

On the Efficiency and Efficacy of
Machine-Assisted Literary Translation:
A Case Study for English/Romanian and
Romanian/English Machine-Assisted Translation

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Abstract

“If you translate long into the machine, the machine translates back into you,” is one of the issues the present article strives to establish and explore qualitatively. I intend to examine the effectiveness and efficiency of machine-assisted translations of significant literary works from a hermeneutical perspective. Essentially, I analyse the output of automated translation platforms such as Google Translate and compare them to human translation. This investigation is valuable in determining whether translators should exercise caution when utilizing translation platforms for culturally rich literary works. Additionally, the article scrutinizes the localisation, cultural, and grammatical coherence of Homer’s *The Iliad* translated from English to Romanian using the Google Translate platform. The human translations used are rendered into English and Romanian from Greek. As Homer’s Greek remains incomprehensible to the translation platform, we employ a secondary translation technique for a tertiary machine-assisted output. Nonetheless, this approach highlights the serious pitfalls of using translation platforms haphazardly in translation work. This analysis will show how awareness of the machine’s imperfect translation capabilities may, in turn, enhance the human translator’s awareness of what works while translating with the help of a translation application.

Keywords: techno-determinism, machine-assisted translation, gist translation, literary translation, digital age, neural machine translation, artificial intelligence.

Language is ever-changing. It is a living organism available to humans in some form or another. Human language is not collectable in a preset form to be integrated and used in the same form for every possible interaction with different societies, cultures, and people, however. Machine Neural Networks intercept language input created by humans in the language's most basic form, promoting a rudimentary understanding of the contexts described by said language. Human beings, alternatively, can innately intercept, understand, and react to language use based on their context and cognition. This latter ability of humans is most potent in literary texts, seen as promoters of bygone or newly emerging socio-cultural idiosyncrasies. In this respect, human beings are prosumers of language. Conversely, automated translation platforms are simply a consumer of language inputs mechanically and systematically processed as output by mechanical neural networks. The machine translator's (MT henceforward) content production is not a conscious effort, hence the latter's omission from the prosumer category however adaptable its technology may become (Rahr and Doronin 2017).

On the other hand, the human translator produces the input inferred from the Source Language (SL henceforward) text, expects an output, reacts to the output given by the machine, and works on it by either post-editing or erasing it altogether. There is an inextricable conscious and fully human effort in language production and reproduction. Literary texts have the same unique quality of being entirely personal and characteristic of each writer's personality developed through social interaction, education, and imagination especially, but also of the dispositions of the readers/translators who, in the act of reading, create the meaning and internalize the text through their understanding of it. This

article aims to highlight the limitations of machine translation when it comes to capturing an author's unique style and personality. By examining the MT versions of literary texts, it becomes evident that the lack of conscious imaginative effort results in translations that lack coherence and fail to adequately capture the essence of the original text. This, in turn, leads to a subpar reading experience for the reader.

An age-old conundrum in translation studies is the need for a theory of equivalence that would explain fully the means through which a Target Language (TL henceforward) text delivers the message of the SL text adequately to the receivers. MT platforms sometimes aim entirely at a gist translation of a certain text without employing complex means of translating and conveying the SL message per pre-established cultural norms; this latter characteristic is especially relevant for literary texts. Notwithstanding, MT platforms (Google Translate to a large extent) have begun to perform incredibly better when translating legal documents. Eugene Nida terms such equivalence as “formal equivalence” (qtd. in Bassnett 34) in that the message contained in the translation is carried over to the reader by “gloss translation” of “poetry to poetry, sentence to sentence, and concept to concept” (qtd. in Bassnett 34) and allows the reader to understand the main message of the text – gist translation – which, in the case of technical journals, and scientific essays, is not a bad option.

Another type of equivalence described by Nida is “dynamic equivalence” (qtd. in Bassnett 34), by which the message of the SL is transposed into the TL translation and understood by TL readers in the same way in which an SL reader would understand the message of the SL text – an effect of equivalence between the two languages and the idiosyncrasies of the readers and the texts. Theories of equivalence will provide useful material in understanding and furthering the argument that MT platforms are procedurally unable to uncover the implicit meaning (if any) behind an SL literary text and succeed in only formally transposing the SL into the TL without effects, panache or style. Therefore, machine equivalence will be shown to be restricted to the formal only.

Theories of style might present the difficulty MT platforms have when faced with texts heavily reliant on the author's style and, subsequently, the literary style the translator employs in order to follow different stylistic and cultural peculiarities of the SL text, which the machine is currently unable to detect. For this reason, post-editing efforts of translators engaged in machine-assisted translations will be discussed as being instrumental in filling the gaps left in the knowledge of the machine – literary knowledge which, for now, seems to be lacking in the neural networks of the MT platforms (Cronin 71).

In what follows, the article discusses different stylistic choices in various excerpts from translations of culturally defining texts such as Homer's *Iliad*, followed by other works of literature and their subsequent machine translations analysed against the background of human translations. This analysis follows the lines of stylistic analysis by tracing and explaining the style central to the way the texts are construed and interpreted (Boase-Beier 1). Additionally, machine translations of the same texts will be interpreted to infer whether or not the machine translator maintains a coherent style or reduces the literary text to a mechanically generated output devoid of any stylistic, or cultural values. For this purpose, theories of style will present the analysis of machine translation in connection with human translations of literary texts that are heavily marked by the author's style and, consequently, by a translator's possible localization-conscious choices during the translation process. The translator construes and embeds his/her style within the lines of the target text. The style and the meaning are inferred and sometimes transmuted continually from one medium to the other, bearing significant changes when transferred from one text to another, from one culture to another. The idiosyncrasies of style within literary texts and literary translations are sometimes omitted by the MT which renders the source language text without its inherent literary meaning and culturally relevant means of expression. The MT does this by integrating the most at-hand word possible, or the most basic syntax, in the given semantic context, resulting in a reductionist gist translation (Cronin

101). Therefore, “what style means for translation studies is paying attention to what is unique to the text and its choices, being aware of the patterns in the text, and paying close attention to the essential nature and function of the text” (Boase-Beier 1). Apart from these universals of stylistic knowledge, in which “voice, otherness, foreignization, contextualization and culturally-bound and universal ways of conceptualizing and expressing meaning” (Boase-Beier 2) are embedded, further analysis of machine translation of literary texts will be made based on “cognitive stylistics,” a field “concerned with the relation between what is universal and what is culture-specific in language and for that reason alone is of great interest to translation theory” (Boase-Beier 3).

Excerpts from Robert Fagles’ English translation of Homer’s *Iliad* and George Murnu’s Romanian translation of the epic poem will be used to concurrently showcase differences in style evidenced mainly by word choice. Lines from the poem will be translated with Google Translate, from English into Romanian and Romanian into English, respectively, to show the MT’s lack of stylistic and cultural acumen given the different mediums and cultures in which the translations are situated (Cronin 72). Translations of the original text in Greek are used because the MT is utterly unable to process the Homeric idiom which “is a problem in itself. It is an artificial poetic language – as the German scholar Witte put it: ‘The language of the Homeric poems is a creation of epic verse’” (Knox qtd. in Fagles 11). A translator’s note detailing every intricacy and conscious choice made throughout the translation of a literary text presents any translator in the making with an ideal of research and scope when reproducing the literary text in any given culture and language. Fagles finds a middle ground between the complex Homeric medium and transposes the dactylic hexameter contained by the epic poem into “modern English”:

Obviously at a far remove from Homer, in this translation, I have tried to find a middle ground (and not a no man’s land, if I can help it) between the features of his performance and the

expectations of a contemporary reader. Not a line-for-line translation, my version of the *Iliad* is, I hope, neither so literal in rendering Homer's language as to cramp and distort my own – though I want to convey as much of what he says as possible – nor so literary as to break his energy, his forward drive – though I want my work to be literate, with any luck. *For the more literal approach would seem to be too little English, and the more literary seems too little Greek.* I have tried to find a cross between the two, a modern English Homer. (Fagles X; my emphasis)

Subsequently, Murnu offers a comprehensive description of his intentions when translating the Homeric idiom. Murnu informs the reader of his strenuous effort to preserve the original meaning and follow the dactylic hexameter's lines as closely as possible by employing the iambic pentameter. This change was allegedly made due to the lack of an essentially Romanian national epic and its respective original heroic meter in which Homer's poem would have found a close equivalent. Murnu actively searched for proper cultural localization of the Greek epic poem while translating. His preface reveals the cognitive effort it takes a human translator to decode the cultural significance of the original text in the SL and then render it according to the TL's linguistic and cultural conventions that sometimes need to be altered or adjusted to that end,

I have found in my vast field of experimentation and accomplishment in Homeric poems, a total of about 30,000 verses with varied content, which reflect almost entirely the life and activity of the ancient world. At every step, I might say at every verse, I was held in place by a problem of transmission (for the work of art rests above all on form, and this is not infrequently inaccessible, hence the need to resort to the equivalent), a problem all the more difficult as my main objective was to give proper value to the happiest and most difficult Romanian expressions. Hence the inexorable need to enrich and expand the expressive capacity of our language, and, as a fatal consequence, the idea of merging dialects, following the criterion of selection and necessity, and even of making a new word (I note in passing the fate of the verb 'to

billow' which appeared for the first time in 'Romanian Life'), not only to vary the expression and to live up to the original text which is of amazing richness and variety but also to fill a gap or avoid a fresh neologism, vitreous element non-attributable to epic tone, without which the style of the epic does not exist. And it was here that I focused my care and attention, my power of skill and accomplishment. I wanted, through this, a total comprehension and assimilation of the poems, a possible Romanization, to be able to replace the lack of a great national epic, an epic that may not see the light of day, as this kind of poetry seems to have been replaced by its prose correspondent, the novel. (Murnu 37-8; my translation)

Naturally, an MT cannot offer reasons for its choice of words and intentions when dealing with complex sentences and when transmuting poetic style (provided the machine can detect and discern the "poetic" style in the first place). Culturally-bound style and contextually relevant passages sometimes bear great dialectic importance for the literary text and the culture wherein they are contained, what Murnu calls the "essential element" (38; my translation). Another important translation of *The Iliad* used throughout this analysis is Richmond Lattimore's, who provides an in-depth look at his translation process in his "Translator's Note" which encompasses the defining quality of what a purely subjective human translation looks like without the aid of technology:

In making this translation I have used the Oxford text of D.B. Monro and T. W. Allen (3rd edition, 1919), and have not knowingly failed to follow its readings except in a very few cases, viz.: In 8,328 I would either read νεῦρον instead of νευρήν, or, better perhaps, take νευρή here to mean nerve, sinew, or tendon, not bowstring. Where the Oxford editors have numbered, but excluded from their text, 8,548 and 8,550-552, I have included these lines. I have translated, but bracketed, 16,614-615. Further, I have, in the interests of clarity and English usage, occasionally given personal names instead of personal pronouns. As regards formula and repeat, I have, with the help of Schmidt's Parallel-Homer and Cunliffe's admirable Lexicon of the Homeric Dialect, tried to preserve something of the formulaic character, but have not systematically attempted to render all identical passages in Greek

by identical passages in English. I have aimed to give a rendering of *The Iliad* which will convey the meaning of the Greek in a speed and rhythm analogous to the speed and rhythm I find in the original. The best meter for my purpose is a free six-beat line. My line can hardly be called English hexameter. It is less regular than that of Longfellow, or the recent Smith-Miller translation of the *Iliad*. (91)

The majority of studies which analyse the potentialities of MT in literary texts were conducted before Google's 2016 adoption of Neural Networks in Machine Translation, applications such as Andy Way (2011), Franz Och and Hermann Ney (2002), Nadeshda Riabtseva (1987), Andy Way and Mary Hearne (2013), Nataly Kelly and Jost Zetzsche (2012), and Laurent Besacier (2014). They have all researched the potential of the MT to translate a short story from English into French, followed by a post-editing process that resulted in a time-efficient output, but lacked the translation quality of a human translation proper because the machine failed to detect certain cultural references and translate syntactic units according to the context of the SL text (Toral and Way 246). David Bellos (2012) distrusted the potential of Statistical Machine Translation because

Taking literary translation as the sole object of translation studies skews all arguments about interlingual communication from the start. . . That's not what literary translation is about. For works that are truly original – and therefore worth translating – statistical machine translation hasn't got a hope. Google Translate can provide stupendous services in many domains, but it is not set up to interpret or make readable work that is not routine – and it is unfair to ask it to try. After all, when it comes to the real challenges of literary translation, human beings have a hard time with it, too. (qtd. in Toral and Way 241)

Antonio Toral and Andy Way (2015) tried to reappraise the roles of Statistical Machine Translation (SMT henceforward) and Neural Machine Translation (NMT henceforward) played in literary translation efficiency by looking at translations of Albert Camus' *L'Étranger* from the original French into a closely related language and a less related language, Italian and English, respectively. They

found, amidst other technical necessities that would enhance the human user–MT interaction, such as the necessity for suitable workflows when tackling the translations of literary texts with the help of NMT, that the SMT struggles to perform qualitative translations of figurative language and lacks in its treatment of cohesion. They offer the following processes involved in the “training” (in the previous chapter, when discussing Neural Machine Networks, the term used was “learning”) of the STM models of translations:

There are two main processes in statistical models of translation: training and decoding. All training is offline, and involves the computation of three models: a translation model, a reordering model, and a target language model (LM). The first two models are generated from parallel data (such as the contents of a Translation Memory (TM), while the LM is derived from a large collection of monolingual data. (243)

Conversely, Maxim Rahr and Pavel Doronin demystify the “magic” behind the Neural Networks and Neural Machine Translations and their work and learning capabilities, as opposed to the training regimen of SMT, thus:

NMT learns to translate by processing massive collections of existing translations across different language pairs. Unlike the SMT method, which is based on acquiring similarities from bilingual texts, the new technology doesn’t just match words and phrases but rather thoroughly studies the relationships between two languages. It analyzes each segment in the text and attempts to understand its context, therefore determining the meaning of each word in the segment that needs to be translated. Looking beyond grammatical rules, semantics and structure, NMT finds insights and linguistic patterns not even a human mind can reveal. It then deconstructs full sentences in the source language and rebuilds them in the target language.

Furthermore, a study conducted by Toral, Wieling, and Way discusses the differences in post-editing efforts of translations of

novels generated by Statistical Machine Translation/Phrase-Based Machine Translation, against the newer, state-of-the-art NMT. By translating a chapter (3700 words) from the novel *Warbreaker* by Brandon Sanderson from English to Catalan with the Neural Machine Translator (NMT), and by having it post-edited by a team of professional translators, they have found that:

Regarding temporal effort, compared to translation from scratch, both PBMT and NMT lead to substantial increases in translation productivity (measured as words per hour), of 18 and 36%, respectively. This demonstrates convincingly that post-editing MT output—whatever the system—makes translators faster than when they translate from scratch. *Furthermore, it indicates that translation outputs by NMT engines were better than those from the corresponding PBMT systems.* In addition, we found that the gain with PBMT remains constant regardless of the length of the input sentence, while the gain with NMT decreases with long sentences. (Toral and Way 10; my emphasis)

In addition to reduced temporal effort, Toral and Way's study proved there was a marked decrease in cognitive effort as well, as opposed to their previous study of Literary Machine Translation (2015) which showed that the mechanically generated outputs lacked cohesion. The decrease in temporal and cognitive effort marks the NMT's ability to translate efficiently and with appropriate cohesion such works as novels generally written in Standard English. Standard English accomplishes the greatest degree of translatability in Toral and Way's Catalan, but also in Romanian when there are no cultural linguistic markers present in the text such as in Mark Twain's *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (the dialects of people of colour and Southerners), and James Kelman's *How Late It Was, How Late* written wholly in a Glaswegian dialect that is largely incomprehensible and untranslatable by the NMT.

The differentiation will prove vital when discussing varied linguistic choices of the NMT compared to specific excerpts of human translations of literary works. Furthermore, even though the

Neural Networks have indeed excelled in finding corresponding translations for words and certain linguistic units, the synthesis between style and textual cohesion will determine the actual efficacy of the NMT in rendering the “literacy” of literary texts. The translation outputs of such excerpts might determine the need for a conscientious human post-editor. Another momentous question this article will try to answer is whether the literary NMT is worth pursuing after discovering the post-editing efforts it entails, and if it is more time-efficient and cognitively liberating to simply forego the use of NMT and dedicate the workflow to a human translation instead. Because, as Toral and Way (2015) admit, the literary translator should choose his translating options carefully to preserve the reading experience.

This article will consider excerpts from Homer’s *The Iliad*, translated by Fagels into Modern English, by Murnu into Romanian, and a second English translation of the poem by Richmond Lattimore who laboured to transpose it in metrical form. Textual, stylistic, cultural, and grammatical analysis of Google Translate’s output of all translations and their subsequent (re)translations into the other language, will point to the NMT’s alleged inability to exhibit, and convey the same depth in translation, as the former three human translators have.

Additionally, by looking at the Original Greek provided by the Chicago Homer website, any translator who wants to translate Greek with the MT will find that it is impossible to do so as the platform cannot detect let alone translate the Original Greek either in English or in Romanian. The hypothesis will be tested by looking at certain word choices that echo throughout the human-translated texts with a particular stylistic/cultural purpose that differs in all the human translations to different poetic effects and contrast the MT’s word “choices” to those of the former. An example of conscious word choice that contributes not only to style and literary purpose but also to the formal elements of the poems (rhythm), is the translation of the verbs in the lines from the second book of *The Iliad*, “The Great Gathering of Armies” (Fagles 99), “Cântul II” (Murnu 82), “Book Two” (Lattimore 119). The formal

difference between the three translations is noticeable in the variable number of lines. This difference exists because the three translations use three different rhythms, Modern English (Lingua Franca adjusted) employed by Fagles, the iambic pentameter used by Murnu, and Lattimore's free six-beat line. Murnu and Lattimore's translations are formally analogous due to the six-beat line's similar textual acreage to the five-foot iambic pentameter.

Conversely, Fagles' translation does away with the strict limitations of fixed rhythm and metre, alternating the beats per line from five to six to seven "to imply the big reach of a simile or some vehement outburst in discourse or the pitched fury of combat on the field or contract at times to three to give a point in speech or action sharper stress" (Fagles xi). Nevertheless, Fagles' translation maintains semantical and contextual contiguity with the other two. Therefore, Fagles translates what in his edition are lines 28-29 as "Father Zeus *has lopped* the crowns of a thousand cities,/ true, and Zeus *will lop* still more – his power is too great" (252; my emphasis). Murnu, translating the same passage from *The Iliad*, transposes the text in his edition in three lines (116-19): "Astfel e voia lui Zeus, a zeului cel mai puternic,/ Care-a *surpat* așa multe cetăți cu mândrețe de ziduri/ și o *să surpe* mereu, căci nebiruit e-n putere" (87; my emphasis), and finally Lattimore's three lines (116-19) mirroring Murnu's edition at least in tracing the formal distribution of these three lines in translation: "Such is the way it will be pleasing to Zeus, who is too strong, who before now *has broken*/ the crests of many cities and *will break* them again,/ since his power is beyond all others" (77; my emphasis). Fagles' "tighter, native English line" (Fagles xi) is made apparent when contrasted with Murnu's and Lattimore's translations which, to a certain extent, surprisingly appear as word-for-word translations of each other. Seeing how both Murnu and Lattimore employ descriptive relative clauses "a zeului cel mai puternic," "who is too strong" to immediately eulogize Zeus' power before and after the verb phrase, both versions encompass and reflect the mighty stature of the deity as perceived in Antiquity.

On the other hand, Fagles masterly describes Zeus's might without prolonging the size of the line with the cursory identifier "true," thus economically transposing the longer relative clauses. "True" qualifies Zeus' might in the same way a lengthy sentence does, without detracting from the cultural implications of Homer's culture around myths and how they were meant to be sung. The background of the culture contained by the myths, wherein lies the prescription for translating the text, as Murnu, Lattimore, and Fagles have done for their chosen stylistic devices, is paramount in conveying the underlying wisdom of the text to the target language to preserve the human aspect of the text since "[b]ackground is knowledge, so context in the sense of background is a psychological entity" (Boase-Beier 18).

Google Translate does a good job in translating such expository sentences by translating Murnu's "a zeului cel mai puternic" as "the most powerful god," Lattimore's "who is too strong" as "care este prea puternic," and stand-alone words such as Fagles' "true" as "adevărat." Indeed, it can be argued that the previous MT outputs are word-for-word translations, but, surprisingly, the "care este prea puternic" translation of Lattimore's sentence into Romanian maintains close proximity to the original six-beat line: "Such is the way it will be pleasing to Zeus, who is too strong," translated as "Așa va fi plăcut lui Zeus, care este prea puternic." The same cannot be said about the following two lines in Lattimore's version translated into Romanian "who before now has broken the crests of many cities/ and will break them again, since his power is beyond all others" as "care până acum a spart crestele multor cetăți/ și le va sparge din nou, deoarece puterea lui este mai presus de toate celelalte," which proves that the MT cannot make conscious word choices to maintain the metre of the original text, even though the meaning is essentially preserved to make the point of Nida's "gloss translation," in which every concept is translated and conveyed to be at least understood (qtd. in Bassnett 34) and not explicitly analysed as an organic conscious choice bearing the least resemblance to a psychologically / culturally / contextually conscious art.

What is even more surprising is the perfect machine translation of the metaphor “crests of many cities” into “crestele multor cetăți,” which might be interpreted to downplay Roman Jakobson’s claim that “stylistic figures such as metaphor and metonymy [are] psychological processes” (qtd. in Boase-Beier 13). The assertion that the machine translator made a relatively conscious choice, however, cannot be sustained since it is uncertain whether the MT perceived the word “crests” as “peaks” to transpose it metaphorically, or it deduced the term from its heraldic definition and coupled it with the “city” to finally translate it as “crestele cetăților,” in connection with the medieval, leading to Jakobson’s definition of “poetic function” distinct from “poetic language.” “Nevertheless, while he pointed out that all language uses the same resources, Jakobson saw literary (and specifically poetic) language as being functionally different in that it used these resources differently in order to meet the “poetic function” (Boase-Beier 13). This is enforced by the fact that the MT chooses to translate city/cities as “cetăți,” drawing its meaning from its Latin correspondent “civitas,” “civis,” which was “[o]riginally denoting a town, and often used as a Latin equivalent to Old English burh ‘borough,’ the term was later applied to the more important English boroughs” (*Oxford Languages*). Noting the “Englishness” contained by the adoption of the word into the language, the translation of the original Greek is no longer the main cultural value conveyed by the text, and its translation subsequently acculturates it. Notwithstanding the proper choice of words displayed by the MT in this example, it translates the “cities” in Fagles’ version of *The Iliad* as the anachronistic “orașe,” a mistake that requires post-editing efforts.

Nevertheless, the mechanically generated translation might be quite satisfactory owing to the simplicity of the excerpts chosen for analysis. Nevertheless, further examples will show how the experience of the world of the past as conveyed by the three human translators is detrimentally undermined by the MT’s difficulty in preserving the semantic flow of the text. The syntactic coherence underlying the synergistic connections words have in the poem, and

the way the author perceived the world they described, makes the point of Michael Halliday's "ideational function, through which a writer embodies in language her or his experience of the world" (qtd. in Boase-Beier 18).

Mythical heroes were portrayed as living in a mythological past where men and gods alike trod the same ground. The psychological entity espoused by Jean Boase-Beier can also be traced in the use of verbs and tenses. The present perfect tense of "has lopped" (Fagles), "a surpat" (Murnu), and "has broken" (Lattimore), and the subsequent mirror-image verbs in the future tense "will lop," "va surpa," "will break" form the perfect symmetry to convey Zeus' might in action from an indefinite time in the past with present relevance and indefiniteness (Radden and Driver 212) that "may involve a time period lasting up to the present" (Zdrenghea and Greere 346). This present is then immediately continued by the narrator into the prophetic near or distant future in which Zeus' might will not have waned. First, let us take Fagles' excerpt and the respective MT translation of it into Romanian to discern the difference in verbs and the effect they have on the overall style:

Father Zeus *has lopped* the crowns of a thousand cities,
true, and Zeus *will lop* still more – his power is too great. (103)

is translated into Romanian by Google Translate as:

Părintele Zeus *a tăiat* coroanele a o mie de orașe,
adevărat, iar Zeus *va tăia* și mai mult – puterea lui este prea mare.

To better understand the implications of Fagles' choice of the verb, apart from line economy, he uses the word in its past participle six times throughout his translation and always attributes it to god-like figures and larger-than-life heroic characters such as Zeus, Eurypylos, Agamemnon, Ajax, Peneleos, and Hector. This usage makes the verb a referent for mythological strength and the possibility for great deeds in combat since the action "to lop" is

used hyperbolically to denote destruction and laceration. Conversely, the choice verb for this action “a tăiat/va tăia,” while it preserves the meaning of laceration, falls short in conveying the hyperbolic characteristic of a godly power or the fighting prowess and bloodthirstiness of warriors of old. A conscientious post-editor might decide to supplant the rudimentary “tăiat/tăia” with the more striking “a sfâșiat/va sfâșia” to account for the laceration. However, it still lacks the grand exposition of a godly figure.

The future aspect of the verb *Is* is used only once by Fagles and is exclusively connected with Zeus because only the god figure has destructive power that translates into the future. At the same time, humans are attributed to such force only in the present. Only a god-worthy substitute in Romanian would amount to the descriptive power of the predicate, some possible replacements being “retezat,” “spulberat,” etc. The use of the latter terms reflects Nida’s concept of “Dynamic equivalence” (qtd. in Bassnett 34) in that now the TL reader can infer that the action is performed by a mighty figure, the idea deriving from the semantic connection with warfare and destruction: “a spulberat cetățile,” “a retezat capul,” etc. It is in this that the style of the human translators differs, due to semantic, formal, and poetic needs, so that every translator uses a different verb, Fagles uses “has lopped,” Murnu “a surpat,” while Lattimore employs “has broken.” Fagle’s use of the verb suggests the heroic and mythic atmosphere of the epic poem.

By contrast, Lattimore attributes the present perfect aspect to physical states and the causes thereof without limiting the meaning of the predicate to the mythical: “the Achaians who are broken under our hands are planning flight among themselves,/ and no longer are willing to guard them by night,/ now that stark weariness *has broken* them” (312/226; my emphasis), and the future aspect is ascribed to natural phenomena: “Here is the night that *will break* our army, or else *will preserve* it” (78/200; my emphasis). The Romanian output of the MT of the passages cited above displays, firstly, a humorous mistranslation subject to suspicion on account of its appropriateness, “aheii care sunt zdrobiți sub mâinile noastre plănuiesc să fugă între/și și nu mai sunt dispuși să-i păzească

noaptea./acum că oboseala totală *i-a rupt*.” Similarly, the second passage is grossly mistranslated and requires post-editing efforts throughout the entire line to appropriate the meaning of the feeling of weakness to exhaustion, and the editing of the meaning of the subsequent predicate to convey the sense of preservation of health and not conservation against decay or safe-keeping: “Iată noaptea care *va sparge* armata noastră, sau altfel *o va păstra*” While the translation somehow contains the meaning of the passages, it is not by any account an acceptable transposition concerning formality, literariness, appropriateness, and stylistic significance, and requires a complete wording overhaul such as Murnu’s masterly translation of the passage into Romanian as: “Noaptea de față-i topenia ori mântuirea oștirii.” The hyperbolic “topenia” expresses the extreme weariness the night inflicts on the troops. The subsequent “mântuire” connects the meaning to the mythological background of the poem and elevates the repose afforded by the protection of the night to the status of reverential salvation.

The Romanian-English machine translation of Murnu’s selected passage from *The Iliad* will show the decrease of syntactic and semantic cohesion in the output. Murnu’s translation,

Astfel e voia lui Zeus, a zeului cel mai puternic,
Care-a surpat așa multe cetăți cu mândrețe de ziduri
Și o să surpe mereu, căci nebiruit e-n putere. (Murnu 116-18)

is rendered by Google Translate into English as,

Thus is the will of Zeus, the most powerful god,
Who proudly overcame so many cities with walls
And it will always collapse, because it is invincibly in power.

Consequently, anyone looking into translating a piece of literature from Romanian into English by using the Google Translate platform should decide, after observing the numerous mistakes made by the MT in the example above, whether it is worth the time spent emendating them and hoping to produce an intelligible output that hopefully resembles a literary creation.

Notwithstanding the word-for-word translation of the first line, the meaning is preserved. The same cannot be said about the other two lines that digress from Murnu's cohesion and destabilize the foci of the stylistic effect by transposing "mândrețe de ziduri" to refer to Zeus' pride in having crushed the fortresses. The MT does not maintain the stylistic/semantic effect produced by the modifier in conveying the sense that the fortresses of the time were architectural wonders that, nevertheless, are felled by the godly figure. The third line fails to maintain grammatical cohesion and generates semantic confusion concerning who/what is described by the impersonal pronoun "it" and, consequently, who/what acts. Murnu's and all the other human translators' renderings refer to Zeus. In contrast, the MT conveys a sense that the fortress will continually collapse by itself because of its own mighty power and not that of an external force acting upon it. Again, there is the anachronistic use of the word "cities" which may have been adequately supplanted in this translation by the word "fortresses" and the erroneous use of the adverb "invincible" to modify an impersonal subject – the emendation should be the postmodifying adjective "invincible."

These proofs of MT's inability to translate Romanian into English come as a warning against the free use of Machine Translation when tackling grand literary translation projects, and these observations are relevant for any works of poetry that follow an intricate formal structure and observe the attributes of a cultural/subjective background; the mistakes requiring post-editing efforts increase with the length of the text, thus amplifying the cognitive load as well.

To conclude, the purpose of this article has been to elucidate the enticing effect Machine Translation engines (Google Translate) can have on human translators in the Digital Age. To this effect, it has shown how dangerous machine-assisted translation dependence can be for literary translations. This article probed the Machine's potential to translate literary texts in connection with subsequent human post-editing efforts. Translation theories of dynamic and formal equivalence have helped distinguish between gist translation,

gloss translation, and dynamic translation. As a result, applying these theories to the literary outputs of the Machine Translator, the article has shown that MT often generates “word-for-word” translations of literary texts. In light of the differences between the translations of the three human translators used for comparison, it has been shown that the MT output mostly processed the input and translated it by erasing the “literary” stylistic effect of the source language text altogether.

Furthermore, I have shed light on how the MT incrementally misconstrues the cultural background and linguistic nuances of the literary input, as opposed to the human translators who adequately transpose distinctive elements to fit the receiving culture (the TL text–dynamic equivalence) by scrutinizing word choice. On numerous occasions, the MT has displaced the cultural background of the input by translating some words either mechanically (gloss translation), devoid of sense in the given context, or anachronistically, thus dislodging the dynamic equivalence desired for a literary translation output. If left unchecked, the Machine Translation output lacks the fundamental quality of literary translation, namely that equivalence should carry the meaning and the context of the poem across cultures without altering its initial cultural significance. In light of this, significant post-editing efforts are required to amend the text.

Ultimately, further qualitative research on the “literariness” of Machine-Assisted Literary Translation outputs should add to the reading experience of such texts. Although some of the studies mentioned in this article have already done this with their respective languages, this case study has presented a sliver of the MT’s potential and incapacity to translate literary texts from a target language (English) into Romanian and vice versa. Given the results of my analyses, the bottom line is that the MT English/Romanian and Romanian/English literary outputs lack considerably in poetic effect, cultural/contextual localization, and stylistic equivalence.

With this in mind, human translators still have the upper hand over machine translating platforms in that they can reflect on

their own errors and the errors of the translation platform as well, a feat outside of the scope of the MT as of today. The awareness of the limitations of technological dependence, which is prevalent in the Digital Age, has paved the way for a renewed focus on traditional translation procedures that prioritize human learning potential. As Cronin suggests, such an approach enables a critical questioning of the increasingly widespread reliance on technology and promotes a more gradual and deliberate transition towards more human-centred translation practices.

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