



ON THE SHOULDERS OF GIANTS: RETRANSLATING CHRISTOPHER MARLOWE'S *TAMBURLAINE THE GREAT* (PART I)

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Abstract

The history of translation has witnessed numerous instances in which retranslation was deemed desirable and even compulsory. The reasons are manifold - from comprehension matters, if the language in a text is outdated, to ideological issues, particularly relevant in the context of a long and rich history of translations in Romanian during communism, or when a translation is too bad to be used in reprints and new editions. Venuti stresses the importance of retranslating canonical texts, of which he mentions the Bible, Homer's epics, Dante's *Divine Comedy*, Cervantes's *Don Quixote*, and Shakespeare's plays, which would "solicit retranslation because diverse domestic readerships will seek to interpret [them] according to their own values" (26). Such a project of bringing Renaissance drama to contemporary readership and theatre-goers is *William Shakespeare's Contemporaries*, coordinated by Shakespearean scholars George Volceanov and Nicoleta Cinpoes. Among others, four volumes of Christopher Marlowe's complete works have been scheduled for publication—two have been published in 2022 and 2023 with Tracus Arte Press, Bucharest. The third (2025) contains *The Jew of Malta* and *Tamburlaine the Great (Part I)*, the latter, in my (re)translation. Aside from the inherent difficulties of translating a text that is over 400 years old, written in blank verse, which should be rendered in a language not entirely suitable for this poetry form, and from the conditions of performability and speakability that should be met in drama translation, this undertaking has also

triggered an “anxiety of influence” of sorts, considering that the only available translation to date belongs to the greatest Romanian scholar in English Studies, Leon Levițchi. This paper explains some choices made in departing from the authoritative, canonical translation in an attempt to deliver a Marlovian text for the twenty-first century, free from the constraints that Levițchi’s translation had to observe in the communist era.

Keywords: *Renaissance drama; Marlowe; translation; retranslation; performativity.*

INTRODUCTION

The history of translation provides many examples in which retranslation has been deemed necessary, and sometimes obligatory. Retranslation, defined as “toute traduction faite après la première traduction d’une œuvre” (Berman 1), usually arises for a wide range of reasons. There are practical concerns, such as understanding difficulties that occur when translations become linguistically and stylistically outdated, losing impact or clarity for modern readers, which Berman calls “ageing” – “il faut retraduire parce que les traductions vieillissent” (4). Additionally, there are deeply rooted ideological reasons, especially evident during periods of political instability or strict ideological control, as seen in the translations into Romanian during the communist regime. In these situations, retranslations were often required to ensure that literature matched dominant ideological narratives, leading to texts that greatly diverged from their original form and purpose.

Furthermore, practical considerations often motivate retranslations, especially when earlier versions are seen as flawed or insufficient, failing to meet the literary standards expected today or the accuracy required by scholars and astute readers. In such instances, publishers and literary institutions typically view retranslation as essential before proceeding with reprints, new editions, or scholarly publications. Additionally, retranslation offers unique insights into the changing nature of language and literary aesthetics. Each generation introduces its own linguistic sensitivities, interpretative approaches, and cultural biases, thereby transforming how texts are received and understood. This ongoing dialogue between past and present enhances literary scholarship by emphasising shifts in societal values, ethical perspectives, and linguistic innovation.

Moreover, retranslations often mirror broader cultural or political debates, reflecting societal shifts.

Another important dimension is the reception history of retranslations. Retranslated works often generate renewed critical attention, sparking scholarly debate and reinvigorating public interest. This phenomenon contributes significantly to the longevity and continued relevance of canonical literature. Retranslation can thus be viewed as a form of cultural renewal, ensuring that texts remain vibrant and resonant in contemporary contexts, while also preserving their integrity and original significance across different cultural epochs.

BRIEF THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The playground of retranslation is rich, being, of late, a topic often approached in translation theory. However, since this paper is essentially a *meta* analysis, it deals with justifications for one translation choice or another, in comparison with an existing translation. This makes theoretical anchoring rather superfluous, since the practice tends to contradict the theory, as will be shown later. For this reason, only four opinions on retranslation—considered the most relevant to date—have been selected for this brief literature review because they apply, to a certain extent, to the nature of the translated text under focus here, in terms of genre and canonicity.

1. The retranslation hypothesis (RH)

The retranslation hypothesis, introduced by Berman in 1990 and further developed by Chesterman in 2000 and 2004, posits that initial translations tend to domesticate the source text to align it with the target culture's norms, while subsequent retranslations aim for greater fidelity to the original. "Later translations (same ST, same TL) tend to be closer to the original than earlier ones" (Chesterman, "A Causal Model..." 23). This concept has been influential in understanding the evolution of translations over time, although it is currently refuted by many specialists.

2. Lawrence Venuti's perspective

Venuti emphasises the cultural and ideological motivations behind retranslation. In his essay "Retranslations: The Creation of Value," published in 2003 and reprinted in the 2012 volume *Translation Changes Everything*, he argues that canonical texts – such as the Bible, Homer's epics, and Shakespeare's plays – are frequently retranslated to reflect the values and expectations of new readerships. Venuti highlights how retranslations can challenge previous interpretations and introduce alternative perspectives.

3. Antony Pym's passive and active retranslations

Passive retranslations arise primarily due to the natural evolution of language and cultural contexts within the target audience. As languages develop and societal norms shift, earlier translations may become outdated or less resonant with contemporary readers. Such retranslations aim to modernise the text, enhancing clarity and relevance without necessarily challenging previous versions. An example is *The Revised Standard Version (RSV)* of the Bible. Published in 1952, it sought to update the language of earlier translations, such as the King James Version (KJV) and the American Standard Version (ASV), to reflect contemporary English usage, without directly contesting the authority of its predecessors.

In contrast, *active retranslations* are undertaken with the explicit intent to challenge or offer alternatives to existing translations. These retranslations often emerge from ideological, political, or cultural motivations, aiming to present a different interpretation or to correct perceived shortcomings in earlier versions. An example of such a retranslation is Mikhail Bakhtin's *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, which has been translated into English twice: in 1973 and in 1984. The 1973 translation is considered flawed and is consequently out of print. The 1984 version was an assumed corrective work.

4. Critical re-evaluations

In an article from 2004, "A thousand and one translations: Revisiting retranslation", Paloposki and Koskinen critically reassess the retranslation hypothesis, suggesting that the progression from domestication to foreignization is not universally applicable. Their research indicates that

retranslations can be influenced by various factors, including market demands, translators' choices, and cultural contexts, which may not always lead to a more source-oriented approach.

RETRANSLATING WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE'S CONTEMPORARIES

Having concluded the retranslation of William Shakespeare's *Complete Works*, with the publication of sixteen volumes (2010-2019), accompanied by two theoretical works, *Întoarcerea la Marele Will sau Reconsiderarea canonului shakespearian* (2020) and *Un Shakespeare pentru Mileniul III – Istoria unei ediții* (2021)¹, the mastermind behind the project, Professor George Volceanov, supported by Nicoleta Cinpoș, Professor of Shakespeare Studies at the University of Worcester, embarked on a new challenge – (re)translating some of the most important plays by William Shakespeare's contemporaries. A similar endeavour – *Teatrul Renașterii engleze. Predecesorii lui Shakespeare* (Stevenson, Marlowe, Kyd, Peele, and Greene) – volume I and *Contemporanii lui Shakespeare* (Dekker, Jonson, Beaumont, Fletcher, Webster, and Massinger) – volume II – was published in 1964 by Editura pentru Literatura Universală. Rarely, if ever, staged, and studied only briefly and marginally in History of English Literature courses, most of these playwrights are virtually unknown to the Romanian readership, which is why the project is felicitous. The most famous name of all, Christopher Marlowe, benefited from a volume entitled *Christopher Marlowe. Teatru*, which featured the plays *Tamburlaine the Great (I+II)*, *The Jew of Malta*, *The Tragical History of the Life and Death of Doctor Faustus* and *Edward II*, published in 1988 by Univers Press, in the translations of Leon Levițchi, Andrei Bantaș and Florentin Toma.

Volceanov's project expands the catalogue of Romanian translations of Marlowe, including the previously untranslated *Dido, Queen of Carthage* and *The Massacre at Paris* (Marlowe. *Opere 1*, 2022), adding the unattributed *Arden of Feversham* (c. 1592) to the Marlovian canon, in a second volume (2023), which also comprises *Doctor Faustus* and the poems *Hero and Leander* and *The Passionate Shepherd to His Love*. The third volume, published in 2025, features retranslations of *The Jew of Malta* and *Tamburlaine the Great* (part I), while the fourth (and last)

¹ A seventeenth volume was published in 2024 with new and improved translations for *The Taming of the Shrew*, *Twelfth Night* and *Troilus and Cressida*.

will continue with the second part of *Tamburlaine* and the translation of *Edward II*.

In an article dedicated to Shakespeare in Romania before and after 1989, Volceanov elaborates on the *raison d'être* of the new translations, explaining both why a third edition of Shakespeare's Complete Works in Romanian was necessary and how the new translators dealt with the source text:

[...] the new edition of Shakespeare's Works (2010) [...] would modernise the vocabulary of the Romanian versions in order to make them accessible to the new generation of readers and theatregoers. It would do away with the distinction between the seemingly irreconcilable notions of philological and performance-oriented translation; it would de-censor and de-bowdlerise the Shakespearean text; it would bring forth new textual interpretations relying on the latest critical editions (and especially on the Arden Shakespeare series); and it would pay due respect to the prose and prosody of the original, i.e., to the principle of stringency. These guidelines had to be observed by all the translators participating in the project. The norms and strategies of this edition coincidentally resemble those expounded long ago by the Hungarian poet János Arany: for him, too, the translation was 'primarily prepared for the stage', 'for theatre-makers'; it should be 'true to the ideas and the form of the original'; it should not omit 'lewd or obscene passages' and it should render 'an unabridged Shakespeare rather than a purified one' (Minier 2014: 46–47). (Volceanov 42–43)

Since the guidelines for the new project are identical, the translation of Marlowe's *Tamburlaine* analysed below has strived to abide by all these aspects. The translation uses J.S. Cunningham's edition of *Tamburlaine the Great* (The Revels Plays, published by Manchester University Press in 1981).

RETRANSLATING CHRISTOPHER MARLOWE'S TAMBURLAINE THE GREAT

Retranslating *Tamburlaine the Great* (part I) was both a personal challenge and a difficult literary endeavour. The influence of Leon Levițchi's 1988 version – its rhetorical richness and its canonical significance – loomed large. Working on a text already translated by Romania's greatest Anglicist initially filled me with hesitation and a humble resistance. Who was I to reword something so powerfully worded by another? This created a form of "anxiety of influence,"

similar to what poets feel when facing their predecessors. It was not just Marlowe I was translating – Levițchi’s reputation, legacy, and prestige were ever present. Yet, this anxiety paradoxically sparked my creative agency. I began to shape the dramatic voices differently, steering clear of imitation. Sometimes I softened the baroque; other times I modernised the rhythm or shifted the register. I opted not to echo but to resonate anew.

This translation is, then, not a revision, but a re-sounding: of Marlowe’s tragedy, but also of the way in which two generations speak poetry, drama, and power. It is a version for a contemporary audience, one that values psychological realism and verbal immediacy but also bows to the monumental work that preceded it. This dialogue, not distance, is what makes retranslation necessary and alive.

The two translations, both faithful in content, serve different aesthetic and interpretive purposes. The first translation adheres closely to the elevated, sometimes archaic register of Marlowe’s original. This version appeals to readers interested in the historical and poetic fidelity of the source. Completed by Leon Levițchi in the 1980s, it emerges from a cultural moment shaped by philological rigour and classical ideals. Levițchi’s language is elevated, archaising, and dense. It preserves Marlowe’s tragic grandeur, cosmic metaphors, classical allusions, tragic formalism and the heightened diction of Elizabethan theatre. In this sense, it aligns with what Berman called a *lettrée* translation, aimed at philological scholarship and high cultural prestige. My translation prioritises clarity, natural speech rhythms, psychological realism, and accessibility. It often simplifies or rephrases complex metaphors for the contemporary Romanian audience. In doing so, it sometimes loses Marlowe’s baroque texture but gains immediacy. It simplifies the archaic lexicon and favours performability. The translation’s goal is reintegration: reintroducing *Tamburlaine* as a living dramatic voice, intelligible to today’s readers and theatre-goers.

This juxtaposition challenges the retranslation hypothesis, which, as shown above, suggests that initial translations tend to be more domesticating and reader-friendly, while retranslations restore the original’s complexity. In this case, the opposite is true: Levițchi’s version is the more foreignising, poetic, and rhetorically ornate translation, while the new version modernises and recontextualises Marlowe’s language for the twenty-first century. It is

interpretive, tuned to a modern audience, with strengths in emotional nuance, clarity, and readability.

The retranslation hypothesis proposes that initial translations aim for fluency and accessibility, while subsequent retranslations tend to return to the original's complexity, style, and foreignness. Yet, real-world examples often contradict this theory, and this is the case here.

Therefore, one can see in Table 1 how this translation/retranslation set is positioned in relation to the defining aspects forwarded by theories of retranslation:

Table 1. Positioning of Marlow's *Tamburlaine the Great* (Part I) Romanian translations within the theory of retranslation

Theory of retranslation	1988	2025
The first translation tends to 'tame' the source	This first version retains foreignness and poetic style	It domesticates more than the first version.
Retranslations restore the original's complexity	Reverse case	Rather than restoring, it simplifies.
Cultural evolution of the target language	Matches older literary norms (canonical, classicising style)	Reflects today's fluid, expressive Romanian language.
Functional shift	Canonical, educational, formal	Performative, affective, emotionally resonant

SIDE-BY-SIDE TRANSLATION ANALYSIS

My translation effort aims to show how retranslation adapts, besides the source text, to the literary evolution of the target culture. It is about serving new readers, performances, and values. The excerpts include the soliloquy of Bayezid (Bajazeth in the Marlovian text), a character whose voice reflects the tragic grandeur, cruelty, and emotional intensity that define Marlowe's style. Zabina's soliloquy, delivered immediately after, upon finding her husband dead, constructs a momentum of amplified horror and desperation. In terms of

translation difficulty, the last sample is simpler at first sight because, unlike the whole text, it is not in iambic pentameter, which should be retained in translation. However, the Romanian language is less suitable for this meter.

In the tables below, V1 is Levițchi's 1988 translation, and V2 is the 2025 version published in the volume *Christopher Marlowe – Opere III (232-235)*.

Bajazeth's speech, preceding his suicide, is marked by violent despair, self-loathing, and imagery drawn from hellish mythology. V1 retains Marlowe's grotesque diction and solemn rhythm more closely. V2 is more readable and psychological.

Sample 1. Existential disgust and hellish imagery

Marlowe	V1	V2
<i>O life, more loathsome to my vexed thoughts</i>	<i>O, viață mai scârboasă decît dîra</i>	<i>Îmi pare viața mai scârboasă ca</i>
	Oh, life more disgusting than the trail	Life seems to me more disgusting than
<i>Than noisome parbreak of the Stygian snakes</i>	<i>Slinoasă a șerpilor din Styx ce umple</i>	<i>Voma-fetidă-a șerpilor din Styx</i>
	Slimy of the snakes of Styx that fills	The fetid vomit of the snakes of Styx
<i>Which fills the nooks of hell with standing air</i>	<i>Tot iadul cu duhori de nedescris</i>	<i>Ce-mpute fece ungher din iad</i>
	All hell with indescribable stench	Which fouls every corner of hell
<i>Infecting all the ghosts with cureless griefs!</i>	<i>Și-mplîntă-n duhuri boale fără leac!</i>	<i>Și crunt mai chinuiește duhurile.</i>
	And implants in the spirits diseases without cure!	And cruelly torments the spirits even more.

(*Tamburlaine the Great*, Part I, Act V, 255-258)

V1 uses archaic diction (*dîra* 'trail', *boale* 'diseases'), mirroring the grotesque ritualistic tone of Marlowe. V2 uses more modern, visceral terms: *voma fetidă*

‘fetid vomit’, *impute* ‘fouls’ – raw and sensory. V1 is more stylistically faithful to Marlowe’s poetic hell. V2 is more graphic, which matches the horror but reduces elevated abstraction.

Sample 2. Self-hatred and visual despair

Marlowe	V1	V2
<i>O dreary engines of my loathed sight</i>	<i>Voi, ochi care-ați vazut cum un tâlhar</i> You, eyes that have seen how a thief	<i>Unelte ale văzului scârbit,</i> Tools of disgusted sight,
<i>That see my crown, my honour, and my name / Thrust under yoke and thraldom of a thief</i>	<i>Mi-a pus în jugul silniciei slava, / Coroana și renumele</i> Has put my glory in the yoke of violence,/ The crown and the name	<i>Care-mi vedeți coroana, cinstea, faima/ Furate și-nrobite de-un tâlhar,</i> That see my crown, honour, fame/ Stolen and enslaved by a thief,
<i>Why feed ye still on day’s accursed beams</i>	<i>De ce sorbiți lumina blestemată-a zilei</i> Why do you drink the accursed light of day	<i>De ce vă mai hrăniți cu soarele</i> Why do you still feed on the accursed sun
<i>And sink not quite into my tortur’d soul?</i>	<i>Și nu orbiți privind cumplita beznă a sufletului meu?</i> And do not go blind looking at the terrible darkness of my soul?	<i>Afurisit, în loc să v-afundați/ În sufletu-mi căznit?</i> Instead of sinking/ Into my tormented soul?

(V: 259-263)

Both V1 and V2 preserve the apostrophic tone of Bajazeth’s direct address to his own eyes. V2 adds a philosophical turn (*unelte ale văzului* ‘tools of sight’) and preserves the metaphor (the eyes as “engines” of suffering) that is explained by paraphrasing and omitted in V1.

Sample 3. Zabina's downfall

Marlowe	V1	V2
<i>You see my wife, my queen, and emperess/ Brought up and propped by the hand of Fame,</i>	<i>Doar ați văzut / Cum soața și împărăteasa mea/ crescută sub oblăduirea faimei</i> You've surely seen/ How my wife and empress/ Raised under the protection of fame	<i>Doar o vedeți</i> <i>Pe soața mea, regina, - mpărăteasa/ Care-a crescut de faimă ocrotită,</i> You surely see My wife, the queen, the empress/ Who grew up protected by fame,
<i>Queen of fifteen contributory queens</i>	<i>Regină-a cincisprezece principese</i> Queen of fifteen princesses	<i>Stăpână peste alte cincisprezece</i> Mistress over fifteen other
<i>Now thrown to rooms of black abjection</i>	<i>Trăiește-acum în neagră sărăcie</i> Now lives in black poverty	<i>Regine, umilită și pătată</i> Queens, humiliated and stained
<i>Smeared with blots of basest drudgery</i>	<i>Mînjită de lături și umiliință</i> Smeared with slops and humiliation	<i>De cele mai scârbavnice corvezi,</i> By the most disgusting chores,
<i>And villainess to shame, disdain, and misery</i>	<i>De scîrnăvia scîrbei</i> By the vileness of disgust.	<i>O roabă care are parte doar/ De-ocară, de mizerii și dispreț.</i> A slave who only gets/ Shame, misery, and contempt.

(V: 264-269)

Both versions capture the fall from glory to degradation. V1 uses more archaic diction (*scîrnăvie* 'vileness', *lături* 'slops'), which echoes the moral horror Marlowe evokes. V2 is more concrete and contemporary, making the social implications clearer, which may make it feel more emotionally immediate to a modern audience.

Sample 4. Self-loathing and starvation

Marlowe	V1	V2
<i>Accursed Bajazeth...</i>	<i>Baiazid, Mișelule...</i>	<i>Ah, blestematul de Baiazid,</i>
	<i>Bayezid, you wretch...</i>	<i>Ah, accursed Bayezid,</i>
<i>whose words of ruth,/ That would with pity cheer Zabina's heart,/ And make our souls resolve in ceaseless tears</i>	<i>A cărui vorbe calde/ Puteau s-o- ncurajeze pe Zabina și să ne mângâie pe amândoi</i>	<i>Puteai s-o-nseninezi cu vorba bună/ Și să-i aduci Zabinei consolare,/ Topindu-ne suflutele-n șuvoaie/ De lacrimi nesfârșite</i>
	<i>Whose warm words/ Could have encouraged Zabina and comforted both of us</i>	<i>You could have brightened her with kind words/ And brought Zabina consolation,/ Melting our souls in streams/ Of endless tears</i>
<i>Sharp hunger bites upon and gripes the root/ From whence the issues of my thoughts do break!</i>	<i>Te roade foamea ce-ți sleiește gîndul"</i>	<i>rău te roade/ Foamea și-ți strangulează gândurile.</i>
	<i>It gnaws at you, the hunger which exhausts your thought</i>	<i>You are badly gnawed/ By hunger, and it strangles your thoughts</i>

(V: 270-274)

Both versions preserve the imagery of hunger gnawing at the source of thought. V1 employs a tighter, more abstract phrasing, while V2 uses a more visceral extended metaphor. In the draft version, V2 omitted the queen's name, which is easily deduced from the use of the feminine pronoun *o* 'her' (*s-o-nseninezi* 'brighten her'); however, it was included in the final version.

Sample 5. Request for water and final tenderness

Marlowe	V1	V2
<i>O, poor Zabina! O my queen, my queen!</i>	<i>Regina mea, sărmana mea Zabina!</i>	<i>Biată Zabina, vai, regina mea!</i>

Marlowe	V1	V2
	My queen, my poor Zabina!	Poor Zabina, alas, my queen!
<i>Fetch me some water for my burning breast”</i>	<i>îmi arde groaznic pieptul, adămi apă</i>	<i>Îmi arde pieptul groaznic, adămi apă,</i>
	My chest burns terribly, bring me some water	My chest burns terribly, bring me some water,
<i>To cool and comfort me with longer date”</i>	<i>Să-l răcoresc; și cât voi mai trăi</i> To cool it; and as long as I live	<i>Să mă mai răcoresc un pic și-n scurtul</i> So I may cool myself a bit and in the short
<i>That, in the shorten'd sequel of my life...</i>	<i>Să mă destăinui ție pe deplin...</i> To confide in you completely...	<i>Răstimp ce mi-a rămas să-ți dăruiesc</i> Time I have left to give you
<i>I may pour forth my soul into thine arms,/ With words of love, whose moaning intercourse/ Hath hitherto been stayed with wrath and hate/ Of our expressless banned inflictions</i>	<i>Cu vorbe dragăstoase, cu suspine înăbușite pîn-acum de ura/ Față de soarta mult prea nemiloasă.</i> With loving words, with sighs stifled until now by hatred/ Towards a much too merciless fate.	<i>Sufletul meu, cu vorbe dragăstoase,/ Și cu suspine, până-acum oprite/ De ura și mânia provocată/ De suferințele pe care le-ndurăm.</i> My soul, with loving words,/ And with sighs, until now stopped/ By the hatred and anger caused/ By the sufferings we endure.

(V:275-282)

Both versions preserve a tender, tragic intimacy. V1 leans on poetic structure; V2 is slightly colloquial, but the emotion lands clearly. It is noticeable in this excerpt that both V1 and V2 purposely omit the sexual reference, flattening *moaning intercourse* into mild *sighs*, thus losing the erotic charge, the mutual bodily exchange, and the raw performative intensity of Marlowe's original phrase. The draft's brief use of *gemete de-amor* 'love moans' showed an earlier approach to

handling *moaning intercourse*, before the phrasing was adjusted in the final version.

Sample 6. Zabina's response

Marlowe	V1	V2
<i>Sweet Bajazeth, I will prolong thy life</i>	<i>Iubitul meu sultan, nu vei muri</i> My beloved sultan, you will not die	<i>Iubite Baiazid, îți prelungesc</i> Beloved Bayezid, I prolong
<i>As long as any blood or spark of breath</i>	<i>Cît timp mai am în mine-un strop de sânge</i> As long as I still have in me a drop of blood	<i>Viața cât timp mai am un strop de sânge,/ Cât încă mai răsuflu, să pot stinge</i> Your life as long as I have a drop of blood,/ As long as I still breathe, so I can extinguish
<i>Can quench or cool the torments of my grief.</i>	<i>Ce domolește flacăra durerii.</i> Which soothes the flame of pain.	<i>Sau răcori această suferință.</i> Or cool this suffering.

(V:283-285)

V1 preserves a more elevated tone (*iubitul meu sultan* 'my beloved sultan'), while V2 opts for using the name in the direct address between wife and husband. Also noticeable is the difference in conveying "I will prolong thy life". Both versions depart from the original: V1 uses a negative sentence about death, while V2 stays focused on life. In the third line, V1 uses a metaphor (*domolește flacăra durerii* 'soothes the flame of pain'), whereas V2 employs a more concrete physicality through *să pot stinge/ sau răcori această suferință* 'so I can extinguish/ or cool this suffering', thus mirroring Marlowe's pair "can quench or cool" with two coordinated verbs of direct action.

Sample 7. Suicide as liberation

Marlowe	V1	V2
<i>Now, Bajazeth, abridge thy baneful days,</i>	<i>Cum n-ai o altă cale, Baiazid,</i> Since you have no other way, Bayezid,	<i>Hai, Baiazid, scurtează-ți zilele,</i> Come on, Bayezid, shorten your days,
<i>And beat the brains out of thy conquer'd head,</i>	<i>Zdrobește-ți capul/ De-aceste blestamate de zăbrele.</i> Smash your head/ Against these cursed bars.	<i>Zdrobește-ți creierul din capul ăsta</i> Smash the brain from this head
<i>Since other means are all forbidden me,</i>	(omitted, blended above)	<i>Învins, căci nu ai alte mijloace</i> Defeated, since you have no other means
<i>That may be ministers of my decay.</i>	(omitted)	<i>Prin care să sfârșești aceste chinuri.</i> By which to end these torments.

(V: 286-289)

V1 omits explicit line-by-line equivalence for Marlowe's fatalistic framing but conveys the act clearly, albeit indirectly. V2 follows Marlowe's logic and structure closely, being more precise and structurally faithful to the original.

Sample 8. Cosmic curse

Marlowe	V1	V2
<i>O highest lamp of ever-living Jove,</i>	<i>Luminător al veșnicului Zeus,</i> Light-giver of eternal Zeus,	<i>Soare al veșnicului Jupiter,</i> Sun of eternal Jupiter,

Marlowe	V1	V2
<i>Accursed day, infected with my griefs,</i>	<i>Ascunde-ți fața-n noaptea nesfârșită Hide your face in endless night</i>	<i>Zi blestemată de durerea mea, Cursed day by my pain,</i>
<i>Hide now thy stained face in endless night,</i>	<i>Și-nchide ale cerului ferestre. And close the windows of the sky.</i>	<i>Ascunde-ți chipu-n noaptea nesfârșită, Hide your face in endless night,</i>
<i>And shut the windows of the lightsome heavens!</i>	<i>(blended above)</i>	<i>Închide și ferestrele din cerul And close also the windows of the</i>
<i>Let ugly Darkness with her rusty coach,</i>	<i>Hidoasa beznă-n carul ei dogit, Ugly darkness in her rusty coach,</i>	<i>Strălucitor; și lasă bezna-n carul/ Ei ruginit, bătut de vijelii Shining sky; and let the darkness in her/ Rusty coach, beaten by storms</i>
<i>Engirt with tempests, wrapt in pitchy clouds,</i>	<i>Rupt de furtuni și-nvăluit de nori, Broken by storms and wrapped in clouds,</i>	<i>Și-nvăluit în nori, să-năbușe And wrapped in clouds, smother</i>
<i>Smother the earth with never- fading mists,</i>	<i>Să-năbușe cu ceață grea pământul Let her smother the earth with heavy mist</i>	<i>Pământul cu o pâclă veșnică, The earth with an eternal haze,</i>
<i>And let her horses from their nostrils breathe / Rebellious winds and dreadful thunder- claps,</i>	<i>Și caii ei pe nări să slobozească / Viforniță și bubuit de tunet.</i>	<i>Iar caii ei, pe nări, să sufle vânt/ Distrugător și tunete sinistre. And her horses, from their nostrils, blow wind/</i>

Marlowe**V1****V2**

And her horses from their
nostrils release / Blizzard and
thunderclap.

Destructive and sinister
thunder.

(V: 290-298)

Both versions preserve the classical register and cosmic imagery. V1 keeps the formality of *veșnicul Zeus* ‘eternal Zeus’ and *luminător* ‘light-giver’, echoing Marlowe’s rhetoric. V2 paraphrases with more natural syntax but keeps the meaning intact. V1 is more stylistically loyal, V2 is more narratively fluid. Both translations capture the grandeur and apocalyptic vision. V1 uses archaic formulations (*să-năbușe* ‘smother’, *slobozească* ‘release’, *vișornită* ‘blizzard’). V2 simplifies vocabulary but maintains imagery and cadence.

Sample 9. The soul’s vengeance and death wish

Marlowe**V1****V2**

*That in this terror
Tamburlaine may live,/ And
my pin’d soul, resolv’d in liquid
air,*

*Ca Tamerlan să nu-și mai afle
tihnă/ Iar sufletul meu,
despărțit de trup,*

*Să aibă Tamerlan parte de
groază./ Iar sufletul meu,
dizolvat în aer,*

So that Tamerlane may no
longer find peace/ And my
soul, separated from the body,

Let Tamerlane have part of
terror./ And my soul, dissolved
in air,

*May still excruciate his
tormented thoughts!*

*Să-1 chinuie mereu și să-1
smintească.*

*Să-i tortureze gândurile negre.
May torture his dark thoughts.*

May always torment him and
drive him mad.

*Then let the stony dart of
senseless cold/ Pierce through
the centre of my wither’d heart,*

*Săgeată a uitării fără pășuri,/
Străpunge-mi inima
îndurerată*

*Săgeată împietrită a uitării,/
Străpunge-mi inima plină de
jale,*

Arrow of forgetfulness without
cares/ Pierce my sorrowful
heart

Stony arrow of forgetfulness,
Pierce my heart full of sorrow,

Marlowe	V1	V2
<i>And make a passage for my loathed life!</i>	<i>Și drum croiește-i slutei mele vieți!</i>	<i>Croindu-i drum, să-mi părăsească trupul/Această viață detestabilă.</i>
	And make a path for my ugly life!	Making a path, so this detestable life may leave my body!

(V: 299-304)

V1 uses a slightly elevated rhetorical form and metaphor (*uitării fără păsurii* ‘forgetfulness without cares’). V2 emphasises internal loathing and flows more naturally. V1 keeps a more explanatory tone in the opening line, using a causal structure (*Ca Tamerlan să nu-și mai afle tihnă* ‘So that Tamerlane may no longer find peace’), while V2 remains closer to Marlowe’s malediction-like wish (*Să aibă Tamerlan parte de groază* ‘Let Tamerlane have part of terror.’). The image of the soul “resolved in liquid air” is rendered differently: V1 opts for a more literal separation (*despărțit de trup* ‘separated from the body’), whereas V2 retains the dissolution metaphor (*dizolvat în aer* ‘dissolved in air’).

Sample 10. Zabina’s suicide

Marlowe	V1	V2
<i>What do mine eyes behold? my husband dead! His skull all riven in twain! his brains dash’d out, The brains of Bajazeth, my lord and sovereign! O Bajazeth, my husband and my lord! O Bajazeth! O Turk! O emperor! Give him his liquor? not I. Bring milk and fire, and my blood I bring him again.—Tear me in pieces—give me the sword with a ball of wild-fire upon</i>	<i>O, zei, o ceruri! Soțul meu e mort! Vai, creierii s-au scurs prin capul spart! Vai, soțul meu ! Stăpîne! Baiazid! O, Baiazid! Sultanul! împăratul! Să-i dau vin? Nu, nu se poate, Aduceți lapte și foc și am să-i dau din nou sângele meu. Sfîșiați-mă în bucăți! Dați-mi fulgerul în vârful săbiei. Jos cu el, jos cu el! Du-te la fiul meu! Afară, afară, afară! Ah, îndurați-vă de</i>	<i>Dar ce-mi vād ochii? Soțul meu e mort! Capu-i crăpat și creierii sunt zob! Vai, Baiazid, domnul, stăpânul meu! Vai, Baiazid, bărbatul, domnul meu! Sultanul, împăratul meu – să-i dau să bea? Ba nu. Aduceți lapte și foc și am să-i aduc din nou sângele meu, sfîșiați-mă în bucăți, dați-mi o sabie cu un șomoioag aprins în vârf. Jos cu el, jos. Du-te la copilul meu, du-te, du-te.</i>

it.—Down with him! down with him!—Go to my child; away, away, away! ah, save that infant! save him, save him!—I, even I, speak to her. —The sun was down— streamers white, red, black— Here, here, here! —Fling the meat in his face— Tamburlaine, Tamburlaine! —Let the soldiers be buried. —Hell, death, Tamburlaine, hell! —Make ready my coach, my chair, my jewels. —I come, I come, I come!

[She runs against the cage and brains herself.]

copilașul ăsta, fie-vă milă, fie-vă milă! Eu, nu alta, vorbesc cu ea. Soarele a apus — steaguri albe, roșii, negre. Priviți, priviți, priviți! Aruncați-i carne în față! Tamerlan, Tamerlan! Soldații să fe îngropați. Iad, moarte, Tamerlan, iad. Pregătiți-mi trăsura, tronul, giuvaierere. Sosesc, sosesc, sosesc!

(Se repede în cușcă și-și zdrobește creierii.)

Oh, gods, oh heavens! My husband is dead! Alas, his brains have poured out through his broken head! Alas, my husband! Master! Bayezid! Oh, Bayezid! The sultan! The emperor! Should I give him wine? No, it cannot be, Bring milk and fire and I will give him my blood again. Tear me to pieces! Give me lightning at the tip of the sword. Down with him, down with him! Go to my child! Out, out, out! Ah, have mercy on this little child, have mercy, have mercy! I, no other, speak to her. The sun has set — white, red, black flags. Look, look, look! Throw meat in his face! Tamerlane, Tamerlane! Let the soldiers be buried. Hell, death, Tamerlane, hell. Prepare my carriage, throne, jewels. I

Salvează-mi bebelușul, salvează-l, salvează-l. Eu, chiar eu vorbesc cu ea. Soarele a apus. Steaguri albe, roșii, negre, aici, aici. Aruncați-i carne în față. Tamerlan! Tamerlan! Să fie înmormântați soldații! Iadule, moarte, Tamerlan, iadule. Pregătiți-mi caleașca, tronul, bijuteriile, vin și eu. Sosesc și eu! Sosesc! Sosesc!

[Se repede la cușcă și își zdrobește creierii.]

But what do my eyes see? My husband is dead! His head is cracked and his brains are smashed! Alas, Bayezid, the lord, my master! Alas, Bayezid, the man, my lord! My sultan, my emperor — to give him to drink? Oh no. Bring milk and fire and I will bring him my blood again, tear me to pieces, give me a sword with a burning bundle at the tip. Down with him, down. Go to my child, go, go. Save my baby, save him, save him. I, even I, speak to her. The sun has set. White, red, black flags, here, here. Throw meat in his face. Tamerlane! Tamerlane! Let the soldiers be buried! Hell, death, Tamerlane, hell. Prepare my carriage,

am coming, I am coming, I am coming! (She rushes into the cage and smashes her brains.)	throne, jewels, I am coming too. I am coming! I am coming! [She rushes to the cage and smashes her brains.]
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(V: 305-319)

Zabina's speech after Bajazeth's death is apocalyptic, surreal, and deeply tragic. By combining blank verse and prose in representing madness, Marlowe anticipates the technique employed by Shakespeare in rendering the final speeches of Ophelia and Lady Macbeth.

FINAL REMARKS

Leviṭchi's translation (1988) was published at a time when literary prestige and philological precision were paramount in Romania. As we know, Leon Leviṭchi was an Anglicist with a deep scholarly investment in preserving the poetic form of Renaissance texts. His version reflects the heroic, rhetorical tone of Marlowe's drama, with high diction and a tragic register consistent with neoclassical translation ideals. In doing so, he retains archaisms, complex metaphors, and mythical or cosmic registers. His translation is canon-building and scholarly but almost impossible to stage. The only staging of the play, *Tamerlan cel Mare*, directed by Victor Ioan Frunză at the National Theatre Bucharest in the 1995-1996 theatre season, used Adrian Solomon's translation, with just a handful of paragraphs from Leviṭchi's translation included in the scenic version.

My translation, by contrast, reflects a different approach – it aims to be target-oriented and sensitive to performance value and psychological resonance. It is informed by modern tendencies in drama translation, where speakability, intimacy, and emotional authenticity get priority. It is the reason why I, in many instances, gave up the ornate rhetoric, favouring clarity and, here and there, simplification, especially in the case of very extended metaphors and classical allusions. While striving to maintain fidelity, I have opted for better performability and readability, sacrificing the baroque density in the process. Another aim was repositioning Marlowe for a contemporary public, in keeping

with cultural mediation strategies that highlight the accessibility of world literature and place historicity in a secondary position.

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