

EQUIVALENCE AND MEANING IN ENGLISH TRANSLATIONS OF MIHAI EMINESCU'S *LUCEAFĂRUL*¹

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Abstract

The article explores the challenges of translating Mihai Eminescu's masterpiece "Luceafărul", focusing on the difficulties of achieving equivalence and accurately conveying its meanings. As one of the most complex and symbolically rich works in Romanian literature, "Luceafărul" presents significant linguistic, stylistic, and cultural hurdles for translators. The study examines various translations, highlighting issues related to lexical and syntactic fidelity, poetic rhythm, and cultural references. It also discusses how different translators have interpreted the poem's themes and metaphors, often influenced by their linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Despite inevitable losses in translation, each version contributes to Eminescu's global recognition, demonstrating the ongoing struggle between linguistic accuracy and poetic expression. The findings underscore the importance of both technical precision and artistic intuition in literary translation.

Keywords: Romanian literature, literary translation, equivalence, poetic meaning, linguistic challenges, cultural adaptation, stylistic fidelity, translation strategies

Rezumat

În articol, explorăm provocările traducerii capodoperei lui Mihai Eminescu, „Luceafărul”, concentrându-ne pe dificultățile de a obține echivalența și de a transmite cu acuratețe semnificațiile acesteia. Fiind una dintre cele mai complexe și bogate în simboluri opere din literatura română, „Luceafărul” impune obstacole glotice și culturale semnificative pentru traducători. Studiul examinează diverse traduceri, evidențiind aspecte legate de fidelitatea lexicală și sintactică, ritmul poetic și referințele culturale. De asemenea, se pune în discuție modul în care diferiți traducători au interpretat temele și metaforele poemului, fiind adesea influențați de contextul lor glotic și cultural. În ciuda pierderilor inevitabile în traducere, fiecare versiune contribuie la recunoașterea globală a lui Eminescu, demonstrând lupta continuă între acuratețea glotică și expresia poetică. Concluziile subliniază importanța atât a preciziei tehnice, cât și a intuiției artistice în traducerea literară.

Cuvinte-cheie: literatura română, traducere literară, echivalență, sens poetic, provocări glotice, adaptare culturală, fidelitate stilistică, strategii de traducere.

"There is no other work in Romanian literature that has been studied, scrutinized, explored like the poem *Luceafărul*. An investigation should be made into the reasons for the extraordinary prestige that this text enjoys among Romanians. It should be investigated why these stanzas arouse such enthusiasm - and so unanimously: the Romanian critics, who do not

¹ This article was supported by a grant of the Ministry of Education and Research of Republic of Moldova, project number 050101.

back down at all in the face of partial or hasty judgments, stop in front of the Luceafăr, lay down their arms and do not hesitate to utter the slightest unfavorable word" (Alain Guillerrou).

Introduction

Mihai Eminescu is considered by readers and world literary critics as the most important voice in Romanian literature. As we are in 2025, Eminescu's anniversary year - 175 years since his birth, called Mihai Eminescu International Year, it is valuable to acknowledge Eminescu's work and to appreciate the efforts of translators in bridging cultures and making his creations accessible beyond borders. Eminescu World Year is an opportunity to return to the work of the light of our poetry through meetings and scientific works, revival of oral traditions (such as poetry recitals, promotion of reading), to strengthen the link between poetry and other arts (such as theater, dance, music and painting) and to facilitate the visualization of poetry through the translation of poems into other languages. In Romanian literature, Mihai Eminescu's "Luceafărul" occupies a place of honour, being recognized both nationally and internationally. Eminescu was an overwhelming personality, who impressed his contemporaries with his intelligence, memory, intellectual curiosity, European culture, richness and charm of language. For this reason, we can say that "without Eminescu we would be different and poorer", as Tudor Vianu said (Vianu, 2020). The truths and vibrations of Mihai Eminescu's verses have taught us to define beauty, love, dream, longing, aspiration, anxieties of life with Eminescu's phrases. Eminescu is a living poet, and his work still has much to offer literary critics and historians, publishers and translators. The task of publishing or translating Eminescu's work, which is so diverse, is far from over.

1. Eminescu Beyond Borders: Translations, Reception, and Universal Legacy

Mihai Eminescu was considered to be the most brilliant representative of Romanian Romanticism and a great European Romantic poet, and one of a series of writers who profoundly marked the current in question, - Byron, V. Hugo, Shelley, Lamartine, Pushkin, Heine, Charles Cros and others. Despite the untranslatability of his work, Mihai Eminescu came to the attention of the intellectuals the whole world. Yet his poems can be spoken in over 60 languages, and the number of those who have been sensitized by his timeless lyrical discourse has, according to one 200. The perception of Eminescian poetry during the poet's lifetime was rather poor. In 1883 his "Făt-Frumos din lacrimă" (Prince Charming) was translated into German, and in 1885 into Hungarian.

Marco Antonio Canini's translation of Eminescu's works, for example, is extremely important for getting to know him in Italy. In the *Libro dell'amore* (Venice, 1885, 1887, 1888, 1890), the "star of Romanian poetry"

appears with *Sunt ani la mijloc..., Când însuși glasul...* and Dorință. The Italian poetry-loving public thus has the opportunity to discover the flavour of Eminescian evocative verse. In 1906 Pier Emilio Bosi, in *Nuova Rassegna di letteratura moderne* no. 20, does not hesitate to admit: "Eminescu's verses, like those of all poets with perfect subtle form, lose much in translation". Nevertheless, he dares, aware of the "sacrilege" he is committing, to translate *Solitude, And if Branches, Venus and Madonna, Venice*. Another name to which Mihai Eminescu's Italian destiny is linked is Professor Romeo Lovera. Although he devotes 18 pages to him, including, among others, *Solitude, And if..., Venus and Madonna, Epigonii, Mortua est!*, he fails to impose on the Italian public the man who "was born under a lonely star, watching his suffering in silence". In 1964 Mario Ruffini printed in Turin a volume of the poet's erotic poetry: *Mihai Eminescu - Poesie d'amore*. He considered the love poetry to be minor, of course in relation to the famous poems *Strigoii, Rugăciunea un dac, Glossă, Melancolie, Călin, Luceafărul, Scrisorile*.

In German culture Mihai Eminescu was translated and interpreted between 1881-1920 by the following translators: Mite Kremnitz, Em. Grigoroitze, Edgar von Herz, Maximilian W. Schroff, V. Tecontia. The most serious attempt to bring Eminescu's work into the sphere of German culture was of course made by Mite Kremnitz, Titu Maiorescu's sister-in-law. Her translations are still highly appreciated today. In the work, *Amintiri fugare despre Mihai Eminescu*, we find some of the poems that caused a sensation throughout Europe, the German language being widely used in the intellectualist circles of the time: *Călin (File de poeveste), Departate sunt de tine, Melancolie, Pescăcărușul, Strigoii, Atât de fragedă* and others.

Eminescu's presence in French literature was established through deeply insightful translations, which resulted from a profound understanding of his work by those who sought to integrate this complex and influential literary figure into their own culture. In 1963 Alain Guillerrou, professor at the Sorbonne, published the monographic work "La genèse intérieure des poésies d'Eminescu". It gave French readers the chance to discover the most brilliant poetic creations, some of which were found in manuscripts of the Romanian poet's European manuscripts.

Andrei Bantas, Annie Bentiou, Dimitrie Cuclin, Dimitrie Cuclin, Petre Grimm, Roy McGregor-Hastie, Roy McGregor-Hastie, Leon Levitki, Sylvia Pankhurst, Corneliu M. Popescu, Brenda Walker, Radomir Andric, Ge Baoquan or Dieter Fuhrmann are among those who have been concerned with the translation and popularization of Eminescu's works in English world.

Mihai Eminescu is probably the only European national poet completely unknown outside the borders of his country. The translations, most of them uninspired, did him rather a disservice. With an intelligent and sustained promotion, a contemporary writer can gain more notoriety abroad than the

national poet of the Romanians has today. Why didn't Eminescu enter the universal literary circuit, like Shakespeare or Baudelaire, as he deserved? Some specialists put forward the theory that Eminescu's translatability is untranslatable, while others blame poor translations, which have diminished the value of his work, and a general lack of interest in promoting him. Dan C. Mihailescu remains wedded to the theory of untranslatability: "I have never believed that Eminescian poetry can really be translated. Rather, poets like Hölderlin, Pessoa and even Baudelaire, who are not essentially based on euphony, cross the boundaries of language. With Eminescu, vocal harmony is itself a message in itself, so that the foreign reader, not previously hypnotized by the sonority, risks being left outside the enchanted door" (Mihailescu, 2009).

By 1970, Eminescu had already been translated into more than 35 languages by more than 200 translators (according to a study made by Ana Şincai). His poems can now be read in more than 60 languages, from English, Hungarian and Chinese to Urdu, but by connoisseurs rather than the general public. Misread in various anthologies or published in tiny print runs, the volumes of verse only pass through the hands of a handful of enthusiasts. More often than not, Eminescian poetry is sacrificed to bad translations. As Ana Şincai mentioned that Mihai Eminescu has not been massively translated into English, and out of the seven existing editions, five have appeared on Romanian soil and only one is translated by a foreign author, and another in collaboration with a Romanian author (OC 2000). "The explanations are first and foremost due to translations that are so uninspired that it's natural that they don't produce an effect, many of them commissioned from Bucharest under the communist regime. The second is cultural propaganda. The more a country (modest in literary terms, like Romania) will know how to "sensitize", the more things can improve. This has not been the case so far, for various sad reasons", explains translator and critic Dan Caragea, in Lisbon.

Florian Copcea, a literary critic and a literary historian, an essayist, a poet, a professor, a PhD in philology, currently a director of *Lumina Publishing House* mentioned that Eminescu pays special attention to translation as an effective means of communication between literatures under the sign of the same unity, himself making translations of the 130 most representative writers, philosophers and scholars of the world. For him (Eminescu), translation must have the aspect of transposition in the sense of capitalizing and applying to the original the means of the language into which it is translated. Later on, Copcea highlighted the fact that Eminescu, although translated all over the world, due to the absence of a Romanian cultural strategy to promote his poetry, remains "the greatest unknown European national poet" (Copcea, 2017). Even in 1984, in Rome, at an international sympo-

sium, George Barthouil made the observation that "Eminescu remains an unknown to the French" (idem, p. 101). If the term "translation" means transferring content from one language into another language, literary translation is not only done for the sake of transposing from a source language into a target language or to increase the number of a writer's works, regardless of whether or not they end up in another language.

2. Mihai Eminescu and Anglo-Saxon World

It is worth mentioning that the first contact of the Anglo-Saxon world with Eminescian poetic treasure is remarkable. It occurred in London, in 1930, in the form of ten poems (published in a small, elegant volume bound in red leather) translated into English by E. Sylvia Pankhurst, a feminist fighter and man of culture who had collaborated with the novelist I.O. Stefanovici-Svensk, then a student in England, later an eminent professor of English in Cluj, and a great specialist in phonetics. Printed by Kegan Paul Publishers, the one hundred and twenty pages of verse are preceded by a letter (in facsimile) from G.B. Shaw to the translator (dated September 12, 1929) and an introductory note by N. Iorga. Here is how this book, restricted in terms of number of pages, becomes particularly precious, since it groups around the poet the names of three reputed personalities, two of them exceptional: George Bernard Shaw - the illustrious playwright, polemicist and essayist, whose scintillating wit fascinated his contemporaries for half a century (an effect just as vivid today), Nicolae Iorga - the erudite cartographer of the Romans, at that time already of European renown and, finally, Estelle Sylvia Pankhurst, a representative figure of the inter-war period, one of the pioneers of British women's access to universal suffrage, "a nastrustic genius of the age", as Shaw called her, who had not overlooked her "special literary talent for rhyming and galloping words".

An ardent admirer of the poet, of Romanian poetry and a constant friend of Romania is the renowned British publicist Roy Mac Gregor-Hastie, whose debut in the press was as a poet, but who has been a well-known translator of poetry, especially Romanian, for almost two decades. Working for the UNESCO Translation Program, he has introduced more than fifty Romanian poets to the English-speaking public. As he himself confesses: "To feel able to approach the work of the Romanian national poet, Mihail Eminescu, I had to do a long apprenticeship. In 1961, I began work on the first English anthology of contemporary Romanian poetry (Peter Owen Publishing House, London, 1969, UNESCO Collection of Representative Works), then I started translating a novel - *Satra* by Zaharia Stancu - and *Eleven elegies* by Nichita Stanescu (Eminescu Publishing House, Bucharest, 1970) and now I think I have convinced my Romanian friends that I am the right person to be entrusted with the translation of their Shakespeare. Indeed, in 1972 the volume "The Last Romantic: Mihail Eminescu" was pub-

lished in the USA, under the aegis of UNESCO, a volume reprinted (by Sever Trifu) "in a different formula" - the author of the translations specifies - in 1980, in Cluj-Napoca. About his work to be as close as possible to the rhythm of the version the original, Ray Mac Gregor-Hastie said: "Above all, I tried to be true to the style of the man as well as the style of the poet".

At the biennial *European Poetry Translation Prize* awarding ceremonies, Eminescu's poetry is declaimed, and the notoriety of this prize has contributed to the rise to fame of Eminescu, confirmed by the pertinent comments on the value of Corneliu M. Popescu, comments published in London newspapers (*The Times, Tribune, Poetry Live*) and signed by prestigious personalities of British culture, such as the poet, essayist and translator Alan Brownjohn, president of the British Poetry Society, the initiator of the prize: "Popescu [...] has translated into English an important part of the work of Romania's greatest poet, Mihai Eminescu", further comparing the success of this endeavor with that achieved by the transposition into Romanian of Shakespeare's plays. In 1929, on the occasion of the publication of Eminescu's verses in English, George Bernard Shaw wrote an admiring letter to his translator Silvia Pankhurst, describing the Romanian poet as one of the greatest Romanticists of the 19th century, and likening Eminescu's verses to the music of Berlioz and the painting of Delacroix.

In Shakespeare's language - the language that would guarantee visibility - Eminescu was first translated in 1930 by Sylvia Pankhurst, published by Kegan Paul. The volume of ten poems was accompanied by a letter from George Bernard Shaw and an introduction by Nicolae Iorga. Florian Copcea, author of the doctoral thesis, on 126 pages of basic text and 117 bibliographical sources, has as its general aim the need to evaluate Mihai Eminescu in relation to poetry and other fields of writing (Copcea 2017). The author emphasizes his proposals regarding the Europeaness and universality of the intellectual models followed by Eminescu in his own literary creation. Thus, in the second subdivision (pp. 95-112) of the third chapter (pp. 88-133), Eminescu's translations (including "Luceafărul") into several foreign languages will be analyzed from the perspective of the "European Idea". As it was mentioned in *Observatorul cultural* (OC 2000) in 1983, the *Poetry Society* in the UK established the *European Poetry Translation Prize*, in memory of Corneliu M. Popescu, sponsored by the prestigious British Council, as part of its work to promote cultural links with other nations. The prize is biennial and aims to encourage translators and publishers of European poetry in English; it was established in memory of Corneliu M. Popescu (a genius of translation), first awarded 25 years after his birth (May 16, 1983) and is a tribute to the exceptional talent of the young translator.

3. Mihai Eminescu and his Translators

Literary researchers, historians and translators (Ioana Bot, Iulian Cos-

tache, Andrei Terian, Lucian Boia) in countless debates, articles and volume chapters addressing the question of the translatability of Eminescu's poetry speak of the 'brilliant untranslatable' and the quality of existing translations that gain recognition and a place in international culture commensurate with the values of Eminescu's poetry. When examining those who have translated Mihai Eminescu's work, according to Ioana Alexandra Lionte (Lionte, 2019, p. 122), we can distinguish *three main categories* based on language proficiency: *non-native speakers* residing in Romania, typically academics or university professors specializing in Romanian Studies; *non-native speakers* living abroad, some of whom are affiliated with universities in the English-speaking world; and *native translators*, including those who visited Romania for political reasons, those who discovered Eminescu's work without ever traveling there, and those who taught as associate professors in Romanian universities.

Regarding *non-native translators* such as Andrei Bantaș, Leon Levițchi, Ana Cartianu, Corneliu M. Popescu, Irina Andone, and I.O. Stefanovici, it is important to highlight that most of them were Academicians who translated from their native language into a foreign one. This raises the issue of a level of competence that goes beyond philological expertise. In this regard, Romanian translators rendering poetry into a non-native language display a persistent tendency to maintain the original's metrical patterns and rhyme schemes, even at the expense of meaning or grammatical accuracy. Regarding the context behind the publication of these translation volumes, Eminescu's works were extensively translated during the communist regime, particularly between 1960 and 1975. However, it is essential to consider the thematic restrictions imposed by the political climate on translators. Nevertheless, these domestically produced translations, driven by ideological motives, are not relevant to the poet's reception abroad.

Foreign translators of Eminescu's poetry present a different landscape, encompassing a more diverse range of profiles. Among them are those who discovered his work in an academic setting, such as Roy MacGregor-Hastie and Brenda Walker. The American translator MacGregor-Hastie "discovered" Eminescu during a time of growing political interest in Eastern Europe, approaching his translations with enthusiasm. However, as Săhlean notes, his versions are primarily informative, lacking artistic ambition and omitting prosody entirely, deeming it an unachievable goal for his purpose. A few decades later, Brenda Walker (1990) adopted a similar approach. Interestingly, some foreign translators had no knowledge of Romanian and relied on intermediaries for content. James Moulder, for example, based his creative adaptations on Google Translate results and Corneliu M. Popescu's translations, Sylvia Pankhurst (1928) worked from literal translations by I.O. Stefanovici, and Brenda Walker (1990) collaborated

with Horia Florian Popescu. The first English translation was published in 1930 by Sylvia Pankhurst.

In a discourse at UNESCO, Ana Şincai from Cluj pleaded for the universalization of Eminescu's poetry in the world. She strongly believed that Eminescu had become "hypostatized through his interpreter". In 1978, a manuscript of 69 poems translated into English by the teenager (14 years old and who died at just 19 in the 1977 during the Earthquake) Corneliu M. Popescu (considered the "genius of translations" of Eminescu's poetry) was published by Editura Eminescu. The year before, in 1977, the brilliant translator had died in an earthquake in Bucharest, aged just 19. No other version has so far equalled Corneliu M. Popescu's astonishing translations, superior to any attempt by specialists. In 1983, The Poetry Society of Great Britain even established the European Poetry Translation Prize in his memory. Corneliu M. Popescu, gifted with an extraordinary talent, managed to restore the melodicy of Eminescian verses, preserving in English words such as "doină", "cobză", "candelă", "toacă". If until then "Luceafărul" was called "The Evening-Star", he found its equivalent in "Lucifer". The poetic English created by the author barely out of adolescence - whose mother tongue was not English and whose poetic experience (both Romanian and, especially, English) could not be, by the force of his too young age, anything but restricted - is nevertheless incredibly harmoniously endowed with rhythm, meter and rhyme, and in Eminescu's poetry, it is precisely rhythm, assonance and rhyme that form a true verbal magic.

We should not overlook the names of other English connoisseurs who are passionate about Eminescian poetry: Andrei Bantaş, Dimitrie Cuclin, Leon Levitki, Brenda Walker, Petre Grimm, Ge Baoquan and Dieter Fuhrmann. Remarkable composer and distinguished intellectual, D. Cuclin had spent almost a decade in an English-speaking environment, being a professor at two American conservatories (between 1931-1938), which explains the American spelling of some words and perhaps even the ease with which he used a modern lexicon in poems such as *The Undead*, *The Luceafarul*, *Calin* (for example, *Arald*, from the King Knight becomes the "gentleman" of the early 19th century).

The first translator of Eminescu's works was the Hungarian writer József Sándor, who published his translated variant of the poem "Atât de fragedă"/"So tender". In Hungarian, Eminescu was translated during his lifetime, in 1885, but in Portuguese, for example, there was until recently only one edition, "Mihail Eminescu: Poesias" (1950), translated by Victor Buescu, who preferred the white rhyming verse of Eminescque. It was only in 2004 that Dan Caragea published a version of "Luceafărului", and a year later "Revedere", translated by Doinei Zugravescu. As Associate Professor, PhD Bucin M. mentioned (*Tr* 2015) the most translated poem by

Eminescu in Hungarian is "*De ce nu mi vii*". Till now there are no less than 22 Hungarian translations of this poem. There are also 18 translations of the poem "La Steaua", 15 translations of "Mai am un singur dor" and 11 translations of "Glossa" in Hungarian.

Mite Kremnitz, writer and translator, together with Queen Maria, translates 21 of Mihai Eminescu's poems into German, in the anthology "Rumanische Dichtungen", published in Leipzig in 1881. The translated poems include: *Letter III, The Fairy of the Tales, Letter IV, The Undead, The Lake, The Lake, The Cold of the Forest, Solitude, Melancholy, Goodbye, The Desire, What You are Dangling, The Little Forest*, and others. The works of German translators of Eminescu reflect a continuous and deliberate effort to find the perfect equivalent, demonstrating a meticulous approach to preserving the essence of the original text.

The Italian poet Giuseppe Ungaretti believes that rarely in the literature of the last two centuries will we find a more complex and complete figure than Mihai Eminescu. Rosa del Conte, a professor at the University of Rome, has published an extensive and valuable monograph on Eminescu "Eminescu o dell'Assoluto", she believes that "the secret of Eminescu's poetry is melodic in nature". As researcher and professor Ludmila Braniște mentioned the Italian translations by Ramiro Ortiz, Umberto Cianciolo, Mariana Câmpean, Rina d'Ergiu, Caterinici, Petre Ciureanu, and Rosa del Conte, along with the literary-poetic versions by Mario Ruffini, stand out for their accuracy, preserving the text, rhythm, and melody without omissions or additions (Braniște, 2022, p. 87). These meticulously crafted translations, marked by dedication and precision, successfully capture the beauty of the original work.

The first full translations of Eminescu's poetry into Chinese were made by the writer and translator Ge Baoquan (1913-2000). He was the correspondent of the New China Agency from 1949-1950, then chargé d'affaires of the Chinese government in Moscow. One day he received a gift of a copy of the first Russian edition of Eminescu's poems, which made a strong impression on him. He translated the first set of Eminescu's poems and published them in the prestigious Chinese magazine "Traduceri", January 1955 issue, under the pseudonym Baoquan: *Pe aceeași ulicioară..., Ce te legeni..., Și dacă..., Somnoroase pășărele* and *De ce nu-mi vii*. The Russians are also interested in the great Romanian poet.

In 1981 the Russian philologist Fiodor Korș (1843-1915) translated the Eminescian sonnet "Oricâte stele" in the journal *Gândirea rusă*. It is worth noting the fidelity with which the famous translator conveys Eminescu's livrescule and the unexpected exaltation he faced in the face of death. In 1920, the newspaper *Viața Noua* published the poem *Glossa*, translated by G. Avakian. Eminescu's own poetic universe was to be recreated by Vasili

Lașcov in his *Anthology of Romanian Poetry* published in 1928. He transposes the lyrical masterpieces *Și dacă...*, *Cu mâne zilele-ți adaogi...*, *O, rămâi...*, *De ce nu-mi vii...*, *Din noapte* and *Sunt ani la mijloc*. With his approach, the Bessarabian translator V. Lașcov infers the thesis that Eminescu's poems are untranslatable, that they could not be transferred into Russian, preserving all their charm, form, rhythm and rhyme. Russian poetry lovers had the privilege of coming into contact with Eminescu's poetic work in 1950, when the volume *Poems* appeared in Moscow, containing over 50 (fifty) poems (both unpublished), including: *La steaua, Venetia, O, mamă...*, *Scrisoarea I and Scrisoarea II, Pe lângă plopul fără soț, Dintre sute de catarge*.

All those poems were translated by Russian poets Leonid Martânov, Emilia Aleksandrova and N. Aseev, the writers Yuri Kojevnikov (who also signed an introductory essay), V. Levik, Gr. Perov, M. Zenkevich, I. Mirimsky and others. In contrast to all of them (mentioned above), the poet Anna Ahmatova and David Samoilov, by translating the poems *Venus and Madonna* (*Venere și Madonă*) and *The Light of the Beacon* (*Luceafărul*) respectively, manage to transfer the resonance, emotional discourse and ideational message of the original language - Romanian - into Russian. The Russian writer Yurii Kojevnicov learned Romanian by reading Eminescu, in fact, by tying his destiny to the work of our poet: "I bought a volume of Eminescu's poems and from that moment in my life a decisive turning point occurred, I was discovering the great poet for myself" (*DT* 2000). It should be mentioned that there are five canonical translations of the poem *Luceafărul* into Russian - three were made in Moscow and two in Chișinău. In 1950, the first version of the poem by two translators - I. Mirimskii and Yuri Kojevnikov, and in 1968 the translated by David Samoilov. In 1975, the Chișinău writer Grigore Perov translated it and his colleague Aleksandr Brodskii offered the readers a version of his translation. And in 1979 I. Kojevnikov returned to his first version from 1950, presenting his own interpretation of the translation.

4. Echoes Across Borders: Mihai Eminescu and the Global Translation of his Verse

Any process of transposing a text from one language into another, functions as a vehicle of the spirit, preserving, to varying degrees, the original values. At the same time, it is essential to adapt to the new linguistic context, since translation is not merely a simple conversion, but a re-creation in which many expressive elements, lacking a perfect equivalent, inevitably remain hidden. This principle is recognized, in various aphoristic forms, in all cultures.

The English use the term "untranslatability" to describe the situation in which a text, be it a sentence, a word or a group of words in another language, has no exact equivalent in their own language.

The great Tudor Arghezi, a Romanian poet, novelist, and essayist said: "Being very Romanian, Eminescu is universal. Anyone who reads this knows, with regret, that the locks of languages cannot be unlocked with foreign keys. Many honestly didactic attempts have been made to transcribe the poet, some, perhaps, it is said, more successful, but Eminescu is only Romanian" (Arghezi, 2020). Romanian writers and critics overwhelmingly praise Eminescu, with many even claiming that he "invented" the Romanian language, at least in the realm of poetry. His works showcase exceptional technical mastery while also standing out for their innovations, blending *archaic language* with traditional forms to establish *new poetic models* that deeply influenced both his contemporaries and future generations.

The translation of Mihai Eminescu's poems into various languages involved a wide range of approaches, including *straightforward prose renderings, interlinear translations, and rhymed prose versions that maintain technical accuracy*. Additionally, some translations remained faithful to the original meaning and atmosphere, preserving the metrics, rhythm, and, to some extent, the charm of the poem's musicality. Ludmila Braniște mentioned "translation is a complex process which presupposes a deep analysis of the source text, the creative process in the writer's mind, as well as an excellent knowledge of both source and target languages which would ensure the accuracy of the rendered sounds and images" (Braniște, 2022, p. 84). Applying to the process of translation as "an Art", we strongly agree with the idea of M. Metleaeva that the author is free in his creative process while the translator is dependent on the original, and the quality of his work is directly proportional to empathy, i.e. his or her ability to relive the emotions experienced by the author in the process of creating the work and, moreover, to familiarize him/herself with the author's temporal environment (Metleaeva, 2017, p. 134). In other words, the translator must combine three types of empathy: a/ *emotional*, based on the mechanism of projection and of imitating another person's reactions; b/ *cognitive*, based on intellectual processes: comparison, analogy, etc.; c/ *predicative*, manifested in the prediction of another person in certain situations.

5. Mihai Eminescu's "Luceafărul" and its Translation: Difficulties of Equivalence and Interpretation of the Meanings

Countless discussions and analyses have lauded "Luceafărul" as the pinnacle of Romanian Romanticism and the crowning achievement of Eminescu's literary career. Given its profound acclaim, any further commentary might seem redundant. Uncovering novel aspects or interpretations of this poem is nearly unattainable. Esteemed literary figures from various countries, including Romania, have meticulously examined and competently evaluated the work. The poem possesses a mysterious depth, with voices of a few characters unfolding a love story. These voices are familiar and re-

cognizable, echoing in similar tones, expressions, and ideas found in many of Eminescu's other works. Numerous interpretations and speculations have surrounded Eminescu's greatest masterpiece, "The Evening Star."

"Luceafărul" is an extensive romantic poem in which the poet explores the theme of the destiny of a genius. Some literary figures, including Brătescu Voinești, have suggested that the poem reflects Eminescu's love for Veronica Micle. However, this view has been dismissed as a simplistic and vulgar interpretation of a work of art that transcends literal reality. Eminescu employs the fairy-tale as a means to allegorically express the struggles of a genius in a hostile environment, among people unable to comprehend his elevated ideas and understanding. Additionally, it is evident that Eminescu incorporates Schopenhauer's philosophical concepts, particularly the notion that a genius is willing to sacrifice personal happiness for a greater, objective goal. "Luceafărul" (the main character of the poem), after falling in love with a beautiful woman on earth, transforms into a young man and descends into the human world. However, upon realizing that she cannot truly understand him, he returns to his celestial place forever. The motif of mortals' admiration and longing for heavenly bodies is a familiar theme in Romantic literature. George Gordon Byron employs this motif in "Cain," where Adah expresses her love for the *morning star* to *Lucifer*. In Eminescu's "Luceafărul", the beautiful Cătălina, the emperor's daughter living in a seaside castle, gazes at the evening star from her window. They soon fall in love. This allegory signifies that human aspire to the absolute. The emperor's daughter believes that the evening star is a superior spirit capable of becoming human.

Therefore, she asks the evening star to come down to her. Eminescu wrote:

"Cobori în jos, luceafăr blând, / Alunecând pe-o rază, / Pătrunde-n casă și în gând / Și viața-mi luminează!"

In English translation by Dimitrie Cuclin, we found:

"Descent to me, mild Lucifer, / Thou canst / glide on a beam, / Enter my dwelling and my mind / And over my life gleam!"

In English translation by Leon Levitchi, we found the following lines:

"Descend, o mild Hyperion, / Glide down upon a ray / Into my home and thoughts anon / And brighten up my way".

In one online translation by unknown translator, we found:

"Descend to me, mild / Evening-star / Thou canst glide on a beam, / Enter my dwelling and my mind / And over my life gleam!"

And in the other version of English translation by Corneliu M. Popescu,

we found:

"Come down, good Lucifer and kind, / O lord of my aspire, / And flood my chamber and my mind / With your sweetest fire"!

Three pleasant translations for the Romanian expression "luceafăr blând" in English are: *A Gentle star, a Mild star, a Gentle evening star.*

In Romanian poetry, "luceafăr blând" refers to the evening star or the morning star, symbolizing a celestial body that is often associated with beauty and gentleness. In the context of Mihai Eminescu's poem "Luceafărul", it is used to describe the character of the Evening Star, which is a personification of the celestial object and represents an idealized, gentle, and ethereal presence.

5.1. Dimitrie Cuclin's Translation

In Dimitrie Cuclin's translation, "Luceafăr" is "Lucifer". "Lucifer" has various interpretations and meanings in different contexts throughout history. For example:

- In *Roman mythology*, "Lucifer" is the name given to the planet Venus when it appears as the morning star. It symbolizes light and announces the dawn. The name means "light-bringer" or "morning star" in Latin.
- In *Christian theology*, "Lucifer" is often linked to a fallen angel who rebelled against God and was cast out of heaven. This interpretation mainly comes from the King James Bible's translation of Isaiah 14:12, which refers to the "son of the morning" or "morning star" falling from heaven. Over time, this figure became associated with Satan.
- in *Medieval and Renaissance Literature*: in works like Dante Alighieri's "Inferno" and John Milton's "Paradise Lost," Lucifer appears as the chief rebel against God, a powerful and proud angel who becomes Satan after his fall.
- in *Modern Culture*: in contemporary literature, film, and television, Lucifer is often shown as a complex character who represents themes of rebellion, free will, and the struggle between good and evil. Thus, "Lucifer" has changed from a symbol of light and the morning star to a representation of rebellion and the archetype of Satan in Christian theology.

Comparing "luceafăr blând" with "Lucifer" calls for examining both terms in their specific contexts and meanings: "Luceafăr blând": Literal Meaning: The term "luceafăr blând" translates to "gentle star" or "mild star" in English. It typically describes a celestial body, usually Venus, when it appears as the evening star.

- in *Romanian poetry*, especially in Mihai Eminescu's "Luceafărul," the "luceafăr blând" symbolizes an ideal, gentle, and ethereal presence. It

stands for beauty, purity, and an unreachable ideal. "Lucifer": Literal Meaning: The name "Lucifer" means "light-bringer" or "morning star" in Latin and originally referred to the planet Venus when it appears as the morning star. In Christian theology, Lucifer is the name given to a fallen angel who rebelled against God and became Satan. In literature, Lucifer is often shown as a powerful, proud being embodying themes of rebellion and the struggle between good and evil.

We can compare "luceafăr blând" and Lucifer used by Dimitrie Cuclin, particularly regarding symbolism and mythology:

- *Common Origin*: both "luceafăr blând" and "Lucifer" originally refer to the planet Venus, symbolizing light and beauty.
- *Different Connotations*: while "luceafăr blând" maintains a positive, gentle, and idealized meaning, "Lucifer" has come to symbolize rebellion, pride, and a fallen state in Christian theology.
- *Use in Literature*: "Luceafăr blând" in Eminescu's poem represents an unreachable ideal and a gentle presence. Conversely, "Lucifer" in works like "Paradise Lost" personifies a complex character who embodies themes of defiance and the fall from grace. It is important to note that while both terms share a common origin linked to the planet Venus, their meanings and symbolic interpretations have diverged significantly. "Luceafăr blând" is a gentle and idealized figure in Romanian poetry, while "Lucifer" is a complex and often negative figure in Christian theology and literature.

5.2. Leon Levitchi's Translation

Leon Levițchi translated "Luceafărul" to "Hyperion." Hyperion is a character from Greek mythology, and he has different meanings depending on the context.

In Greek mythology, Hyperion can be categorized in two ways:

- *Titan*: Hyperion was one of the twelve Titans, the offspring of Uranus (Sky) and Gaia (Earth). He is often linked to the sun and light. Hyperion's name means "the high one" or "he who goes above."
- *Parentage*: He was the father of Helios (the Sun), Selene (the Moon), and Eos (the Dawn) with his sister Theia. In this role, he is related to celestial events and the cycles of day and night.

In literature, we find Hyperion represented by two authors:

- *John Keats*: In English literature, John Keats wrote an unfinished epic poem called "Hyperion." This work shows the fall of the Titans and the rise of the Olympian gods. Hyperion is a central character that symbolizes the old order.

- Dan Simmons: In modern science fiction, Dan Simmons wrote a series called the "Hyperion Cantos," beginning with the novel "Hyperion." The title refers to the mythological figure, but the story itself mixes futuristic and mythological themes.

In Astronomy we can talk about *Moon of Saturn*: Hyperion is also the name of one of Saturn's moons. Discovered in 1848, this moon is known for its irregular shape and chaotic rotation.

Thus, Hyperion is a multifaceted figure appearing in Greek mythology as a Titan associated with the sun, in literature as a symbol of transition and change, and in astronomy as a celestial body orbiting Saturn.

We can draw a comparison between "luceafăr blând" and Hyperion used by Leon Levițchi, especially within the context of symbolism and mythology:

- *Common Themes of Light*: Both "luceafăr blând" (gentle star) and Hyperion are linked to light and celestial bodies. "Luceafăr blând" refers to the evening star (typically Venus), often symbolizing beauty, unattainability, and idealization in Mihai Eminescu's poem *Luceafărul*. Similarly, Hyperion, in Greek mythology, is the Titan associated with the sun, light, and the celestial realm, symbolizing a higher, radiant existence.
- *Symbol of Transcendence*: The "luceafăr blând" in Eminescu's work represents an ideal, transcendent being that is beyond human reach, an ethereal force that is both beautiful and distant. Hyperion, as a Titan, also embodies a powerful and transcendent figure, one that exists beyond the ordinary realm of mortals, representing divine or cosmic light.
- *Connection to the Divine and Ideal*: In the case of "luceafăr blând," the evening star's gentle light is often seen as a symbol of unattainable ideals, both in love and in spiritual aspirations. Hyperion, similarly, represents an idealized, divine figure, associated with cosmic order and light in Greek mythology. Both figures can be interpreted as symbols of higher states of existence that are not easily accessible to mortals.
- *Distant or Fallen Types of Figure*: Hyperion as a Titan, therefore is a celestial being- a being of stature meaning that it existed, and recount a time when it was "the sun" before the time of the Olympians. The "luceafăr blând" (the evening star), in *Luceafărul* is also an unattainable being- a distant star whose being places it away from mortals- it also has some tone of distance and ideal rather than union. In summary, both the "luceafăr blând" and Hyperion have a relationship in light, transcendence, divine or celestial beauty, both represent ideals beyond the power of humanity, representing an elevation of existence that those mourn and exhaust all longing and gifts to reach; they are comparable figures in symbolism and mythology.

5.3. Corneliu M. Popescu's Translation

While it is possible to make comparisons between the ideas of "luceafăr blând" (gentle star) and "Lucifer" based on their associations with light and celestial figures, calling "luceafăr blând" "good Lucifer and kind" may not be entirely accurate in the context of Mihai Eminescu's *Luceafărul*.

In *Luceafărul*, the "luceafăr blând" represents the idealized, distant, and unattainable Evening Star, which is a symbol of beauty, purity, and transcendence. The term "blând" emphasizes gentleness and tenderness, without any negative connotations associated with rebellion or evil.

On the other hand, "Lucifer" traditionally refers to a figure in Christian theology, often seen as the fallen angel who became Satan, associated with pride, rebellion, and defiance against God. Although "Lucifer" means "light-bringer" or "morning star," it has taken on a much darker, complex connotation over time, particularly in literature and religious texts.

Thus, while both figures are linked to celestial light, equating "luceafăr blând" with "good Lucifer and kind" would be misleading due to the contrasting symbolic meanings and associations of these terms. "Luceafăr blând" is more of an idealized and gentle figure, while "Lucifer" has a more complex and often negative connotation in religious and literary contexts.

5.4. Online Unknown Translation

When comparing the Romanian phrase "luceafăr blând" with the English translation "mild Evening-star", done by unknown translator, we can explore the nuances in meaning and the connotations of both expressions:

Literal Meaning

Luceafăr blând: In Romanian, "luceafăr" refers to a bright celestial body, typically the evening star (Venus), while "blând" means gentle, mild, or tender. Together, "luceafăr blând" conveys the image of a celestial being that is soft, tender, and peaceful, emphasizing the gentle nature of the evening star.

Mild Evening-star: In English, "mild" also means gentle, soft, or subdued, and "Evening-star" refers to the same celestial body (Venus) observed at dusk. The word "mild" in this context carries a similar sense of gentleness but might evoke a slightly less intense emotional or ethereal quality than "blând" in Romanian.

Connotations of Gentleness

Luceafăr blând: The Romanian "blând" carries a slightly richer, more poetic nuance, suggesting not just mildness but also an ethereal, almost divine tenderness. In Eminescu's *Luceafărul*, this phrase describes the idealized and unattainable nature of the Evening Star, contributing to the poem's romantic and symbolic atmosphere.

Mild Evening-star: The use of "mild" in English, while still gentle, might not

fully capture the depth of reverence and celestial majesty implied by "blând". "Mild" in English can sometimes suggest something less intense or powerful, whereas "blând" in Romanian carries a sense of gracefulness and subtle strength that might not be as immediately conveyed by "mild".

Emotional Tone

Luceafăr blând: The emotional tone in Romanian emphasizes not only the gentleness but also the unattainable nature of the star, invoking a sense of longing and melancholy. It represents an ideal that is distant and beyond human reach, which aligns with the poem's themes of unattainable love and divine beauty.

Mild Evening-star: The English translation "mild" conveys a gentleness, but it may not fully evoke the sense of divine distance and unapproachability that "blând" does in Romanian. "Mild" may come across as softer or more neutral, whereas "blând" carries a warmth and a nuanced tenderness that deepens the emotional resonance.

Cultural and Linguistic Differences

The Romanian "*blând*" has a broader range of meanings, including kindness, tenderness, and softness, with a specific romantic and idealized quality in the context of Eminescu's poetry. English, on the other hand, uses "*mild*" in a more neutral way, which may not evoke the same richness of emotional depth or symbolism when applied to the evening star.

Summing up, while both "*luceafăr blând*" and "*mild Evening-star*" express the idea of a gentle, celestial being, "*luceafăr blând*" in Romanian carries a more profound, idealized connotation that blends tenderness with unattainable beauty, while "*mild Evening-star*" may seem softer and less evocative of the same mystical or emotional depth. The translation "*mild Evening-star*" captures the gentleness, but it may not fully encompass the full romantic and ethereal resonance that "*luceafăr blând*" holds in the context of the poem.

Conclusions

As Florian Copcea notes Mihai Eminescu places special emphasis on translation as a viable by-way of communication between literatures under the sign of the same unity, transposing, himself, the most representative writers, philosophers and scholars of the world (Copcea, 2011, p.11). For him, translation must carry the aspect of transposition in the sense of mobilizing and applying to the original, the means of application of the language to which it is translated.

The dedicated efforts and commendable achievements of Mihai Eminescu's translators deserve recognition and appreciation. While varying in accuracy and poetic quality, foreign translations often struggle to capture the originality and beauty of the original works, despite the translators'

refined prosody and inspiration. This highlights the interaction between one of the greatest modern poets and his translators, who interpreted Eminescu's poetry through both their personal perspectives and their national lens – sometimes with appropriate humility, and at other times with deep admiration, as acknowledged by the translators themselves.

The advantages of gaining insight into the artistry of the Romanian poet through translations should not be underestimated. Although no translation can fully achieve perfection, these versions still merit recognition. They represent continuous and collective efforts that contribute to securing Mihai Eminescu's place among the great figures of world literature.

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