργα μεγάλα τε καὶ θωμαστά, τὰ μὲν Ἕλλησι, τὰ δὲ βαρβάροισι ἀποδεχθέντα, ἀκλέα γένηται, τὰ τε ἄλλα καὶ δι' ἣν αἰτίην ἐπολέμησαν ἀλλήλοισι.

Seweryn Hammer, the author of a Polish translation that is not only still used in teaching, but also very present in Polish culture (quoted among others by Ryszard Kapuściński), translated this passage thus:

Herodot z Halikarnasu¹ przedstawia tu wyniki swych badań, żeby ani dzieje ludzkie z biegiem czasu nie zatarły się w pamięci, ani wielkie i podziwu godne dzieła, jakich bądź Hellenowie, bądź barbarzyńcy dokonali, nie przebrzmiały bez echa, między innymi wyjaśniając, dlaczego oni nawzajem z sobą wojowali. (Herodot 1959: 21)

Herodotus of Halicarnassus herein presents the results of his inquiries, so that neither does human history become effaced from memory with the passing of time, nor do the great and marvellous works, some by Hellenes and some by Barbarians, vanish without a ripple, explaining, among other things, why they battled each other.²

Domański (1992: 18)

Oto ukazanie badań Herodota z Halikarnasu, aby ani to, co stało się za sprawą ludzi, z czasem zbladło się nie stało, ani dzieła wielkie i podziwu godne, jedne przez barbarzyńców, drugie przez Hellenów dokazane, bez sławy się nie ostały, zarówno pod innym względem, jak i pod tym, jaka to wina sprawiła, że wojowali ze sobą.

This is to show forth the inquiries by Herodotus of Halicarnassus, so that neither what has been done by men may fade with time, nor may great and marvellous deeds, some by Barbarians, some by Hellenes performed, remain without fame, both in what caused their battle with each other and in other ways.

Domański confesses quite openly that his translation is “somewhat bizarre.” Indeed, the first of the above quotes is fluent – smooth, one might say – its sentences are correct and all the phrases used are quite legitimate

¹ Both readings of Herodotus’ origins appear in manuscripts: Thurioi, where he lived, or Halicarnassos, where he was born. The two translators agree on the latter.

² All English translations of Polish texts are by Jan Rybicki unless otherwise stated. This is also true of the English translations of Polish translations of Greek texts. They were kept as close as possible (without compromising the points in the Polish versions discussed in this paper) to existing direct English translations of Greek texts.

in the Polish language. In the second, surprise (if not protest) might accompany “show forth;” the rival “results of inquiries” sounds much better. Nor is Domański even quite literal: Herodotus writes of showing forth his “inquiry,” ἀπόδειξις – singular, not plural. Yet the problem is not that of greater or lesser literalness.

One little word, ἦδε, vanished from the Hammer translation. It is key to the entire reasoning and the thesis of Domański’s essay, which deals with the transition from oral to written culture and the consequences of the phenomenon for constructing statements in philosophical texts. For ἦδε is an indicative pronoun, which performs a particular function here, signifying, more or less, “this particular.” According to Domański, its usage in Herodotus’ sentence “signals a closeness, possibly an identity; it is a label, a tag. It has been placed at the beginning of the book, of the text preserved in writing, a lasting material object to which the author seems to be pointing with his finger” (Domański 1992: 19). The whole phrase ἱστορίας ἀπόδειξις ἦδε suggests (in Domański’s opinion) Herodotus’ full awareness of having written a book. This is an entirely different way of signing a text than what we know from Theognis, who clearly envisaged an oral product. Such a phrase is evidence of a phenomenon which Domański calls “the book revolution.” Hammer’s translation allows for no such reading. One might add, as well, that to translate δι’ ἣν αἰτίην ἐπολέμησαν as “what caused their battle with each other” is largely preferable to “why they battled each other” due to more than just the literalness of the former. The concept of *aitia* connotes the Greek concept of cause and fault, where cause is a result of a human error. Placed at the very beginning of Herodotus’ work, this phrase well describes his position on causality in history and his religious stance. To quote Domański once again, “the very telling of history shows *aitia* as a human sin of pride, a significant motive of human actions” (1992: 19). If δι’ ἣν αἰτίην is rendered by a simple *why* (quite legitimate in lexical terms), the sense it had for Herodotus and for his audience – whether listeners or readers – is lost.

This leads us to the problem of translating the concepts, terms and also the events related in the story. Here, too, Herodotus’ *Historiae* – the earliest preserved extensive work of ancient historiography – serves as a good example. In fact, the title of the Polish translation by Seweryn Hammer is not only misleading, but it also conflicts with the very idea of Herodotus’ writing. It should be recalled that ancient historiography was simply a literary genre, and that works by historians were, above all, judged for their aesthetic merits. Thucydides cautions in the above-quoted passage (I 22.4)

that he writes neither to please his audience nor “to win the applause of the moment;” instead, he hopes it will (in Crawley’s translation) “be judged useful by those researchers who desire an exact knowledge of the past as an aid to interpreting the future, which in the course of human things must resemble.” But this mainly concerns his content and his choice of material (“the absence of romance in my history;”) and certainly does not preclude careful composition and narrative style. Herodotus’ case is even more complex. He is not a historian in the modern sense of the word, and he does not write his “histories” as *res gestae*; he writes so that “great and marvellous deeds” should not “fade with time.” Thus the model is unquestionably epic and the only difference between him and epic writers is that he “inquires” into “great deeds” (ἔργα μεγάλα τε καὶ θωμαστά) rather than following other poets and hoping to be inspired by the Muses. His *prooimion* clearly states the character of his work and does not attempt a systematic exposition of the past. Yet the Polish title *Historie* (Histories; this has been replaced by the Latin *Historiae* in modern critical editions) neither mirrors the essence of Herodotus’ writing nor even the phrase ἱστορίας ἀπόδειξις. On the other hand, the title *Ukazanie badań* (Showing Forth of Inquiries) or *Badania* (Inquiries or Examinations) would seem at strange, if not downright comic, and would make the reader no wiser as to the nature and the genre of the book; it could even be mistaken for a medical treatise...

Translating Herodotus is hardly easier than translating tragedies. An attempt to preserve the whole character of this remarkable work would make the whole task unfeasible. After all, there has been enough misunderstanding in interpreting the original. In Antiquity, Herodotus was accused of wordiness, compositional errors and a tendency to digress. It was only careful reading with full understanding of the author’s composition and *lexis* that revealed the meticulous construction of the work, composed of deliberate and rigorously combined *logoi*, fulfilling the promise of the *prooimion* (cf. Węcowski 1996: 345–398).

The translation of rhetorical prose poses a separate problem. As we have already discussed, it is the living word, whose impact on its audience comes in part – if not chiefly – through its tone. A speech is performance art; the trouble is, we have little knowledge of the means the speakers used. We do know that, in the times of the Empire, a rhetor’s discourse was a true thespian routine; that apodeictic speeches were given in theatres; that the spectacle drew throngs of listeners (or viewers?); and that speakers made their performance as dramatic as possible, until it began to resemble a monodrama. Things could not have been very different in the Classical period.

Aeschines, an Athenian orator and politician of the fourth century BCE, thus describes the comportment of his adversary Timarchos (I 25–26):

this man not long ago, yes, only the other day, in an assembly of the people, threw off his cloak and leapt about like a gymnast, half naked, his body so reduced and befouled through drunkenness and lewdness that right-minded men, at least, covered their eyes, being ashamed for the city, that we should let such men as he be our advisers (Aeschines 1919: 25).

The orator contrasts Timarchos' behaviour with the approach of public political speakers from the past:

And so decorous were those public men of old, Pericles, Themistocles, and Aristides (who was called by a name most unlike that by which Timarchos here is called), that to speak with the arm outside the cloak, as we all do nowadays as a matter of course, was regarded then as an ill-mannered thing, and they carefully refrained from doing it (Aeschines 1988: 24–25).

Timarchos seems to have gone too far in the theatricality of his performance, at least according to Aeschines. On the other hand, it seems quite improbable that he would have been stark naked at any time. Aeschines' words were probably meant to highlight the excessive gestures and vivacity of his adversary's display. Still, Aeschines does allow that vivid gestures are part of the repertoire of his contemporaries' means of expression and (possibly) of his own ("as we all do nowadays as a matter of course").

In another trial – in which he was the defendant, with capital punishment hanging over his head – Aeschines brought his children to court and movingly pleaded with the judges (II 179): "To plead with you in my behalf are present my father (...); my brothers (...); my connections by marriage; and these little children, who do not yet realise their danger, but are to be pitied if disaster fall on us." (Aeschines 1998: 290). Now this is a truly theatrical scene: one can easily imagine both the children standing in front of the jury and the speaker pointing to them and then turning to appeal to the judges. The style and the rhythm of Aeschines' prose, his choice of words and his sentence structure are all in accord with the character of a rhetorical spectacle. This brings to mind the method used by Oliver Taplin in his attempts to reconstruct a theatre performance: the analysis of the text (obviously, that of the original) allowed him to draw conclusions as to the behaviour of the characters and the course of action on stage (cf. Taplin 2004). The same is true of a rhetor's speech. Yet such are the requirements of translation that the prose must be read in private rather than recited to

an audience. The problems begin with the persistent use of the indicative pronoun οὗτος. Constant repetition of the Polish *ten, ten to, ten oto*, or even combining the name with the pronoun – *ten oto Timarchos* or, worse, *ten Timarchos* – would be highly unacceptable. In giving a speech, however, the words are accompanied by an indicative gesture seen by the audience, and the person indicated is as good as branded, since this usage of οὗτος has a somewhat pejorative sense. No translation can render this.

Aeschines' first speech, *Against Timarchos*, begins with a long sentence, in which Aeschines explains to the judges his motives in bringing a political matter to court. After all, the judges were simple citizens picked at random (the tribunal was at least 500 strong in cases of this kind), and were naturally suspicious of politicians attempting to settle their scores by trial. Aeschines wants to make two things perfectly clear: that he had never before sued anyone for political reasons, and that he was only doing so now in the interest of the *polis*, despite having been personally attacked by Timarchos (who sought to sue him in turn). He states all this in a meticulously worded sentence, which amounts to some ten lines of text in present-day standard editions. Subordinate clauses are expressed in participial constructions that sound pleasantly succinct to the Greek ear and, at the same time, express the entirety of circumstances that the speaker wishes to present. Furthermore, the syntax rivets the audience's attention, keeping them interested in the rest of the speech and in the speaker's ultimate intent. It is difficult even to imagine a corresponding passage in Polish; it has been split into three complex sentences, with the subordinate clause invariably following the conjunction *że* (that). The translation gives no indication of Aeschines' style, to say nothing of the numerous and rhetorically significant alliterations...

Against Timarchos introduces a variety of other, content-related problems which are quite delicate in nature. Aeschines accuses Timarchos of illegal use of certain public rights (such as speaking to the Assembly and in courts of law), since the latter has been under partial *atimia* (loss of honour and civil rights) for having practised prostitution in his youth. The problem is that homoerotic love was quite respected and fairly common in Athens – and throughout Greece – at the time. Aeschines makes it clear that he, too, would fall in love – frequently and freely – with beautiful boys; that many beautiful and decent boys have male lovers; that there is no crime in a youth's relationship with a mature citizen; and that there is nothing wrong with a citizen who has a male lover. The issue was the payment Timarchos allegedly received from his erotic liaisons and his generally dissolute

lifestyle, even into his mature years. Speaking of such matters, Aeschines needed to eschew the ribald vulgarity of the language of comedy and, at the same time, to describe Timarchos' comportment in a way that would persuade his audience of his adversary's iniquity. It seems that not a single expression he uses has a counterpart in Polish, let alone one that would be inoffensive or, on the contrary, excessively refined, euphemistic or reminiscent of legal jargon.

Aeschines is at his most revealing on Timarchos' proclivities in the following passage (I 52): οὐκέτι δήπου φανείται3 μόνον ἡταιρηκῶς, ἀλλὰ καὶ - μὰ τὸν Διόνυσον οὐκ οἶδ' ὅπως δυνήσομαι περιπλέκειν ὄλην τὴν ἡμέραν - καὶ πεπορνευμένος (you will no longer look upon him as one who has merely been a kept man, but – by Dionysus, I don't know how I can keep glossing the thing over all day long – as a common prostitute; Aeschines 1988: 47). I have translated this as: “*wyda się on wam już nie pospolitym utrzymankiem* (‘kept man’), *lecz – na Dionizosa, nie potrafię przez cały dzień stosować omówień!* – *po prostu pospolitą dziwką* (‘whore’)” (Aeschines 2004: 68).

This is a very imperfect translation. Both Greek terms (*hetairekos*, *peporneumenos*) summon associations quite unlike those used in the Polish version, respectively *utrzymanek* and *dziwka*. *Hetairekos* is derived from the verb *hetairein*, and although it does denote a companion in the style of a hetaera, it is in fact used to describe a boy whose “companionship” with a man (*hetairos* is simply “companion”) brings the former monetary benefits. The participle *peporneumenos*, in turn, derived from the verb *porneuesthai*, connotes with *porne* (cf. Dover 1978: 20). Yet even the status of a *hetairekos* was enough to strip a youth thus described of his civil rights; a future citizen cannot behave like a hetaera and perform her profession. *Peporneumenos* further emphasises this definition, in part to later justify branding Timarchos as *pornos*. This final term is entirely untranslatable, since there are no masculine nouns in Polish that correspond to *dziwka* (whore) or *prostyutka* (prostitute). Also, *pornos* or *porne* derive from the verb *pernemi*, the equivalent of to “sell” or “sell (and export).” Any Athenian would understand the sentence quoted above more or less as “it is now evident that you are not a companion such as a hetaera; instead, you simply sell yourself.” At the same time, the Athenian would detect a certain vulgarity, since *pornos* is a term of abuse... None of these nuances can be rendered in Polish! Moreover, both terms were used in the context of Athenian civil rights law. To stick to this meaning, the text should be translated as “*nie żyłeś z nim w konkubinacie, lecz uprawiałeś nierząd* (you did not

live with him in common-law marriage; instead, you prostituted yourself).” The Polish sentence would sound humorous or, at best, highly awkward and would contain none of the deliberate vulgarity. It is tempting to express both the vulgar tone and the grammatical form of the two Greek terms, perfective past participles. The result, “*Byłeś z nim nie stowarzyszony, lecz skurwiony*” (*stowarzyszony* being a perfective past participle derived from “companion” and *skurwiony* an identical derivative of “whore”); except that the former term would seem quite cryptic and the latter would contain incorrect phrasal elements. Also, the latter is too offensive.

On the other hand, to translate “*πῶτος Τίμαρχος; ὁ πόρνος*” as “który Timarchos? Ta dziwka? (What Timarchos do you mean? The whore?; I 130)” renders *πόρνος* with a feminine noun and thus produces associations differing from the author’s intent. The lack of the definite article in Polish is another problem. Aeschines quotes a question citizens allegedly asked whenever they heard Timarchos’ name. The usage of *ὁ πόρνος* is meant to show the audience that it is, in fact, Timarchos’s nickname, or even his middle name. The Polish indicative pronoun cannot render this implication. It is probably due to this passage that a scholiast of Antiquity relates that, ever since the Aeschines/Timarchos lawsuit, any boy prostitute was called Timarchos. The translation *ten zwany dziwką* (the one named whore) would be closer to the original yet too lengthy, which would clash with Aeschines’ rhetorical style.

Against Timarchos abounds in – or indeed consists of – similar instances. Translation issues concerning moral concepts such as *sophrosyne* or *hybris* are evident; even more so are the constant problems with polonised versions of names and proper nouns. Timarchos’ name itself is an issue, since it contains the stem, *Timarch-*, and the nominative suffix *-us*. Polish translation practice has been to keep the original Greek in the nominative and to replace the Greek suffixes with Polish ones in other cases, but this could startle the present-day reader who knows neither Greek nor Latin, and might have only a limited knowledge of Polish grammar. The resulting vocative *Timarchosie*, for example, sounds strange and again distorts the rhythm of the rhetorical prose.

All one can do is to repeat the above quote by Łanowski. It is true that the translator might have “the urge to abandon one’s work, simply feeling this is a hell of a job,” and to question the very sense of translating Ancient Greek literature. The translation gives no idea of the original. To understand the Greek text one must know Greek and have a working knowledge

of Ancient Greek culture – incidentally, the statement by Sapir quoted at the opening of this study suggests that this is a prerequisite of understanding any language... And there is nothing one can do, since the culture is dead, alien and entirely incompatible with that of the present day. A translator of a Greek text is and always will be *traditore*, to quote the Italian saying. For he or she betrays the ancient work by the simple fact of importing it into his or her own culture. So perhaps it is better not to translate at all?

trans. Jan Rybicki

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