

Translation 3.0: A Blueprint for Translation Studies in the Digital Age

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Abstract

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At the close of the second decade of the twenty-first century, Translation Studies has evolved into an accepted and even booming discipline in higher education. Since translation touches on every aspect of scholarship, learning and communication, especially in the age of globalization and digital communication, universities that don't already have Translation Studies programs are contemplating how to begin. This document is a blueprint, a guide, to understanding the

explosive growth of the discipline and how to structure an approach to Translation Studies that meets the needs of students, faculty, administration and the publics served by a university. The blueprint examines Translation Studies as a discipline over the last 20 years by reviewing six university Translation Studies programs as case studies and analyzing their growth and evolution in the context of dramatic technologically-driven changes in society. The analysis shows that new translation programs have emerged at universities in cities that experience robust economic and population growth, evidence strong cultural and literary roots and are based in areas strong in technological innovation. But the main driver of success in creating new Translation Studies programs is the presence of activist faculty who passionately support and advocate for a Translation Studies program. Translator training and translation research and scholarship are now on equal footing, as academia begins to understand that the two are inextricably connected. This text is one piece of a multi-faceted Public Scholarship dissertation project. The elements in full are: 1. *Translation 3.0: A Blueprint for Translation Studies in the Digital Age* (120-page monograph), 2. *Can Google Translate Literature?* (40-page scholarly article), *Translation3point0.wordpress.com* (Spain in translation website with articles and data visualization). Taken in full, this project explains but also models the activity of a translation studies hub, a center of activity for a discipline that touches on all others and is a crucial element of twenty-first century higher education.

## Introduction

“Translation is the engine rather than the caboose of literary history.”

Rebecca Walkowitz, *Born Translated* (2015)

“Over the past half-century, translation studies has emerged decisively as an academic field around the world, and in recent years programs devoted to the teaching of translation have proliferated.”

Lawrence Venuti, *Teaching Translation* (2107)

In late 2013, I arrived in Seattle nurturing the idea of studying literary translation to improve my translation writing skills and to forge a professional career in the field. At the time, I was a successful media professional and a published though still emerging translator of Spanish-language<sup>1</sup> poetry and prose into English. I arrived from multi-cultural, multi-lingual London, where I had been active in professional translation groups and participated in the myriad of translation events, lectures and seminars in the London area. With enthusiasm and high expectations, I returned to my city of birth, known for its love of books, poetry and literature, to find almost nothing in the way of literary translation activities or studies. This dissertation project is part of my effort to change that. It is scholarship as practice, a multi-faceted, multi-disciplinary approach to building the kind of translation community on and off-campus, that I would like for myself and that I believe is a benefit for my university, my city, my state, and my profession.

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<sup>1</sup> Throughout this project I refer to Spain (the country) and to the Spanish language. The Spanish language is just one of several languages spoken in Spain, the country. Meanwhile, hundreds of millions of people around the world in many different countries speak the Spanish language. To ensure clarity, I refer to Spanish-language poetry/fiction/prose (from any country) and Spanish-language poetry of Spain to specify the country.

Seattle is one of the most literate and literary of U.S. cities, a status that gained international designation when it was named a UNESCO City of World Literature in 2017. It is home to many award-winning and best-selling authors and poets, avid readers, and a celebrity librarian in Nancy Pearl. A multi-cultural gateway to the Pacific Rim, Seattle hosts the biggest publisher of world fiction translated into English (AmazonCrossing), one of the biggest video/computer game companies that hires translators for their global gaming platforms (Nintendo),<sup>2</sup> and several of the most active players in the research and development of artificial intelligence-driven machine translation (Amazon, Microsoft, and the Allen Institute of Artificial Intelligence). Small Northwest-based book publishers of translated literature make a big mark. Copper Canyon Press in nearby Port Townsend is a nationally recognized, award-winning poetry publisher whose titles include works by major Spanish language poets Pablo Neruda, Octavio Paz, and Vicente Aleixandre in translation to English. Seattle-based Fantagraphic Books publishes international comics and graphic novels in translation to English and promotes itself as “Publisher of the World’s Greatest Cartoonists.” Small non-profit publisher Wave Books, a 2017 recipient of the Pulitzer Prize for Poetry, publishes poetry in translation from Spanish, Russian, French, Arabic and German. Chin Music Press, another tiny independent Seattle publisher nestled in the lower-floor warren of the colorful Pike Place Market, publishes, among other things, translated works from Japan and Korea. Seattle’s beloved independent bookstore The Elliott Bay Book Company regularly features presentations by translators, and its events coordinator Karen Maeda Allman served as a judge of the 2018 National Book Award for Translated Literature. Seattle is also home to high-profile translators and translation scholars and

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<sup>2</sup> Lars Knudson, Nintendo Associate Localization Producer, told UW graduate students in 2017 that the company’s game translation team consists of approximately 60 people at Nintendo’s U.S. headquarters in Redmond. Asked if he would describe the work the teams do to create and translate narratives as “literature,” he said yes, citing the narrative, character development and dialog as some of the game’s literary characteristics.

a major public research university, the University of Washington, where translation is taught and studied in isolated pockets across campus, but not yet acknowledged or institutionalized as an academic discipline. US Department of Labor (US Department) job growth statistics place translation as one of the fastest growing sectors in the US economy. The growing need is driven by dramatic changes in mass migration of peoples, technological innovation, economic globalization, and digitized communication and publishing. Many scholars identify the digital age as the most important change in human culture since the invention of the printing press circa 1440. Translation is at the core of this change, argue leading translation scholars such as Michael Cronin, who wrote in his 2013 *Translation in the Digital Age*: “Students, scholars, and, indeed, anyone interested in the future of human cultures and languages, would be well advised to watch carefully what is happening to translation in a digital age” (2). Scholars Jeremy Munday (2016), José Lambert (Routledge 2013), and Lawrence Venuti (2017) go further in their most recent publications to affirm that there is no longer any doubt that translation studies is an established academic discipline. For Venuti, “translation studies has emerged decisively as an academic field around the world” (1), and Munday declares it is one of the most “spectacular” events to occur in the humanities in recent years (9). Yet in Seattle, with all its obvious resources and potential, organized translation scholarship and training lags.

In summary, I arrived home in Seattle hoping to develop my career as a literary translator but found that the training opportunity I sought did not exist. As a long-time digital media innovator and entrepreneur, it occurred to me fairly quickly that if the scholarly opportunity I was looking for didn't exist, I would somehow have to create that opportunity. It was at this moment that I was introduced to the concept of Public Scholarship, through my investigation into the UW Spanish & Portuguese Department's new PhD in Hispanic Studies degree program.

The program's description intrigued and inspired me; its students could choose to develop an alternative dissertation project beyond the traditional monograph, and students would be encouraged to collaborate with the Simpson Center for the Humanities to develop a Public Scholarship approach to their academic undertaking. I learned that Public Scholarship is an academic movement that has emerged in response to changes in society and the economy. Those changes have led half of humanities PhD students in the US to drop out of their doctoral programs because they are "disenchanted by the narrowness of their intellectual and social experiences" (Bartha and Burgett 39). UW Professors Miriam Bartha<sup>3</sup> and Bruce Burgett, in their 2015 article "Why Public Scholarship Matters in Graduate Education," provide one of the best definitions of the goals and purposes of Public Scholarship by stating that they resist defining it, because that leads to an unproductive debate on what is and what isn't on the list. Instead, they say, public scholarship is an organizing language that serves to align and articulate convergent interests. Flexible and situational, it is driven by the students' motivations and commitments, emphasizing collaboration and information sharing among the multi-departmental cohort. The participants are asked to define their audiences and publics and learn the skill of transforming research "artifacts" into evidence. The result is a "collaborative, integrative approach to graduate education that encourages fellows to build from their strengths" (37) and aims to bridge academic and non-academic accomplishments, engagements, and ambitions, which the authors call the building blocks of a more public university. The role of the public in this process is key. As argued by James Quay and James Veninga in "Making Connections: The Humanities, Culture and Community," published by the National Task Force on Scholarship and the Humanities, the

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<sup>3</sup> Miriam Bartha is director and Bruce Burgett is dean of the School of Interdisciplinary Arts & Sciences, UW Bothell.

role of the “non-professional” humanist is key in Public Scholarship activity: the citizen-journalist, the citizen-philosopher, the citizen-investigator. I add to this list the self-made citizen-translator.<sup>4</sup> Each one of these flexible and situational elements of Public Scholarship made sense in the contribution to my goal and so, after several discussions, with Professors Anthony Geist, then Chair of the Department of Spanish & Portuguese, and Kathleen Woodward, Director of the Simpson Center for the Humanities, and with their support, I chose to pursue this dissertation project in which I define, analyze, and model the practice of translation studies at a major research university as an academic and public good.

*Translation 3.0: Translation Studies in the Digital Age*,<sup>5</sup> is a multi-disciplinary, Public Scholarship and Digital Humanities-oriented dissertation project with three core elements;

- 1) *Translation 3.0: A Blueprint for Translation Studies in the Digital Age*, a monograph evaluating six university translation studies programs and outlining recommendations for institutions considering creating their own programs. The monograph is a traditional scholarly text anchoring the rest of this multiple-element dissertation project.
- 2) *Translation3point0.wordpress.com: Contemporary Spain in Translation to English*, a website and data visualization display. The site contains a series of my own analytical articles and renders previously difficult to access data on Spain’s translated literature

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<sup>4</sup> See McDonough Dolmaya and Olohan for insights into a new generation of multilingual, digitally connected citizen-translators who have been translating for years (without compensation) texts on major digital platforms such as *Facebook*, *Wikipedia*, *Netflix*, and *TEDTalks*.

<sup>5</sup> The “point oh” designation is a technology term that refers to versions of software development. In the early era of the internet evolution, the expression “.0”, or “point oh,” entered popular lexicon to refer to the next version of a product, event, or even a politician. For example, at the 2019 World Economic Forum Annual Meeting in Davos, Switzerland, a panel on technology and the future of the world’s economy coined the phrase “Globalization 4.0.” My decision to title this project “3.0” is based on looking to the future of translation studies, the next phase that builds on the acceptance of translation as an academic discipline and examines the crucial role digital technology plays in the field.

into an attractive, interactive public tool to better understand Spain's literary and cultural output. This aspect of the project is public, collaborative, online, and ongoing, and is a model of digital humanities in action.

- 3) *Can Google Translate Literature?* is a scholarly research article on machine translation that asks two questions: how effective is Google Translate at translating complex literature and poetry, and what are the implications of machine translation for translation scholars. The article makes an interdisciplinary appeal for humanist translation scholars to study and understand the ethical, theoretical, and practical implications of technological development of the discipline.

These are the three formal elements of this dissertation project. I will now put those formal elements into the context of an overall project that embraces public scholarship and digital humanities as well as advocates for translation studies as an important academic discipline to incorporate into the university program. The next section of the introduction will explain that context and illustrate that my dissertation project includes a five-year effort to model how an inter-disciplinary translation studies program might look. To this effect, I define public scholarship and digital humanities in relation to translation studies, and describe the activities that connect them. In the final part of this introduction, I will outline the structure of this monograph on the case studies and recommendations.

As new academic disciplines, both public scholarship and translation studies come under scrutiny over whether they engage appropriate theoretical frameworks and research methodologies. Critics question evaluation methods. Venuti, for example, argues that institutions face an on ongoing challenge to “mediate between research that is largely theoretical speculation . . . (and) the teaching of translation practice . . .” (2017 213). Munday calls this “an artificial gap

between practice and theory ... which ignores the fact that the practice of translation is an invaluable, not to say essential, experience for the translation theorist and trainer” (26).

Munday’s view returns us to the notion of practice as scholarship, one of the principle elements of public scholarship. In the 2008 report *Scholarship in Public: Knowledge Creation and Tenure Policy in the Engaged University*, by Julie Ellison and Timothy K. Eatman and published by the *Imagining America* consortium, the authors offer guidelines for evaluating new kinds of scholarly activity for the purposes of awarding faculty promotion and tenure. The guidelines are also useful for evaluating a public and digital scholarship-related dissertation such as this one. According to Ellison and Eatman, Public Scholarship can: 1) appear in different forms of creating knowledge about, for and with diverse publics and communities, 2) contribute to the public good, 3) yield a continuum of scholarly and creative artifacts of public intellectual value, 4) exist “on a continuum” with traditional scholarship, 5) combine research, teaching, creative activity, and publication, and 6) include such output as policy reports, oral histories, and work for a non-academic audience.

Public scholarship advocates argue that the best way to define the discipline is to highlight successful projects. Ellison and Eatman list the following as best practice examples of civic agency and scholarly continuum by faculty working toward promotion and tenure: A multi-institutional symposium on slavery in America that led to the publication of a book; the creation of a new theater at U-Mass Amherst to stage works of world theater; Animating Democracy Initiative, a grant-funded project in arts as civic discourse; an urban design and historic preservation project that resulted in a book by UW professor Gail Dubrow about preserving Japanese artifacts in key West Coast cities; a teachers-as-public-scholars project in Georgia to

work with K-12 teachers; and the Free Minds project in Austin, providing low-income adults with access to college level humanities courses.

Following Ellison and Eatman's lead, the following is a series of definitions of the projects and activities that constitute public scholarship in my dissertation project over the course of my studies. To start, the Translation 3.0 project, and its diverse elements, meet the standards described above. The monograph *Translation 3.0: A Blueprint for Translation Studies in the Digital Age*, aspires to provide guidelines to a future translation studies program at the University of Washington or another R1 university creating knowledge for communities on and off campus. The website *Translation3point0.wordpress.com* yields a continuum of scholarly and creative artifacts of public intellectual value by making public, transparent and easy access to a unique dataset along with explanatory articles on which of Spain's authors and poets are being translated into English, by whom, and who's publishing them. I will continue to update and publish to this site even after this dissertation project is completed. As with a traditional scholarly dissertation, this thesis project has continuity and community. Woodward writes: "Communities are formed around questions; they are communities of the question. In the humanities, inquiry adds context that ever widens and deepens; . . ." (117). It is my intention that *Translation3point0.wordpress.com* is just the beginning of a community that will expand and extend the inquiry into translation issues over time. In addition, it is my hope that *Can Google Translate Literature?*, which I will submit for publication in a scholarly journal after my dissertation is complete, will spark a discussion about introducing technological literacy into translation studies programs. As fast-changing technologies such as Artificial Intelligence bring continued change and uncertainty, it is more important than ever to connect humanists and technologists on campus.

Beyond the three elements of my formal dissertation project lie an array of additional innovative public scholarship related activities that I have developed over the course of my PhD program. I detail those activities here because they are the walls to the foundation provided in the Blueprint. Throughout my five-year program, I have purposefully *modelled* the activities of a translation studies program in support of my own educational experience but also in the service of others interested in translation practice and research on and off campus. I have been encouraged in this process thanks to the flexibility and creativity of the Spanish & Portuguese Department in approving this new kind of dissertation and thanks to the active support of the Simpson Center with funding and infrastructure. These are the activities:

With generous funding from the Simpson Center for the Humanities, I created the 2018-2019 Multi-Disciplinary Translation Studies Graduate Research Cluster (GRC)<sup>6</sup>. The goal of the Translation GRC is to identify translators and translation scholars on campus and help forge a community among us that could then take the next steps toward creating a UW translation studies project. The group includes UW graduate students, undergraduates, and faculty. Monthly meetings are well-attended and enthusiasm is growing. Guest speakers are drawn from campus, industry, and the public. Renowned Russian-to-English literary translator Marian Schwartz attracted a large cross-disciplinary audience as well as members of the public. AmazonCrossing editor Dr. Elizabeth DeNoma, who holds a doctorate in Scandanavian Languages and Literature from the University of Washington, spoke to a cross-section of graduate students and faculty about the value of having a PhD for working in industry and in particular for her role in literary translation publishing. Other speakers have included UW scholars sharing their research and experience, such as Dr. Cynthia Steele, both a professional literary translator and UW translation

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<sup>6</sup> <https://simpsoncenter.org/projects/multi-disciplinary-translation-studies>

professor; Dr. Zakiya Hanafi, an affiliate professor in the UW Department of Human Centered Design and Engineering; and Dr. Noah Smith, a UW professor of artificial intelligence and expert on natural language processing and machine translation. All of these speakers expressed enthusiasm for the future development of a translation studies initiative at the UW, and the Translation GRC members have begun discussing options for developing an initiative based on the one launched in November, 2018 by Yale University.<sup>7</sup>

In the fall of 2016, I co-founded the Northwest Literary Translators (NWLTL) working translator peer group and an offshoot of the Northwest Translators and Interpreters Society (NOTIS), a professional organization supporting translators and interpreters with job referrals, training and networking. The NWLTL's goal is to provide members with a sense of community, professional information, creative feedback and learning opportunities that will help us grow in our profession. Members include aspiring literary translators and published literary translators, some of whom travel from Oregon, Southern Washington State and British Columbia to attend. The group has grown steadily over two years from a handful of participants at events in early 2017 to crowds of 30 to 60 attendees at monthly gatherings, depending on the speaker. We now have 83 members, including several UW translation scholars, participating in discussions on our member-only Facebook group. The monthly meetings are open to all and have been a source of learning, professionalization and growth for the members. The events have tapped into a rich vein of literary translation expertise in the Seattle area. Many of our members are successful, published literary translators with much wisdom to share with others. We hold "Feedback Forum" meetings where participants can share their work-in-progress and get expert feedback. Events have included a panel of local literary publishers with AmazonCrossing, Chin Music

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<sup>7</sup> See Yale case study.

Press, Wave Books, and Fantagraphics Publishing. Seattle Opera is one of the few opera companies in the nation to have its own in-house translator, Jonathan Dean. Dean's title is "dramaturg" but his role for the last 20 years has been to translate opera scripts into English, mostly for display on supertitles that display above the stage, but also sometimes for singers to perform in English. His work has resulted in an extensive library of translations that are leased to other opera companies that don't have the luxury of their own "dramaturg." Dean spoke to more than 60 rapt attendees at a NWLT gathering as he described the process of translating the words of an opera and making the words fit the supertitle screen while at the same time matching the pace of the action on stage. Amazon's director of self-publishing spoke to another large crowd about how activist translators can make use of sophisticated self-publishing tools to get their authors' voices heard. Two Seattle-based copyright and publishing attorneys answered our questions about contracts and rights negotiations. UW professors, including Professor Geist and Professor Richard Watts of the Department of French & Italian have been popular speakers at the meetings held at David Brewster's Folio Athenaeum membership library in the Pike Place Market. The audiences for these events often include individuals who are simply interested in how fiction, poetry, comics and opera make their way from their original languages to entertain and delight them in English. A strong network of connections has already been forged between the UW GRC community and the professional NWLT peer group.

Since 2017, I have been collaborating with the UW Continuum College (CC) in the development of a UW Translation Certificate. The conversation began with the exploration of a general translation certificate, but after we surveyed working translators in the Northwest, the focus quickly narrowed down to supporting medical interpreters who were the largest group of responders and expressed the highest need for ongoing training in new health care vocabulary,

ethics of interpreting and technology tools. The Continuum College is in the process of evaluating different course configurations for a UW Certificate in Health Care Interpreting, in consultation with local hospitals and agencies that license such interpreters, and institutions that use medical interpreters. This project, as it evolves, could be a model at the UW for developing self-sustaining continuing education approaches to offering translation certificates.

I produced a literary translation to earn my UW Master's Degree in Hispanic Studies (2016). The degree was awarded based in part on my translation of an excerpt from *Alguien dice tu nombre* (*Someone Speaks Your Name*), a novel by the prestigious Spanish poet and director of the Cervantes Institute Luis García Montero. I accompanied my translation with a lengthy monograph in Spanish analyzing how the poet's poetic voice "translated" into his prose writing style and detailing my approach to the translation work. Translation of a text without accompanying annotation<sup>8</sup> and analysis is still not accepted as scholarship in many universities. The subject was addressed at the 2018 American Literary Translators (ALTA) Conference by a panel on translation and academia. Panelists from several university shared anecdotes of being required to write scholarly monographs alongside their translations in order to get promotion and tenure, or to complete requirements for a Master's degree or doctorate. One full professor admitted that she had waited until winning tenure before being able to focus on translation as scholarship, but added she thought things were changing slowly.<sup>9</sup>

In June, 2016, I won a place at the prestigious Bread Loaf Translators' Conference in Middlebury, Vermont and, again with some financial support from the Simpson Center, I spent

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<sup>8</sup> Esther Allen makes a convincing argument in favor of translation as scholarship in her comparison of translation and scholarly annotation of a text (2013).

<sup>9</sup> American Literary Translators Association (ALTA) Conference, October 2018. "Don't Wait for Tenure to Translate: Building Platforms for Literary Translation in the Academy," panel on pushing for recognition of translation as scholarship.

seven days studying under award-winning translator and translation scholar Esther Allen. An excerpt from the work I produced there was later published in *World Literature Today* (King 2015).

All of the activities described above are acts of public scholarship. They create knowledge about, for and with diverse publics and communities, contribute to the public good and combine research, teaching, creative activity and publication. In the absence of more formal translation courses, I sought out every opportunity to participate in translation classes, seminars, guest lectures, and book presentations. There were not many activities over five years, but I was able to take advantage of whatever was offered. In a graduate course on literary translation taught by Prof. Cynthia Steele, I translated a García Montero poem that was published later by *World Literature Today* (King 2016). In October, 2016, I participated in the UW Department of Comparative Literature's conference and graduate seminar titled *Teaching World Literature*, sponsored by the Simpson Center. The goal of the conference was to discuss the development of a new undergraduate major in world literature in view of declining undergraduate enrollment. While the conference and graduate seminar did not specifically focus on translation, it became part of the discussion because obviously comparative literature departments could not exist without it. In my short position paper for the graduate seminar, I argued for the value of an interdisciplinary focus on translation as a unifying element of a new undergraduate program on world literature. Throughout my graduate studies, I focused on deploying different translation theories and methodologies in research papers even for non-translation-related classes in my Hispanic Studies coursework. I wrote one research paper for a course on Spain's "Generation of '27" pre-Civil War surrealist literary movement using gender and queer theory to analyze five English translations between 1940 and 2008 of Federico Garcia Lorca's poetry collection *Poeta*

*en Nueva York (Poet in New York)*. My paper “En traducción: Evolución de la voz ‘queer’ en el poema ‘Oda a Walt Whitman,’” (“The Evolution of the Poet’s ‘Queer’ Voice in the Poem ‘Ode to Walt Whitman’”) examined the different ways in which Lorca’s translators choose to ignore and devalue the homoerotic elements of his work and how those choices evolved over the years in response to societal changes.<sup>10</sup> The methodology was a combination of close reading and queer theory. In a core course on Spain’s medieval masterpiece by Juan Ruiz, the Archpriest of Hita, *Libro de Buen Amor (Book of Good Love)*, my professor, who had no background in translation studies, generously supported my wish to develop a qualitative analysis comparing the only five existing English translations of the title. It was a shock to discover that this cornerstone of Spanish literature was not translated into English at all until 1933, some 600 years<sup>11</sup> after it was first published, that only five translations existed, and that no new English version has been undertaken since 1978. This discovery contributed to my determination to advocate for better tracking and understanding of Spain’s history of literature in translation through my website *Translation3point.wordpress.com*.

At the February, 2018 UW Praxis Conference “Translation Practice: Negotiating Differences,” sponsored by the UW English Department, I was invited to present a summary of my research on Google Translate as a tool to translate literature.

I launched *Translation3point0.wordpress.com* in the fall of 2017 and have been updating the site with new data and articles analyzing the data for the past year. I’ve presented the database, and my analysis of what it shows, to translation scholars at the University of León in

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<sup>10</sup> “When trying to determine the reception of a literary piece of writing at a particular moment in history, an analysis of its translations into other languages serves a critical function, because the choices translators make are another way to clarify a text’s relationship to the world,” (Kramer 527).

<sup>11</sup> By contrast, *Don Quixote de la Mancha*, Spain’s defining masterpiece novel by Miguel de Cervantes, was translated into English and was being widely distributed around Europe just seven years after it was published in its original Spanish in 1605.

Spain, to the NWLT group, and to the GRC group on the UW campus, as well as promoting it at the ALTA Conference in Bloomington, Indiana in October of 2018. My data analysis demonstrates that new voices are emerging from the Iberian Peninsula, especially in under-represented languages such as Catalan, Galician, Basque, Arabic and Hebrew in addition to Spanish. The data suggests the English-speaking world is starting to get a taste of the full range of Spain's rich cultural and literary heritage through the publication of fiction and poetry titles in English. This illustration of the trend toward growing publisher interest in the lesser-known languages and cultures of Spain in translation to English reflects an ongoing parallel debate in academia about how Iberian Studies is understood. In a research report for the Cervantes Institute at FAS Harvard, Spanish scholar Esther Gimeno Ugalde positions Iberian Studies as an emerging field in the twenty-first century, defined by an attempt to reframe the previous theoretical focus on a monolingual (Spanish) and centralized (Madrid) cultural and linguistic entity. Instead, the evolution toward a new Iberian Studies represents an alternative paradigm "that opens up new polycentric perspectives that encompass aspects of literature, culture, and language that have been historically relegated to marginal positions" (4). Thus, my research into publishing trends in Spain's poetry and fiction in translation becomes part of a larger conversation about and exploration of new trends in Iberian scholarship.

All of these activities and outputs are examples of "yield on a scholarly continuum," and they contribute, block by block, to the foundation of a translation studies experience at the UW, even before a formal program is created.

Simpson Center Director Kathleen Woodward, in her 2009 article "The Future of the Humanities: In the Present and in Public," describes the characteristics of successful Public Scholarship projects. What they have in common, she says, is that they champion

experimentation, innovation, commitment, and passion and they advocate for social justice through scholarship. My work toward this dissertation over the last five years has multiple, interdisciplinary pieces linked by my passionate belief in the inevitable role of translation studies in the future of all top American universities and my commitment to contributing to an inclusive, collaborative and supportive translation studies environment in higher education.

This monograph, *Translation 3.0: A Blueprint for Translation Studies in the Digital Age*, describes and analyzes six university translation study programs - five in the U.S. and one in the U.K. – each chosen because it illustrates some of key elements in the constellation of choices when developing an approach to translation studies. The universities include the British Centre for Literary Translation (BCLT) at the University of East Anglia (UEA) in Norwich, U.K., University of Rochester’s (New York) Translation Studies program, Literary Translation at Columbia (LTAC) an MFA degree in Manhattan, Translation Studies at the University of Texas/Dallas, and Princeton University’s undergraduate Translation Studies minor. The BCLT, UT/Dallas and LTAC are longstanding programs while the others are relative newcomers. Many universities have developed translation programs over the last 15 years in particular, some of which will be mentioned in comparison with these case studies. But there are too many programs, and too many being added continually to provide full accounting in this project. PEN America’s listing of U.S. university translation programs is dated November, 2012 and half of the case studies in this paper are not included. This is an academic discipline in full flux and change, so the best approach to understanding the evolution of translation studies programs is to categorize and define them.

The recommendations and guidelines section is divided into three sections. “Infrastructure” addresses elements such as research methodologies, organizational placement,

and pedagogical practices: people, place and policy, the very basics of defining what translation studies means, who teaches it, to whom, and how. “Degrees” offers a structured approach for thinking about audiences for level and types of degrees, minors, specializations, certificates, and seasonal courses, online and in person for translation studies. Drawing on the examples in the case studies, this chapter suggests approaches that seem to have worked for institutions at different stages of development in translation studies. “Community” defines publics on and off campus that are available to support translation research, training, and practice. The definition of public can range from on campus research groups to partnerships off campus with the private sector and professional non-profits, print, and online publishing activities, joint conferences, awards, internships, speaking/listening opportunities and more. Successful community models from the case study programs are organized into categories and assigned priorities according to institutional goals. The *Blueprint* concludes with a series of recommendations and observations that I hope will be useful as a foundation for building new translation programs.

“Mushrooming,” “booming,” “proliferating,” “exploding” are just some of the terms used by scholars and media alike to describe the growth of interest in translation and translation studies during the first two decades of the twenty-first century. Much of this interest is sparked by technology-driven change in how humans learn and communicate. We are all now “people of the screen” as described by futurist author Kevin Kelly (88). Our daily interaction with others is increasing negotiated through technology. We consume text, images, and sound instantly and constantly, and we communicate with others both on an intimate scale through private messages and on a mass scale through social media. We learn through the screen, we project our image of ourselves through the screen, we form our understanding of the world through the screen. The technology acts as silent mediator and translator for our communication and access to

knowledge, giving new meaning to Venuti's notion of the translator's invisibility (1995). In his frequently cited 1995 book on the history of translation, Venuti identifies efforts in the twentieth century to emphasize the "fluency" of translated texts into English at the expense of preserving the cultural impact of the original, an effect he termed as "domesticating." The result was an erasure of the fact that the work was translated, leaving the translator "invisible." In the twenty-first century, computer algorithms are seamless, ubiquitous and invisible translators for human interaction, and knowledge creation and sharing. These kind of technologically-driven changes in human society are profound. As famously detailed by scholar and philosopher Walter Ong in his 1982 *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word* technology no less than changes the way the human brain works. Ong describes how in oral cultures, knowledge had to be memorized to be preserved. Knowledge consisted of what you could remember. Thus, knowledge was organized in ways that were formulaic and aggregative, rather than analytical, in order to retain wisdom and produce effective community administration (35). By about 400 B.C.E, however, the Greeks had incorporated a dramatic new technology into their society: writing.<sup>12</sup> The ability to capture and preserve thought and knowledge through written text "freed the mind for more original, abstract thought" (35). Writing requires a sense of continuity, Ong writes, and focuses the mind on moving ahead because it is always possible to stop and look back. History took on greater meaning as information that was written down didn't change, and began to be revered. Ong famously points out that Plato in the *Phaedrus* and the *Seventh Letter* railed against writing in the same way that some bemoaned the advent of the computer. "Writing,

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<sup>12</sup> "Writing is in a way the most drastic of the three technologies. It initiated what print and computers only continue, the reduction of dynamic sound to quiescent space, the separation of the word from the living present, where alone spoken words can exist" (Ong 91).

Plato has Socrates say in the *Phaedrus*, is inhuman, pretending to establish outside the mind what can only be in the mind. It is a thing, a manufactured product. Secondly, Plato's Socrates urges, writing destroys memory...writing weakens the mind" (78). Ong goes on to point out that the invention of printing inspired the same intellectual and societal angst. He quotes Italian book printer Hieronimos Squarciafico in 1477 saying that the "abundance of books make men less studious." Ong nicely sums up the irony of these criticisms: "Once the word is technologized, there is no effective way to criticize what technology has done with it without the aid of the highest technology available."

As we live through another period of technology-driven change, equal to the introduction of writing and the printing press in its tumultuous effect on human society, it is critical to acknowledge the central role of translation in global communication, examine it carefully through robust scholarship and manage it ethically through translator training. I am confident that most if not all R1 universities in the U.S. will soon develop their own approaches to this important field of study. It is my hope that this dissertation project contributes to that process.

## **PART ONE: UNIVERSITY CASE STUDIES**

### Introduction:

This thesis examines six translation studies programs at universities in North America and the United Kingdom to show the range of what's currently on offer and to frame options for the creation and development of a new university-level program here in Seattle or elsewhere. Each track is well-known in translation circles and I analyze how they serve the needs of current students and of their pertinence to scholarly interest in translation studies. They are: The British Center for Literary Translation (BCLT) and Translation Studies at the University of East Anglia (UEA) in Norwich, U.K.; Literary Translation at Columbia (LTAC), part of Columbia

University's MFA Program in Manhattan; The Center for Translation Studies at the University of Texas/Dallas, the University of Rochester's MA in Literary Translation in upstate New York, Stanford University's undergraduate minor in Translation Studies in Palo Alto, California, and the recently-developed Yale MacMillan Translation Studies Initiative in New Haven, Connecticut. Some of the programs have been around for many years. The BCLT (1989) and Translation at UT/Dallas (1980) were both founded during a period in the twentieth century when translation theorists were just beginning to consider translation studies "as a separate discipline, overlapping with linguistics, literary criticism, and philosophy, but exploring unique problems of cross-cultural communication" (Venuti 2012 185). These two precursor programs have led the way in translation studies but have also had to adapt as the discipline has swiftly evolved in the twenty-first century. The rest of the programs outlined here have come into their own in the twenty-first century amidst changes wrought by technologies such as social media and digital publishing, and a globalized economy and mass migration. This has led to new interest in translated literature from readers and publishers but also from aspiring student translators seeking training and degrees. This interest has paralleled substantial changes in higher education where funding is shrinking, student debt is increasing, and students – undergraduate and graduate – increasingly seek to take charge of their own education. Each of these programs has much in common with the other, but at the same time has developed its own niche targeted to both the strengths of the institution and its faculty and to the interest of its students. The commonalities are important because one way or another, all these programs have built a successful foundation for translation studies. The common characteristics are: the influential founder(s), the socio-economic context, geography, community, and degrees. Each of these six translation studies programs demonstrates success in some areas listed above, but in different

ways. In order to effectively illustrate both the commonalities and the differences, I have analyzed each according to the characteristics above, and then grouped the programs together according to the type of program they offer:

**MA Translator Training Programs:** This is the most frequently found program, offering a one or two-year specialization designed to help a student start a professional career as a translator or for a role in the publishing industry. In this category I profile BCLT (which also supports PhD students under the auspices of the school of Literature, Drama and Creative Writing at UEA) and the University of Rochester (UR also offers an undergraduate certificate in translation studies, focused on the artistic, technical, and commercial aspects of translating).

**MFA Writing Programs:** These are programs that embrace translation as an artistic endeavor of interpretation and either don't teach or de-emphasize research, theory, and technical training. Literary Translation at Columbia (LTAC) falls solidly into this category, although other programs profiled here, such as the University of Rochester, also offer creative writing courses for translation studies students.

**PhD Programs:** The UT Dallas Center for Translation Studies last year celebrated its 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary with its founder, translation scholar Rainer Schulte still at the helm. Its work has evolved over the decades but it has always emphasized research scholarship in addition to teaching translation practice. Schulte is a strong advocate of translation as scholarship and of translation studies as a multidisciplinary field of research<sup>13</sup>. The UT Dallas Center for Translation Studies offers an MA as well.

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<sup>13</sup> See "Digital Translation," Schulte video conversation on translation in the digital age.

Undergraduate minor and certificate: This is a newer approach to translation studies which in the last 50 years had been predominantly an area of graduate work or faculty scholarship, if it existed at all. At universities with undergraduate translation studies certificates, program leaders say that their already multi-cultural and, in many cases, bilingual or multilingual students are interested in developing certified translation capabilities as part of their skill set, and to be recognized for it with official university-sanctioned degrees. This kind of program exists at Stanford University, Princeton, and Indiana University-Purdue University, Indianapolis (IUPUI).

Interdisciplinary Translation Studies Hubs: This is also a newer model of organizing translation studies programs and captures the international and multidisciplinary nature and potential of translation studies. The “hub” designation identifies the central coordinating body or institution at the university which sits outside, or alongside, traditional schools or departments. Yale’s Translation Studies Initiative, which initially offers speaker series and lectures but no translation degrees, sits within the Whitney and Betty MacMillan Center for International and Area Studies established to promote teaching and research in all areas of global cultures and world affairs. The Center provides six undergraduate majors, three Master’s degree programs and four graduate certificates, in addition to supporting conferences, workshops, symposia and events. Similarly, the Oregon Center for Translation Studies is supported by the University of Oregon Global Studies Institute. Their graduate specialization in Translation Studies was launched in 2015 and emphasizes multi-disciplinary research.

## **MA in Literary Translation – Theoretical, Artistic, and Professional Training**

### **The British Centre for Literary Translation**

“...BCLT has always been an unusual, hybrid organization, a kind of ‘foreign body’ doing the larger part of its work outside academia, both nationally and

internationally, but sitting within a university environment otherwise devoted to teaching and research in academic subject areas” (Large 2015).

The translation studies program that first inspired me was the British Centre for Literary Translation at the University of East Anglia (UEA), because of its success in bridging the gap between university-level translator training and scholarship and the world of professional translators and publishers. Because it is a hybrid, it has become one of the most recognized translation centers in the English-speaking world.<sup>14</sup> As a resident of London between 2007 and 2013, I was able to attend many public translation events the BCLT sponsored there. Key points:

- Long-standing MA degree program that adapted to changing industry over time
- Located in the School of Literature, Drama and Creative Writing
- Emphasis on literary translator training and career preparation for students
- Program expanded to include undergraduate training and doctoral degrees
- Geographic location connected to writing and publishing
- Strong community connections and partnerships

#### The Influential Founder

The BCLT was founded in 1989 by award-winning German author and UEA professor of European literature W.G. “Max” Sebald. Long a respected scholar, Sebald shot to international literary fame later in his career after several of his novels, originally written in his native German, were translated into English and won critical acclaim in publications like the *New York Times* and the *New Yorker*. There is scant documentation of Sebald’s reasoning behind the

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<sup>14</sup> A Google search on May 19, 2018 on “British Centre for Literary Translation” produced 21,000 results. A search on “UT Dallas Center for Translation Studies” produced 99 results.

creation of the BCLT,<sup>15</sup> but the timing around the translation of his own novels into English coincided closely with the institution's creation and initial growth. Sebald himself benefited enormously from the translation of his books into English. He was respected, but not acclaimed in his native Germany. His few documented observations about the role of translators seem to suggest he was mostly concerned with improving their work. In an October, 2001 recorded public interview at the Los Angeles Public Library, Sebald answered a question from the audience about what was lost in translation in his novel *Austerlitz*, translated by Anthea Bell. His response did not sing his translator's praises.

“Well, something gets lost inevitably, and the texts are often a pastiche of various levels of time . . . . So, there are elements of fine grain that get lost. And you do occasionally gain something but that is the exception, rather than the rule. Well, it's very easy to lose everything, it doesn't take much: if the prosodic rhythm is not maintained, if the text has two or three blunders or half-blunders on every page, readers very soon get irritated and they don't quite know where it comes from, the problem. But they find that they're not inclined to read on, if it's 'bumpy' in any sense” (Catling 371).

Historically, the BCLT has focused on training literary translators, while supporting research in translation studies as a secondary (though now growing) element of the program. The current BCLT Director Duncan Large writes that Sebald's vision for the center was to recreate the collaborative working environment of the European “residence house,” a set of apartments or small houses where working translators and translation scholars could live close to each other

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<sup>15</sup> Catling, Jo. E-mail interview May 2018. In celebration of what would have been Sebald's 75 birthday in 2019, the BCLT is working to review his papers and surface his views on literary translation. Catling is a professor at BCLT and the co-editor of *Saturn's Moon: W.G. Sebald – A Handbook*.

and interact with peers and with students. Sebald led the BCLT for only 12 years due to his death at 57 in a 2001 car crash just outside Norwich. At the time of his death his novels were being compared to the works of Borges, Nabokov and Kafka, and speculation had begun that he was a candidate for the Nobel Prize for Literature (O'Connell). He made his living as a literature professor but won enduring fame as a writer<sup>16</sup> in translation to English and then through the translation studies center he founded. His path to the role as a leader in translator training arose from his own role as a translated author, rather than from any expressed interest in translation scholarship. From his mid-20s he lived and worked in the U.K. and though he was fluent in English he always wrote his creative work in German. He worked very closely with his two translators Michael Hulse and Anthea Bell (Homburger) and translation to English was crucial to his success. Born in Germany in 1944, Sebald studied literature and graduated from the University of Freiberg in 1965. In 1966, he was hired as a lecturer in German Literature at the University of Manchester. In 1970, he joined the newly minted UEA just a few years after it was founded in 1964 in the quiet city of Norwich 118 miles northeast of London. The young university was in a period of rapid growth and Sebald was a lecturer in German in the school of European Studies where he devoted himself to teaching, research, and writing "formidable" (Homburger) literary critiques of German authors, theater, and writing. His academic career was very successful, and he was named chair of German literature in 1987. This appointment also marked the beginning of Sebald's creative output. Beginning in 1988, he began to write and publish the works that would make him famous. His works in German won him awards and followers among other prominent contemporary German writers (McCulloh xvi) and he began to

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<sup>16</sup> Sebald won a number of German literary awards, including the Heinrich Heine Prize (2000) and the Berlin Literature Prize and the Joseph-Breitbach-Preis, but it was the rapturous embrace of Sebald by U.K. and U.S. critics and intellectuals, in particular American writer Susan Sontag, that brought him worldwide attention (O'Connell)

develop a following in that language. His first work to be translated into English and published in New York in 1996 was *The Emigrants*, a book American writer and critic Susan Sontag called “an astonishing masterpiece” (Gussow) that deployed a “hybrid technique” of sifting reality and artistic creation with the use of extensive research and photography. Sebald called his own work “documentary fiction” (O’Connell). He saw the connection between the “real” world and scholarship because he himself was a poet and novelist who valued research but seemed to yearn for greater expression as an artist and professional writer. He was in this way a cross-disciplinary writer because his novels paced the border between fiction and fact and thus his interest in, and close oversight of, the translations of his work is understandable. His role as leader of the BCLT seems to have been influenced by his determination for translator accuracy. BCLT lecturer and Sebald translator and biographer Jo Catling is preparing a new volume on Sebald to be published in May, 2019 as part of an event to mark what would have been Sebald’s 75<sup>th</sup> birthday. One of the goals of the volume is to document and describe further Sebald’s notions of translation (Catling E-mail). Translation scholars now identify the study of translators themselves using cultural and sociological theories as an important and growing area of translation research (Munday 8), an approach that encompasses gender in translation studies,<sup>17</sup> post-colonial studies and translation, among others. It acknowledges the important cultural environments that influence whether and how work is translated, edited and published and in the case of the BCLT how translators are trained.

### Socio-economic Context

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<sup>17</sup> See Sherry Simon’s *Gender in Translation: Cultural Identity and the Politics of Transmission*.

A number of influences were at play that may have contributed to Sebald's 1989 vision for a literary translation center. The city of Norwich is historically known as a city dedicated to reading, writing and publishing (UNESCO), and in 1970 the University of East Anglia created the U.K.'s first MA in Creative Writing, a program whose graduates include best-selling English author Ian McEwan and Nobel Prize winner Kazuo Ishiguro. By 1987, the Creative Writing program had added a PhD degree while still teaching creative writing to undergraduates. The program also included a residency and combined scholarship with practice. But the most important driver of translation studies growth was the need for translators. In the larger context of Europe, the BCLT was founded as the European Community was strengthening and growing, and in response, so was the demand for translators. The quickly evolving European Economic Community was formalized into the European Union in 1992 by the Maastricht Treaty with the stipulation that official documents must be published in all 24 official languages of the community. This was one of the precursors to the process of globalization that would sweep the globe by the end of the twentieth century and one of the main drivers for European governments to support both language and translation training from the mid-twentieth century onwards. This new political and economic institution could not exist without a vast and highly professional community of translators to facilitate communication.

Sebald designed his original program as a residency for working translators and a program for them to interact informally with UEA students and researchers. Sebald's model for this structure was the Europäisches Übersetzer-Kollegium (EUK or European Translators' College) in Straelen, Germany (Large 6). The EUK was founded in 1978 by Samuel Beckett translator Elmar Tophoven and the local chair of the Association of Literary Translators as a short-term residency to provide access to several apartments, a library study, and gathering space

for otherwise often isolated working translators. The EUK founders in turn took their inspiration from one of history's most influential translation programs (*EUK*): the medieval Toledo School of Translators in Spain, an extraordinary project created by Raymond, Archbishop of Toledo in the mid-twelfth century. The project was supported and funded by Spanish King Alfonso X, which allowed Raymond to recruit a team of scholars from across Europe and the Mediterranean to translate into Latin, Spanish and other "vulgar" languages of Europe the Arabic language works in the rich libraries of the Moorish empire that Spain had just defeated. At the Toledo School during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, teams of translators worked on texts by important Arabic and Hebrew language scientists and philosophers, as well as many of the great classics of Greek and Roman literature, philosophy, science and medicine that only existed in Arabic at the time. Dozens of translators participated. Hundreds of titles were produced. Their renditions of manuscripts into Castilian Spanish, Latin (the official language of the Catholic Church), Greek and the languages of Europe are cited as one impetus for the European Renaissance and a translation exercise that "has no match in the history of Western culture" (Burnett 270). The scholars collaborated with one another, helping and teaching each other as they worked. Their scholarship was based on actively working on translations. It is this model, on an obviously different scale, that the EUK was replicating across Europe and that Sebald sought to implement at the UEA. The socio-economic factors leading to the success of the Toledo School in the twelfth century included the fact that in the twelfth century, Toledo was already a multi-lingual and multi-cultural society and an important center for learning, but the new Spanish leadership, in particular the Church, did not read Arabic and they, above all, needed the translations (Burnett 250). The parallel to a new and growing European need for translators in the nineteenth century is obvious, along with Sebald's own interest in, and debt to, translation.

The BCLT was first created as a summer residency and translation seminar series attached to, but outside, the academic institution.<sup>18</sup> Over the years the program has evolved and is now described on its website as a “research centre” embedded within the School of Literature, Drama and Creative Writing that supports a program of PhD research and undergraduate courses. This is now a “hybrid” approach, embracing vocational training for literary translators as well as traditional scholarly research. Large describes it as dedication to the translator, the scholar, and to the reading public, and a commitment to developing new audiences and readership for translated literature. Today, the program has five goals: 1) professional development for translators, with an emphasis on jobs, 2) creation of new audiences for literature in translation, 3) information and advice, 4) public awareness of literary translation, and 5) generating and encouraging academic debate. “I believe that this hybrid role has been BCLT’s main source of strength, so although my brief is now to develop research strength in translation studies, I certainly don’t see this as separate from the task of fostering literary translators, and indeed I want to argue that the two sides of BCLT’s activity—the university environment and the public programme work—have been mutually reinforcing,” Large said in a 2017 speech to a women’s college in South Korea (2). Large ties Norwich’s thriving writers’ culture, especially the successful campaign by the Norwich Writers Centre (now the National Centre for Writing) to win a designation for Norwich as a UNESCO City of World Literature in 2012, to the success of the BCLT and its richness as a center for the study and practice of literary translation. Large’s sees his own brief as taking the organization to the next level, to “orientate the BCLT more towards the role of an academic research centre and prioritise the goal of ‘generating and

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<sup>18</sup> Currently the BCLT fulfills Sebald’s original vision with a three months’ residency for translators from India funded by Charles Wallace Trust (Large 6).

encouraging academic debate” (1). What has always been a public-facing and working translator program is also developing a more robust program on the history of translation and translation philosophy.<sup>19</sup> Large also argues forcefully that his concept of “fostering literary translators” encompasses translators on and off campus. In that, he mirrors the Public Scholarship movement in the U.S. which is responding to the changing needs of students, communities and universities by striving to connect them. Professionals and academics enrich each other’s work, Large says. As undergraduate interest in studying languages declines, interest in literary translation among undergraduates has risen dramatically as both undergraduates and graduates seek degrees that can help them get jobs as translators of multilingual websites, computer games, films and video series subtitles (Large 2). Global migration and students traveling to study has led to undergraduates who are already bi-lingual, bi-cultural, or multi-cultural. They are less interested in learning new languages than learning what to do with the ones they already know, including getting credit, and hopefully employment, for them.<sup>20</sup>

## Geography

Norwich, a city of fewer than 200,000 people, won global recognition when it was named a UNESCO City of World Literature in 2012. Location is one of the determining factors for the direction in which a program of study develops. Frances McCue, Seattle poet and literary entrepreneurial founder of the writers’ hub Hugo House, has written that a “space is where an idea takes root in real terms.” If that is so, then Norwich as a city created the space for the success of the literary translation hub that the BCLT has grown to become. In its award

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<sup>19</sup> “The retreat of Modern Languages is counter-balanced to some extent by the rapid rise of Translation or Translation Studies as an undergraduate study area . . .” (Large 2).

<sup>20</sup> In May, 2018, the U.K. College and Universities Admission Service (UCAS) listed 14 U.K. universities as having undergraduate translation opportunities. In January, 2019, UCAS listed 15 school.

announcement, UNESCO hailed Norwich as “a place where ideas and the written word have flourished for over 900 years,” citing the first English-language book by a woman to be published, *Revelations of Divine Love*, by Julian of Norwich (1395). UNESCO also cites multiple arts and literature festivals hosted in Norwich, as well as the most intensive use of libraries by residents of any U.K. city. In addition, the Norwich Writers Centre is hailed as a unique collaboration of local government, national government (Arts Council England), and academia (UEA) to fulfill a mission to “put literature at the heart of contemporary culture.” The UEA Creative Writing Program attracts its illustrious alumni. The BCLT brings together writers and translators, as well as “serving as a model for new translation centres in Poland, India, China and Egypt” (UNESCO). Norwich has clearly benefited from historical literary richness and its proximity to London, arguably the publishing capital of the English-speaking world. In turn, the BCLT has benefited from literary and translation events in London. This luck of geography has done much to drive the success of the program. In her 2001 Columbia University doctoral dissertation, McCue described “triggering places,” as a space between internal creative impulse and the physical act of creativity. She described Hugo House, as a triggering place that opens the space between the writer and the community. BCLT’s concentric circles of “triggering place(s)” — their offices, classrooms and translation library, the UEA campus, Norwich City, London and Europe—contribute to the global recognition of BCLT as a successful and influential literary translation hub. “Space . . . is a term for the gap between the spark of an idea, or a creative impulse, and the way an individual or a community acts upon it” (McCue 56). The BCLT models the successful alignment of geography, place, and community.

Community

The BCLT is part of a larger and very active U.K. and European community of translation institutions and activities, such as Literature Across Frontiers (LAF),<sup>21</sup> PEN Translates, the PETRA-e Framework of translation scholars, the European Network of Literary Translators (RECIT) whose member organizations offer translator residencies and resources across Europe, and the *Translators in Schools* program, funded by the Stephen Spender Trust, which trains primary and secondary school teachers in best practices in using translation to teach writing and literature, especially to growing multi-cultural student bodies. *In Other Words*, is a literary journal by and for working translators, published by the National Centre for Writing with close collaboration from the BCLT. The BCLT hosts many speaker events in Norwich and London that are widely attended and commented on in the large and active U.K. translator community. This is key to BCLT's continued and growing success, Large writes. "BCLT is at the heart of a network of national and international organisations supporting literary translator development in the U.K. and beyond, comprising universities, private sector agencies, government bodies and cultural promoters, publishers, charitable foundations and other funders" (9). Large's description of the organization he now leads as the "heart of a network" emphasizes the human and personal sense of the hub around which revolves a community of both people and institutions: "universities, private sector agencies, government bodies and cultural promoters, publishers, charitable foundations and other funders." In other words, both institutional support and funding for programming is crucial to success. The BCLT enjoys support from a variety of organizations at the local level, such as the National Centre for Writing locally and the European Community internationally. Language and translation are important among member nations for

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<sup>21</sup> LAF is a European Community-funded non-profit platform for literary exchange, translation research, and policy debate based at the Mercator Institute in Wales, U.K..

the obvious need to communicate across different languages and cultures. Large was one of the leaders of an EU movement to forge a common approach to training literary translators in particular, called the PETRA-e<sup>22</sup> Framework (Large 8), in which eight university and non-university partners across the region agreed on standards and practices of literary translation education, specifically addressing the role of the university in helping literary translators get jobs in their field. Publications create both physical and virtual communities and play an important role in developing skills and expertise for literary translators in training. Many translation studies programs feature some sort of publication such as print or online periodical magazine or a book publishing imprint and program leaders emphasize the opportunity for their students to learn editing and publishing skills as an integral part of their translation studies. Students in the MA in Literary Translation (MALT) at the BCLT contribute to *In Other Words*, which was launched as part of the BCLT in 1992. In 2015, editorial direction was taken over by the BCLT partner in Norwich, The National Centre for Writing. The BCLT also sponsors the John Dryden Translation Competition for emerging translators as part of their effort to draw attention to new literary translation talent. And finally, conferences, master classes, literary translation summer training programs, workshops, seminars, boot camps and mentorship programs form a core offering and connection to scholars and the non-academic alike, growing the profile of the university hub that sponsors them and contributing again to forging communities of translation specialists on and off campus while improving the work of many in the industry without other training. The BCLT, as one of the oldest and most active of the university translation programs, has long-running and successful examples in all of these categories. Since 2009, the annual Sebald Lecture has highlighted a speech by translators and important writers who have been

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<sup>22</sup> The PETRA-e Framework is a European network of institutions dedicated to the education and training of literary translators. <https://petra-education.eu/>

translated, in recognition of their influence in the field. An annual BCLT internship is brokered with specialty poetry publisher Arc Publications. But the BCLT flagship event is a week-long summer International Literary Translation and Creative Writing Summer School, which has been running since 2000. This summer school program has extended to countries such as Brazil, China, India, Japan, Pakistan and the United States (Large 7), supporting and influencing hundreds of literary translators along the way.

## Degrees

The UEA and BCLT have developed a program with multiple tracks for a variety of students, emphasizing, as Large described, interdisciplinarity and career preparation. There are two BA degrees: one track in Translation, Media and Modern Language, and another in Translation and Interpreting with Modern Languages. In the first track, students spend four years in programs with specialized language study of Spanish, French, or Japanese. Students must spend the third year abroad in a country with their language of specialization at a university that has a partnership agreement with the UEA. Students are required to study translation theory and the process of academic enquiry and can select from modules on media, culture, politics and linguistics. For the second Interpreting track, there is a much greater emphasis on language skills with compulsory language courses and required courses on media, subtitling and dubbing. Students are encouraged to acquire a third language skill from a variety of languages offered at UEA. Students are also required to spend their third year abroad and their fourth year honing their skills in interpretation, subtitling, or dubbing.

UAE offers two MA programs, the popular MALT and an MA in Applied Translation. The MALT is a full-time one-year program or a part-time two-year program with an emphasis on the cultural, stylistic, and theoretical issues of translation. Students can choose to complete the

MA only, as preparation for a translation career, or to lay the groundwork for PhD studies. The program includes interaction with translation scholars in residence, workshops with professional translators, and internships with editors of the school's annual academic translation journal *Norwich Papers*. The Applied Translation Studies degree, also one year full-time and two-years part time, shifts the emphasis on student preparation for jobs in the translation industry. Students choose from three tracks: professional translation, forensic linguistics (for jobs in areas such as law and justice), and intercultural communication. Students develop their own portfolios of work according to their interests and are paired with professionals for guidance on extensive project work. They also receive training in the latest translation technologies and can choose to specialize in interpretation (spoken translation). A wide range of language pairs is offered (always into English). The PhD track in Literary Translation supervised by the BCLT Research Group, founded by Sebald in 1993 to support students who wanted to work both as scholars and as literary translators, a model set by Sebald himself.

The top priority and biggest challenge for the university is to provide the best balance of scholarly experience for students at all levels while also preparing them for jobs upon graduation. "Specifically, persuading students that literary translation is a vocational degree course is crucial to the success of any such program" (Large 3). "It is often difficult to account for the success of a degree program, but I firmly believe that it is the unique mix of theory and practice that has kept the UEA MA in Literary Translation afloat" (4). Large uses "afloat" because literary translation degrees in the U.K. are under pressure while applied or technical translation degrees are growing. Non-literary careers in translation have "mushroomed" in recent years due to globalized products and services in the areas of internet publishing, gaming, subtitled films and videos, and product localization. In his 2015 speech on fostering literary

translators, Large emphasized the “increasing recognition” of translation studies as a legitimate and valuable area of scholarship. In support of translation research, the BCLT sponsors scholarly symposia with titles such as “Innovation and Experimentalism in Translation and Translation Theory” (2017) and “Shakespeare in Translation” (2016), which attract participants from around the world.

What is the measure of success for a literary translation program? If the measure is public visibility and impact, the BCLT program is a triumph. For director Large, the BCLT’s success hinges on the program’s consistent “refusal to divorce literary translation from the vocational and professional sphere” (2015 4). Other factors for success include the fact that the program is embedded within a “thriving” and “prestigious” creative writing program at UEA. Although the BCLT has a number of advantages not available to all universities interested in developing a translation hub, it does model very successfully how to build on existing assets. From Sebald’s idea of a regional translator’s residency, the BCLT has grown to a global influence on translators, translation scholars, publishers, educators, and the reading public. Benefitting from being embedded in a major European research university, the BCLT has much to offer as a model for the importance of partnering with the public sector and working translators, especially its focus on partnerships with the physical community of Norwich, partnerships with other academic and non-academic institutions, and embracing public scholarship, effectively bridging the gap between scholars and professionals.

### **Literary Translation Studies at the University of Rochester**

“Literary translation studies at the University of Rochester provides a multi-faceted approach to the art, technique, and business of translation by combining academic rigor, strong practical training, and intensive professional development

through internships with Open Letter, the University's renowned imprint for literature in translation" ("About" UR LTS)

The University of Rochester is a relatively small (about 11,000 students) private research university located in upstate New York. Its translation studies degree program in the School of Arts & Sciences is just 10 years old, but it is also one of the most celebrated in the U.S. The key elements are:

- Its success: Open Letter Books is a non-profit translated literature imprint of the University of Rochester. Under the direction of publisher Chad Post, Open Letter has focused global attention on the UR Translation Studies program, and is used within the program to provide translators with professional skills and experience.
- Post is the high-profile public face of the UR translation program, through Open Letter Books and the program's digital publishing arm *Three Percent*. As a digital native, he has used his understanding of online communications and marketing, together with his "trademark optimism" (Deahl) to make his publishing operation, and by extension the UR's translation degree program, recognized world-wide.
- Post's development of the *Three Percent Database*, a unique resource tracking new publications of world literature in English has won the program great attention among scholars and the general media.
- Post has attracted influential literary translation and publishing industry figures to Rochester, not normally a literary destination, culminating in UR hosting the 2019 ALTA conference.

- The city of Rochester's location in the region's "Tech Valley" has contributed to an entrepreneurial culture at UR that values and promotes interdisciplinary projects and partnerships with industry and the community.

### Influential Founder

Chad Post is not a translator. He is not a translation "scholar" in the traditional sense of holding an advanced degree in literature. A writer, editor, and book publisher, he is passionate and deeply knowledgeable about world literature, and one of the most influential and high-profile U.S. names in literary translation publishing in the early twenty-first century. Described by *Publishers Weekly* as an "international literature evangelist," (Deahl), Post has become the face of the translation studies program at the University of Rochester. In a perfect confluence of socio-economic factors, Post caught the first wave of interest in global literature in translation when he was hired in 2007 by the UR's Department of Languages and Literatures to become the publisher of the university's new world fiction in translation imprint, Open Letter. The meshing of Open Letter and the Literary Translation Studies program was envisioned by a cross-disciplinary cohort of professors and administrators in the school of Arts and Sciences<sup>23</sup>. They perceived that the way to provide their students with expertise that would get them jobs, would be to require them to develop in equal proportions skills in scholarly enquiry, the art of translation and the publishing industry. In an E-mail exchange, UR literary translation program director Joanna Scott, a member of the UR group that created the program, described the process as highly interdisciplinary and based on an understanding of the students' needs:

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<sup>23</sup> E-mail exchanges (Scott and Post 2018) and phone interviews (Post 2018).

“We had an opportunity to start a small press with an international focus, with support from the University administration. As Open Letter took shape, we set out to build some new programs, and to fortify existing programs, in order to tie the press in with the academic and extracurricular interests of our students” (Scott).

The university hired Post from a previous position as an acquisitions editor at Dalkey Press. In a telephone interview, Post described a moment of serendipity. He said Dalkey was looking to move to a new university and the University of Rochester considered taking it on. But, UR shifted and decided to create their own new international publishing imprint, and hired Post away from his position as Dalkey acquisition editor to run it. In addition to establishing and leading Open Letter, Post launched the website *Three Percent at the University of Rochester*, in which he and others regularly publish book reviews and articles about literature in translation to English. He also created the *Three Percent Database*, a unique resource tracking detailed information about new literary voices being published in English, and he launched the Best Translated Book Award and the *Three Percent Podcast*, featuring interviews and conversations between Post and other publishers, book store owners, translators and authors. Post’s Database is cited by scholars from around the world (Donahaye) because it captures information about new works of translation not easily available through any other library or data completion source.<sup>24</sup> Open Letter has published more than 100 books from 44 countries and 26 languages. Post is a ubiquitous presence, at translation conferences, writers’ conferences, international book fairs, and on frequent posts to his website and social media pages (Post “Three Percent: A Resource”). He has been the focus of traditional media profiles, which invariably describe his energy and passion for literature in translation. He is young, digitally and social-media savvy, and charming

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<sup>24</sup> The lack of translation data is an ongoing focus of my own research (King “Why” 2018).

and accessible in person and online. In October of 2018, he won the Ottaway Award from the online literary magazine *Words Without Borders* for his contribution to cultural understanding through the promotion and publication of world literature. In addition to all of the above, Post also teaches a class on literary translation publishing and helps oversee internships. The study of literary translation at the University of Rochester has been transformed over the last decade by the university's decision to create this program and to hire Post.

Post holds a BA in Language and Letters from Michigan State University (1997) and studied at the University of Rochester Simon Business School 2007–2009 (Post LinkedIn). He is not himself a translator and doesn't help edit the books (he has a small staff for that), but he obviously reads the books, and is the tireless face of a successful program to promote literature in translation. His breezy but informed, straightforward, (and occasionally salty) language is readable and engaging and he has many followers.

### Socio-economic Context

Driven by globalization, interest in literature in translation began to surge in the first decade of the twenty-first century (Venuti 2017 1). This interest coincided with the 2008 global housing crisis and market collapse during which the traditional publishing industry shrunk, merged, and reduced the number of publications produced, in particular literary titles. That gap was filled by a proliferation of small independent and mostly non-profit publishers many of whom focus on niche and specialist areas, such as literature and poetry in translation. The UR decided that the way to build their program in response was to incorporate a translation publishing imprint as part of their program. Open Letter, which launched just a year ahead of

AmazonCrossing,<sup>25</sup> reached a milestone in 2016, celebrating the 100,000<sup>th</sup> book sale, and a total of 78 titles published since launch. The press is funded in part by the UR, but has also been successful securing grants from the National Endowment of the Arts (Art Works, 2014, \$50,000; Art Works, 2015, \$60,000).

There is much to celebrate in the success of Open Letter, *Three Percent* and the Literary Translation Studies program at the University of Rochester. But the use of a literary translation imprint as a cornerstone to an academic program is not without its critics, who question whether the globalization of literature through the translation process is, in fact, a “menace to cultural diversity” (Sapiro 419). Models have been developed to analyze the impact of globalization on culture: world systems theory in which some countries benefit at the expense of others; and the core periphery model which attempts to understand culture through a spatial metaphor—the relationship of the dominant city “center” with the outlying and less-developed periphery. These models analyze “homogenizing effects” and patterns of appropriation. In her research paper on literary translation publishing in the United States and France, French sociology professor and author Gisèle Sapiro finds that large publishers reinforced the domination of English while the smaller literary publishers developed a strategy of resistance by translating literary works from an increasing number of languages, in order to promote cultural diversity” (420). This finding reflects the current policy at Open Letter, where Post and his team focus specifically on bringing under-represented languages, cultures and authors into English.

## Geography

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<sup>25</sup> AmazonCrossing was launched in 2009 with just one editor, Gabriella Page-Fort and has grown to a team of four editors and dozens of contracted translators. In 2010, AmazonCrossing published just two books, while in 2018, it published 45 titles in languages that included Turkish, Dutch, Polish and Swedish (*Three Percent Database*).

It was in part to overcome challenges of geography that UR translation studies program developers chose to create a new curriculum anchored around a non-profit publishing operation that specializes in world literature. Located on the shores of Lake Ontario, Rochester is closer to Canada than it is to the publishing centers of Manhattan. What could the program do to expose their students to world class-translators, writers and publishers who might not be inclined to make the trek up to picturesque city of just over 200,000? The school would bring the world to their campus. “Before we signed off initially (on the creation of Open Letter Books), we looked at the potential costs and benefits and decided we could make this a mecca for the academic study of translation, as well as publication,” said Joel Seligman, the president of the University of Rochester” (Rohter). Seligman, who stepped down as UR president in 2018 after a 13-year tenure, was known as a successful fund-raiser, innovator and avid community outreach leader especially to the burgeoning “Tech Valley”, the state’s answer to northern California’s Silicon Valley (Towler). Seligman sought alliances with startup-technology companies even while he was promoting Rochester as a “City of the Arts.” Rochester’s growing image as an area of technological growth and innovation has contributed to a culture of innovation and entrepreneurial activity, which is in part what led the creators of the UR Translation Studies to embrace the idea of building the program around publishing in print and online.

Post and his *Three Percent* and *Open Letter* publishing efforts have put UR on the map. In 2008, just a year after starting at UR, Post and *Open Letter* hosted the PEN World Voices Festival in Rochester, the first time the festival was held outside New York City, featuring talks by Umberto Eco and Salman Rushdie. In his blog post after the event, Post wrote: “To have these two great writers together on one stage is a rare and special event. This is a wonderful opportunity for everyone in upstate New York” (“Salman Rushdie...”). Ten years on, Post, *Open*

*Letter* and the University of Rochester will host the U.S. literary translation premier event of the year, the ALTA annual conference, in November, 2019. From its origins as an unlikely venue for success in global literature, the University of Rochester has emerged as a hub for literature in translation thanks to innovation, entrepreneurship, and savvy marketing moves by Post.

### Community

“The academics came together to make it happen,” Chad Post told me in our 2018 phone conversation. The success of the UR Translation Studies program is at every level about developing a community, on and off campus. It started with faculty from a variety of different departments joining together to draw up a plan that was supported by the UR administration. This model of ensuring literary translation students are networking and connected into the professional publishing community is followed by the BCLT and, as we will see, in Columbia University’s LTAC MFA program. But one of the strongest connections of Rochester’s Translation Studies program with the national and international translation scholarship community is the *Three Percent Database*. The database makes a start at addressing an important problem in translation studies today: the failure of publishers, metadata companies such as Bowker, and libraries to accurately document and organize information about literature in translation. Very basic information such as the name of the translator or the very fact that the work has been translated is missing in archives. This makes it extremely difficult for researchers to locate editions, evaluate translations, and understand the implications of an individual text or a body of work. Librarians are often not able to provide information about works in translation to researchers because the details have not been made available by the publisher to the metadata service providers, who in turn provide book information to libraries. As detailed in a U.K. report on how publishing data is gathered, processed, and disseminated in Europe, most translation

publishers today are small and frequently non-profit (Donahaye 6). They don't have the staff or the incentive to report detailed information on their titles to for-profit metadata companies, and thus the information doesn't get compiled. Post has tackled that problem personally and head-on: over the last decade, has developed relationships with translation publishers so that they send their data directly to him and he enters into the database himself. In addition to translated book titles, the database includes detailed information about each title, such as the translators' names and gender, publisher information and even the price of the book in translation. For translation scholars investigating trends underlying the changes in how world literature is published and distributed, this database is valuable because the data either doesn't exist or isn't compiled and organized anywhere else and because Post ensures that it is publicly available for use under Creative Commons license. So, for example, it is now possible to track who are the most active publishers of Finnish language literature into English, or how women a decade ago dominated the translation world, but now represent an equal share of translation work with men, while men still dominate the authorship of works in translation (*Three Percent Database*). Post's passion for tracking literature in translation is transparent in this laboriously detailed process, which involved creating the database, entering the data by hand from catalogs and lists he received from publishers, and maintaining the database with some support from LTS interns. In 2017, Post and the University of Rochester reached an agreement with *Publisher's Weekly* for the online magazine to develop a searchable version of the *Three Percent Database* which features the ability for users to write to Post to alert him to errors in the database or contribute their own information to the database. *Publishers Weekly* now hosts the data and displays it with a search engine that makes Post's valuable data, previously only available in downloadable spreadsheets, open and fairly easy to explore. For those seeking to use the data for their own research the

*Three Percent Database* is still available for public use under Creative Commons License, according to Post. It is also this data that underlies my research website *Translation3point0: Contemporary Spain in Translation to English*.

At least one U.K. researcher has called for universities to build on what Post has begun with his *Database* (Donahaye 23), citing evidence from research showing that even the British National Library was inconsistent in its cataloguing of translation information and that in many cases translator name, original language, original title and other crucial details about books is missing (8). Donahaye suggests in her report that since university libraries have contractual relationships with companies such as Bowker, which gather and provide data on book publishing, universities with translation programs might be able to collaborate with each other and organizations such as PEN and Literature Across Frontiers, to further advocate for a community approach to ensuring detailed information about works in translation is available. This is an important area of translation scholarship waiting to be addressed by the growing number of translation scholars.

Post's success in creating a community around Open Letter, Three Percent and the LTS program lies in great part in his ability to develop a digital community as well as an in-person community. He comments extensively on the Best Translated Book Awards (BTBA), an annual award for the previous year's fiction and poetry in translation. BTBA judges are invited to write about the process on the awards pages. Post is highly effective in his use of social media, and active on his *Twitter*, *Facebook* and *Instagram* accounts as well as institutional *Three Percent* branded accounts. He has more than 7,000 followers on Twitter @chadpost and 6,800 on @open\_letter. Open Letter has 7,300 followers on *Facebook* and 1,600 on *Instagram*. Post also produces a regular podcast featuring interviews with translators, surfaces voices that are not

often heard. In January 2019, he featured Jonathan Dunne, owner and publisher of Small Stations Press and the single most prolific translator of the literature of Spain into English (“Three Percent Bonus”). Dunne is a British author, editor, and translator whose publishing company is based in Bulgaria. His story is unique in that he translates almost exclusively from the Galician language and has single-handedly raised the profile of Galician literature for English-language readers. His work demonstrates how globalization and technology allow small publishers to have a big impact on the translation and distribution of world literature. Post spoke to Dunne as part of a month-long series of blog posts about Spain.

Awards create community. The creation of the BTBA, conferred by *Three Percent* and Open Letter, is another successful Post idea that has developed a community around literary translation excellence. The first awards for best book of translated fiction and best book of translated poetry were given in 2008 without any cash prizes. In 2010, Amazon announced it would fund the award with \$25,000 prize money to be divided equally between the authors and the translators. The judging panel changes each year; judges are selected for their expertise in translated literature from a field of book sellers, translators, academia, critics and readers. The awards are covered by traditional media and commented on extensively in social media. Amazon has contributed \$140,000 to date (“Best Translated”). In 2017, out of 500 eligible books, 16 were selected for the long list by nine judges. For Post, awards help break down barriers readers might have toward literature from other countries. “I also think people like prizes, shortlists, trying to guess who is going to win and rooting for either their favorite book, or favorite underdog. It’s fun and helps take translated literature out of the ‘ivory tower’ and helps combat the idea that reading books from abroad is like eating your vegetables” (Alhart).

Students and alumni are a focus of community development for the LTS. The program averages about five graduate students and a dozen undergrad students who work together as interns with Open Letter each year. Some former students have ended up publishing with Open Letter.<sup>26</sup>

Chad Post, an expert communicator whose skills span technology, marketing, literature, publishing and community engagement has been instrumental in turning the world spotlight on the University of Rochester's Literary Translation Studies program.

## Degrees

The University of Rochester offers the following Translation Studies degrees:

- Undergraduate Certificate in Literary Translation (Open Letter internship available)
- Master of Arts in Literary Translation Studies (MALTS) (Open Letter internship required)
- Graduate Advanced Certificate in Literary Translation (Same as MALTS without the thesis)

Course and degree descriptions on the program's website emphasize its interdisciplinary nature and utility for many different kinds of students at different stages of their studies, with options for either certificates or degrees at both the undergraduate and graduate level. The professors who teach on the program are from the Departments of English, Spanish, Modern Languages and Culture, Comparative Literature, Film and Media studies, and Art and Art

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<sup>26</sup> Will Vanderhyden, who has gone on to win a 2016 NEA Literature Fellowship.  
<https://www.openletterbooks.org/products/the-invented-part>

History, reflecting the diverse influences on the courses offered to students. Post believes the program provides value to all students in a way that no other program can:

“It teaches the students global awareness, about their relationship to the rest of the world. It broadens and deepens what people study. If it weren’t for my program, no student would read a book from another language, ever. That’s not good”

(Phone interview, September 2019).

The program description emphasizes the artistic, technical and entrepreneurial nature of translation. All students are taught theory, practice and the business of literary translation and publishing. Students are required to build a portfolio of translations and may choose to intern at Open Letter Books to learn business skills. The MALTS degree requires students to intern at Open Letter, in addition to producing a book-length translation, with scholarly commentary. A requirement for the graduate certificate is at least one course in an area of creative writing, fiction, poetry, screen writing, or other genres, with the goal of improving the translators’ skills as writers. For undergraduates, the LTS program offers an undergraduate certificate in literary translation that falls under the umbrella of the Multidisciplinary Studies Center in the School of Arts, Sciences and Engineering. Working with an advisor, students craft their own approach to their studies by adding a minor or an undergraduate certificate, like the Certificate in Translation Studies. It is a feature of several of the newer Translation Studies program that university administration allows for flexibility and creativity in selection by students of their degree emphasis. Students are working toward traditional and non-traditional degrees, and they are also able to develop specific skills they believe will supplement their ability to succeed in a competitive post-graduate marketplace.

The strategy to create a professional non-profit international publishing operation as the cornerstone of their Translation Studies program has made UR Literary Translation Studies program one of the most visible and important in the country. It is arguably Chad Post's personal force field that is driving that visibility.

## **MFA in Literary Translation: A Writing Degree for Translators**

### **Literary Translation at Columbia University**

“LTAC is not a formal translator-training program; rather, it was created out of the belief that an encounter with literary translation is beneficial to a writer's development and imagination, while conversely the skills involved in writing well are also essential for translation.” (*LTAC*)

Key points at LTAC:

- Located in the Columbia University School of the Arts
- Focus on writing, not on theory, history or research
- Some of the biggest names in translation are adjunct professors
- The program's graduates get published and win awards
- Based in Manhattan, the world capital of publishing in English after London

### **The Influential Leader**

The director of the LTAC is a scholar and prize-winning literary translator Susan Bernofsky. Translation study existed in Columbia's MFA program before Bernofsky took over as LTAC director in 2012, but her international renown and high digital media profile has made this program an influencer in the translation and publishing industry. Bernofsky translates from

the German and is credited with introducing Swiss-German modernist author Robert Walser (1878–1956) to the English reading public. Bernofsky, who holds a PhD in Comparative Literature from Princeton University, has been awarded at least six national prizes for translation. She has served on the ALTA board and as chair of the PEN Translation Committee. As an academic, she was an early adopter to digital media, creating her blog *Translationista: Dispatches from the World of Literary Translation* in 2010 where she writes frequently about a wide range of translation-related issues and events, from sharing information about workshops and conferences to growing interest in children’s literature in translation. In her inaugural post on November 11, 2010, she declares herself a fan of Chad Post’s *Three Percent* blog, but wanted to add her translator’s voice to his publisher’s voice. Bernofsky’s social media voice extends to Twitter as well where she has just over 7,300 followers, and she is a frequent speaker, judge and presenter on the conference circuit. As with Post, but from a translator’s perspective, Bernofsky’s individual reputation and media/social media presence draw attention to the program she leads.

### Socio-economic Context

The LTAC is a writing program for translators at a time when students see opportunities in a digitally interconnected society, Bernofsky said in a telephone interview. “The internet has created a growing interest in creative writing among the younger generation, who are self-propelling and globally connected. We provide the training and structure they need as translators and writers.” Theoretical questions are addressed if they are relevant, she said, but for the most part “they are too abstract for my students.” The students who apply for this degree program see opportunities as artists, she said, motivated by the multi-lingual world of publishing and media they see around them. As with other writers trying to break into their fields in New York, many

of her student translators work as waiters or in other hourly day jobs as they try to get themselves started in literary translation, Bernofsky said. Translation research is at work at Columbia, she pointed out, but in individual pockets and disconnected from the MFA program.<sup>27</sup> A quote on the program website illustrates this perspective: “Is your Spanish good enough to translate (Colombian Nobel Prize-winning novelist Gabriel) Garcia Márquez? The question should be is your English good enough?” says Gregory Rabassa, Translator of *One Hundred Years of Solitude*.”

One success story that illustrates the kind of student the program attracts and launches into translation careers is Katrine Øgaard Jensen, who graduated from the LTAC in 2017 and won the 2018 ALTA National Translation Award in Poetry with her first work of translation *Third-Millennium Heart*, by Ursula Andkjær Olsen (Contros Kearl). Denmark-born Jensen has published poetry, dramatic texts and libretti for operas. She studied musicology in Denmark and Germany and translation in the United States. Since graduating, she has been working as an editor at *Europe Now*, an online literature and culture journal published by the Council for European Studies at Columbia University. This student profile – multi-lingual, multi-cultural, digital natives and world citizens – is typical of the kind of student who attends the Columbia translation MFA, Bernofsky said.

## Community

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<sup>27</sup>For example, Columbia Professor of English and Comparative Studies Gayatri Spivak is a leading scholar on gender in translation. She writes that feminist translation has become a testing ground for cultural meaning. In addition, Columbia’s Barnard College has Center for Translation Studies that sponsors lectures and events for undergraduates but does not offer any degrees or certificates. An undergraduate minor is available through the Department of Comparative Literature. <https://barnard.edu/online-campus-learning/barnard-center-translation-studies>.

Community outreach at Columbia includes an innovative global initiative with partner universities to collaborate on translation projects. *Word for Word* was launched in 2011 and has been directed by Bernofsky since 2013. The program matches LTAC translation students with students in writing programs in other countries who then collaborate to translate each other's work. The language pairs include Arabic, Catalan, English, Finnish, French, German, Italian, Portuguese, and Spanish and American Sign Language. The program has two levels: the virtual workshop where teams collaborate digitally and a funded study abroad exchange. Partner institutions include the Institut Ramon LLull in Barcelona, Spain; the Instituto Vera Cruz in São Paulo, Brazil; the Universidad Diego Portales in Santiago, Chile, and the University of the Arts in Helsinki, Finland. The program helps the students improve as translators but also gets them to “engage with their own language in a new and deeper way through the medium of literary translation and the experience of cross-cultural collaboration” (*Word for Word*). Through publishing partner Ugly Duckling Press, the program produces e-book anthologies of the students' work.

### Geography

As a world publishing center, New York is home to some of the industry's best-known literary translators. Several of them teach at the LTAC MFA program: Edith Grossman and Alyson Waters are adjunct professors. Adjuncts at Columbia are paid well, Bernofsky points out, which is not the case at many public universities. Other translators visit for talks or seminars, such as a panel discussion set for April 2019 with Margaret Jull Costa, a prolific British translator from Spanish literature into English, and Ana Luísa Amaral, a Portuguese poet, author, scholar and literary translator. The networking opportunity for student translators in the program is part of the appeal. Finally, as with Norwich's proximity to London's publishing capital, LTAC

benefits from being located in the heart of a publishing mecca, Manhattan, making top-level networking opportunities and access to jobs appealing features of the program.

## Degrees

The only degree offered is the two-year MFA with a concentration in translation studies. Students may also opt for a joint course of study, combining translation studies with coursework from other MFA concentrations such as theater, digital story-telling and the sound-art program. A sample LTAC course list includes: Susan Bernofsky - *Word for Word* Workshop; Edith Grossman - The Long and Short of it (Seminar); Jennifer Hayashida - Literary Translation Workshop; Madhu Kaza - Kitchen Table Translation (Master Class). The emphasis is clearly on practice: workshops and master-classes rather than lectures and research.

The LTAC MFA is an interesting model for an R1 university because it demonstrates the opportunity to develop specialized programs for targeted students even within a larger research university like Columbia. Translation studies touches on virtually every discipline. Which opportunity is nurtured to fruition depends on the leadership, geography and community available at an individual university.

## Research and PhD Programs

### The University of Texas Dallas Center for Translation Studies

Translation erases the borders between disciplines, fosters interdisciplinary thinking and creates bridges between the Humanities, Art & Technology, and the Sciences” – Manifesto for Translation Studies, UTD Center for Translation Studies

The University of Texas at Dallas (UTD) is a public research university established in 1969 when the founders of computer chip manufacturer Texas Instruments donated the technology-focused graduate research center they had created in 1961 to the state of Texas.<sup>28</sup> Through the 1970s, a technology and banking boom spurred growth in the city of Dallas and its new university (“A Pioneering Past...”). As part of that growth, in 1980, literary scholar and translator Rainer Schulte founded the UTD Center for Translation Studies (the Center), one of the first research-oriented multi-disciplinary Translation Studies programs in the United States. Schulte is still leading the program in 2019.

Key points:

- Launched as a research degree program with an MA and PhD
- Located in the School of Arts & Humanities
- Translation practice as well as theory incorporated at launch
- Schulte co-founded ALTA in 1978 and led the annual conferences until 2014
- Schulte founded and still edits the scholarly magazine *Translation Review*
- Schulte embraced technology and expanded his program as new definitions of translation studies emerged

The Influential Founder

From the beginning, writes Rainer Schulte, he believed that translation studies must be a “constant dialog between practice and theory” (1). Schulte is a unique figure in the U.S. history of translation studies because of his early and consistent focus on creating a multi-faceted translation studies *center*, which at launch emphasized the interdisciplinary nature of translation

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<sup>28</sup> The three co-founders were *Eugene McDermott, J. Erik Jonsson and Cecil Green*.

studies, the value of translation as both an artistic and scholarly act, and the importance of connecting working translators with translation scholars. Translation scholar Lawrence Venuti identifies a handful of earlier translation training courses and certificates developed in U.S. universities in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s, but they were mostly focused on technical translation and interpretation or creative writing (2017 3).<sup>29</sup> What made Schulte's new translation studies ground-breaking in the 1980s was his commitment to an inclusive strategy: translators and translation scholars needed to be part of the same community. To achieve that goal, he launched a scholarly journal, *Translation Review*, as an integral part of the Center. Unlike other translation journals at the time, *Translation Review* would speak to practicing translators, writers, publishers, and even general readers as well as translation scholars. He also launched the American Literary Translators Association, a non-profit peer group of working translators that would appeal to academics who translate. ALTA has evolved into one of the most important membership organizations for literary translators in the U.S. In a 2018 E-mail exchange with me, Schulte described how these three elements worked together to begin to change the way academia and the public viewed translation:

“ALTA helped establish literary translation as a skilled profession. Both ALTA and *Translation Review* changed the way translations were critically reviewed. It has been the mission to see *Translation Review* as the implementation of new ways that were generated also by our translation program and the dialogue of translators of ALTA” (E-mail interview 2018).

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<sup>29</sup> Venuti lists the following: in the 1950s, Middlebury Institute for International Studies at Monterey Masters in technical translation and interpreting; in the 1960s, workshops in literary translation in writing programs at Columbia University, the University of Iowa and others; in the 1970s, the Translation Research and Instruction Program at Kent State University; in the 1980s, Masters in translation for technical texts and interpretation in the Applied Linguistics department at Kent State University.

In the view of his colleagues at UT Dallas, Schulte did nothing less than shift the U.S. perspective toward translators and translation studies. “He, in a very real sense, is the founder of translation studies as an academic discipline. There was a time when translation wasn’t taken seriously. But now, people get tenure for translating. Rainer in many ways singlehandedly fought this battle,” said Dennis Kratz, UTD Dean of the School of Arts & Sciences (News Center). In early 2019, Schulte was still at the helm of the Center and *Translation Review* both of which celebrated a 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary. He continues to innovate. In 2012, Schulte announced a redesign of *Translation Review* and a new strategy that would add translators notes and commentary to every translation published in the magazine:

“No scholar explores the linguistic and aesthetic interaction of a literary text with the same attention to detail and contextual thinking as does the translator. In addition to the reading of a translation, comments by the translator about the act of rendering the work from a foreign language into English will bring the reader closer not only to the foreignness of a poem or a fictional piece but also to the pulse and rhythm of the original language. The insights provided by the translator can definitely enrich the experience of the literary creation for the reader” (3).

Schulte is a German-born academic who considered a career as a concert pianist before opting to pursue his love of literature and translation. He first came to the U.S. on a Fulbright Scholarship and went on to earn a doctorate in Comparative Literature from the University of Michigan. He is also a translator of fiction and poetry from German, French, and Spanish. He defends and promotes translation as scholarship—the act itself as an expression of deep learning and understanding of a text and its cultural context—and is concerned that academia still treats translation and its practitioners as “stepchildren” (*What is Translation?*). For Schulte, in a new

century marked by globalized digital communications, “[t]he translator had to be elevated to being the most important mediator in a world where multiple languages meet each other every day” (E-mail interview).

Schulte is deeply interested in technology and its connection to language, communication and translation. The Center’s website promotes translation as a foundation to study in the humanities but also in “new media,” in particular new technologies that allow researchers to use digital tools to analyze individual works of translation or entire corpora of texts.<sup>30</sup> The Center is currently in the process of building a research group of students and instructors who will begin to focus on research in the area of digital translation, Schulte said in his E-mail (2018). He believes all students must be introduced to technology through undergraduate “workshops on translation in verbal, visual, musical and multimedia.” In addition, he writes, “it will become extremely important to redirect our graduate students especially in the field of the Humanities to acquire the knowledge of computer languages.”

#### Socio-economic Context

As a research-focused program, the UTD Center for Translation Studies, more than the previously mentioned programs in this survey, was influenced by change in translation theory in Europe and the United States. Schulte came of age as a scholar during the 1960s and 70s, a period of dense, European-influenced tide of theories and counter-theories, when translation theory was dominated by the debate over the relative importance of equivalence—accuracy, correctness, and fidelity—in translation, whether it was possible or desirable and how to achieve

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<sup>30</sup> Corpus-based translation studies emerged in the late 1990s as a new translation methodology as computer software programs became available organize and analyze word use and patterns in large corpora of texts. (Munday 291).

it (Venuti 2012 5). The period featured competing efforts to develop a more systematic theoretical approach to evaluating equivalence, led by Russian-American linguist Roman Jakobson and his oft-cited 1959 article “On Linguistic Aspects of Translation,” in which he argues “there is ordinarily no full equivalence between code units” (Munday 58). His writing influenced intense debate on equivalence in the following decades among other theorists such as Eugene Nida who wrote about “seminal concepts of formal and dynamic equivalence and the principle of equivalent effect” and Peter Newmark who wrote about “semantic and communicative translation.” These are examples of the translation studies discourse that featured prominently as Schulte was developing his career as a translator and a scholar.

By 1980, when Schulte launched his Center, it was the start of what would become the decade of “High Theory” for literary translation (Venuti 2016 201). Translation studies was finally emerging as a separate discipline from linguistics and philosophy, and there was a theoretical shift toward what Venuti calls “functionalism,” or the text’s potential to “release diverse effects.” The effects he described could range from pure communication of information to social, political and economic agendas. This period saw the proliferation of new theories of translation in relation to post-colonialism, cultural studies, gender studies, and national literatures studies as theorists battled to develop a set of strategies and practices that would define translation as a discipline in its own right (5). It is amid this flurry of theoretical debate that Schulte launched his Center, *Translation Review*, and ALTA with the declared goal of raising the visibility of the translator and making the discipline of translation more accessible.<sup>31</sup> On his personal website, Schulte writes that he started the Center “to create and implement a new

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<sup>31</sup> Venuti’s much cited and influential *The Translator’s Invisibility*, which details the crucial role of translators in world history, would not appear until 1995.

paradigm for teaching literature and the Humanities and to promote cross-cultural communication (Schulte “Home”). In his E-mail to me, he underlined the importance of connecting to a world beyond academia with clear ideas and language. “In our case, we consider the paradigm of translation an absolute necessity to reorient academic scholarship and thereby also reduce academic jargon” (E-mail).

To understand Schulte’s desire and determination to shift the paradigm of translation studies, it’s useful to consider his evolution as an individual, an academic and a translator. Schulte was a child in Germany during WWII, and remembers being moved with his family from their home into a shelter by American troops who confiscated their home at the end of the war. In a video interview, he describes the refugees stitching together several white handkerchiefs to wave at approaching U.S. troops in an effort to keep them from firing on the shelter (“Stuart J’s Lens”). Schulte’s then 12-year-old older brother ducked American bullets as he stood at the door of the shelter to wave the flag. This experience provides possible insights into Schulte’s insistence as an academic on cross-cultural understanding and communication. After graduating from Dickinson College in Pennsylvania in 1958, he went on to earn an MA in English and French at the University of Mainz outside Frankfurt, Germany in 1962 and a PhD in Comparative Literature from the University of Michigan in 1965 (Schulte “Home”). Schulte is fluent in German, English, French, Spanish and Italian. He also studied in Milan, Valladolid and Mexico City. He is a poet and playwright as well as a literary translator, and he lived through a period when the translator was truly invisible, and the discourse around translation philosophical and remote from the translator and from readers of literature in translation. Schulte initially considered a career as a concert pianist, and studied music in Darmstadt, Germany in the late

1950s. Musical performance as a form of translation is an integral part of the Center,<sup>32</sup> making it clear that the combination of Schulte's personal and professional interests shaped the future of the Center itself. Amidst the promulgation of theories such as French critic Roland Barthes' "The Death of the Author"<sup>33</sup> and the general invisibility of the translator during this period, it could be expected that a polymath such as Schulte who believes that translators are themselves artists and authors would rebel and move to fill in the important missing piece by focusing on connecting the working translator into his translation studies program.

### Geography

Another important contextual factor in analyzing the UTD Center for Literary Translation is the historical moment of growth for Dallas as a city. After WWII, Dallas began to develop as an industrial manufacturing and then technology center; by the 1960s, it was the third largest tech center in the United States (McElhaney and Hazel). The city's population grew from almost 700,000 in 1960 to over 1.2 million in 1990, with growth driven by technology and telecommunications company investment, oil wealth and a real estate boom. In 1974, the year before Schulte joined UTD, city officials opened the Dallas-Fort Worth International Airport marking the beginning of the city's growth as an international travel hub and destination for corporate headquarters and conferences. The UTD is located in Richardson, about 15 miles north

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<sup>32</sup> "The concept of our translation center and translation studies program was generated by finding different interpretive approaches to verbal, visual, and musical texts." (Schulte E-mail).

<sup>33</sup>In his famous 1967 essay, Barthes argued that the reader must liberate himself from the tyranny of the author's identity, and that the birth of the reader must be at the cost of the death of the author. Barthes ideas strongly influenced a generation of literary criticism and this article later sparked an equally famous response in agreement from French philosopher and literary critic Michael Foucault in his 1969 essay, "What is an author?" The American academic Camille Paglia, however, derided the influence of Barthes' essay, writing: "Most pernicious of French imports [into American academia] is the notion that there is no person behind a text. Is there anything *more* affected, aggressive, and relentlessly concrete than a Parisian intellectual behind his/her turgid text? The Parisian is a provincial when he pretends to speak for the universe. Behind every book is a certain person with a certain history. I can never know too much about that person and that history."

of Dallas in the heart of what is now known as the Dallas “Telecom Corridor,” home to hundreds of companies including AT&T, Cisco Systems, and State Farm Insurance (Richardson).

Technology, business entrepreneurship, international connections, and an appreciation and investment in the arts are the cultural context of the geographic setting in which Center for Translation Studies is located. The UTD evolved from a science and technology graduate school, so interdisciplinary programming is part of the institutional DNA.

### Community

From the start, Schulte expressed his intent to forge a community that brought together multiple scholarly disciplines such as literature, the arts, music, and technology, with working translators in the community. He did that in two specific ways: co-founding and directing ALTA and its annual conference and launching the *Translation Review*, which he still edits with the view to embracing working translators and interested members of the public. Both ALTA and *Translation Review* were launched in 1978, even before Schulte had created the UTD Center for Literary Translation in 1980. In his 2018 E-mail interview with me, Schulte described his foundational thinking for the journal:

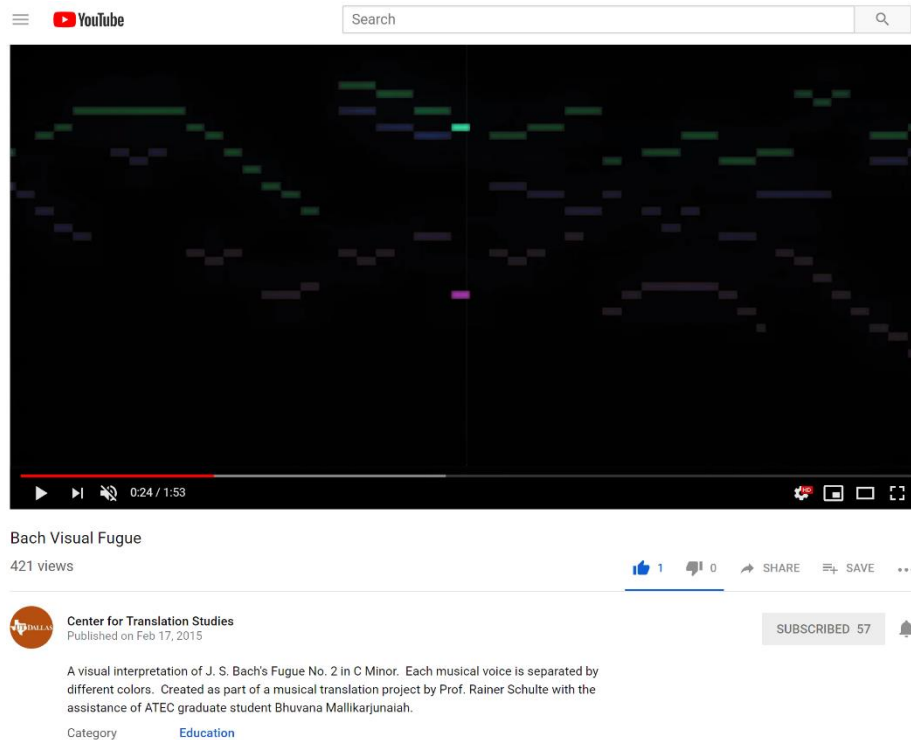
“From the very beginning, *Translation Review* was seen as a medium to emphasize the art and craft of translation, which are seen to develop new scholarly and critical insights into translation studies. One of the primary concerns was and still is not to promote difficult to understand academic articulations so that the review could also become a forum for the general reader and students and instructors of the Humanities and other disciplines. The review was also created to give the voice of the translator a prominent presence which is reflected in the

numerous interviews that were published in the review as well as in separate videos.” (Schulte E-mail)

To achieve that accessibility, Schulte organized the magazine’s content to appeal to a variety of readers: translated poems, plays and novels for general readership, essays on the teaching literary translation, translations with commentary by the translator on the process, articles technology’s influence on the practices of translation, and translations among and between different genres and media, including music and visual arts. The journal currently is made available for purchase online and by subscription in print. All ALTA members receive the print version in the mail. Selected articles and videos from some editions are posted on the Center’s website and on the *Translation Review YouTube* channel, which in January of 2019 had 58 subscribers. The channel features short head shot videos of commentary by Schulte, and full lectures by prominent translators including a 2014 interview with legendary Spanish-to-English translator Gregory Rabassa, the translator of Gabriel García Márquez’s *One Hundred Years of Solitude* from Spanish into English.

Despite Schulte’s vision to embrace digital technology in translation, the Center’s digital footprint is small. The Center’s Facebook page has 316 followers, and the most recent post was in November 2016. By comparison, over 1,000 people follow the University of Rochester *Three Percent* Facebook page and 6,000 people follow the BCLT Facebook page. It can easily be argued that Facebook followers do not necessarily equate to influence and impact. Influential translation scholar Lawrence Venuti has a few dozen Facebook followers, but a search for his name and “translation” on *Google Scholar* produced 12,300 citations in January 2019. Having a voice in the digital conversation is crucial to create an effective twenty-first century community. Schulte incorporates digital research into his program. For example, in 2015 Schulte posted to

the Center's *YouTube* page a two-minute video of a digital project to “translate” music visually using a Johann Bach's *Fugue No. 2 in C Minor* (Schulte 2015). The video shows lights flashing along a scale that matches the tones in the music itself, separating out the different voices. The project is described very briefly, and would benefit from information on how it was developed, what the research question was, and what results were obtained.



Schulte's other important translation community creation ALTA has been extremely successful. Originally operated by the Center for Translation Studies, ALTA is now an independent, non-profit, membership-based arts organization. Membership more than doubled between 2005 with 239 members and 2017 with 717 members (Daum) reaching 820 members in 2018 (Vincent). It is the only organization in the U.S. dedicated specifically to *literary* translation, but since its launch in 1978, it has expanded its definition of the community it serves. Today, according to the organization's website, ALTA serves, in addition to literary translators,

students, teachers, publishers and readers of translation. In 2016, a new category of membership was added, called “Friend of Translation” (Annual Report) which allows anyone who’s interested to join, get access to the members-only community on the website and receive digital subscriptions to *Translation Review* and *World Literature Today*. ALTA has an array of community-building features:

- The ALTA National Translation Award. Established in 1998, the award judges analyze the source text in the original language as well as the translation. In 2015, the Award was divided into poetry and fiction. Winners are announced at the annual conference.
- Website and extensive social media, including the ALTA blog, Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube profiles.
- ALTA guides and publisher database: The guides are short articles advising early career translators the work of translation, book proposals and promotion. The publisher database is used by translators looking for publishing companies that might be interested in their work.
- Emerging Mentorship Program: a year-long program matching an emerging translator with an experience translator on a specific project. The winners of the mentorship win free travel to attend and present their projects at the annual conference. Funders include AmazonCrossing, the Polish Cultural Institute, and the Russian Federation Institute of Literary Translation.
- Annual ALTA Conference, held each year in a different city, typically hosted by a university.

For 40 years, the Conference has been central to ALTA’s community. For the last several years attendance has averaged about 500 people who come from across the U.S. and overseas. The

agendas are packed with three tracks of presentations and roundtables. In the fall of 2018, ALTA41 was held at the University of Indiana, where the program included eight different simultaneous session tracks from 9 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. across four days, interspersed with keynote speeches, poetry and fiction readings, an ongoing book fair and evening entertainment (ALTA41). The range and intensity of programming is difficult to absorb: theater performances of translated plays, a workshop on using WikiTranslate, how to apply for translation grants and fellowships, translation scholarship and how to teach translation, targeted language sessions such as a presentation on translation of Basque and Catalan, gender issues in translation, translating audio for drama, and promoting your work in the digital age, are just a few of the session topics at ALTA41. The ALTA conference is a community helping its members learn, grow, specialize, network and publish.

The ALTA website makes one brief reference to the move away from the UT Dallas Center for Literary Translation, reporting that in 2013 it began its move to “become an independently run non-profit arts association.” As of 2019, the organization is now headquartered at the University of Arizona in Tucson. The move seems to have been good for ALTA. Their 2105 Annual Report states the conference saw 24 percent growth between 2013 and 2015 (“Annual Report”). Schulte, ALTA’s founder, responded obliquely when I asked him about the split by E-mail:

“It was the assessment of the founder of ALTA that the time had come to separate ALTA from the university so that eventually it could live on its own.

Furthermore, the founder was particularly pleased to see the increase of younger translators becoming members of ALTA and they should have an opportunity to make their voices, concerns, and desires heard. It is clear that that aspect of the

organization is flourishing. Since ALTA no longer has the substantial support of our university, it is extremely important that the board of ALTA really pay extreme attention to bringing the endowment to \$1 million. Now that ALTA has moved to a new environment it gives our translation center staff the time to chart some of the new avenues for translation studies in the future, especially translation in the digital age.

In conclusion, one could say that both ALTA and translation studies at UTD have now more freedom to expand their respective missions.” (E-mail interview).

There seems to be a note of concern in this statement from Schulte about the financial security of the organization after losing “the substantial support of our university” as part of the move. In its 2015 Annual Report, ALTA recorded an endowment of \$432,718, up from \$391,812 in 2014, the first year of operating independently, with an overall budget deficit of about \$12,000. Membership, a major source of earned income, was up 23 percent between 2014 and 2015.

As an indication of where translation is going next, look to the venue of the next ALTA conference. ALTA42 will be held in November 2019 in Rochester, New York, home to the University of Rochester Translation Studies Program and, of course, Chad Post’s Open Letter Books and the *Three Percent* website. The conference theme is *Sight and Sound* which suggests a conversation to “attend to the visual, aural, oral, gestural, kinetic, and performative aspects of language and literature that shape translation practice.” Organizers are calling for panels on topics relating to “the translator as performer, the translator as camera,” and sessions that promote the translator’s “visibility in the wider literary field” (ALTA42). The call for sessions emphasizes that conference organizers do not want presenters to read their academic work, but

rather to prepare “talking points and examples based on the practice of literary translation.” The conversation about translators, translation and its role in contemporary society has shifted dramatically from the days in which Rainer Schulte first launched ALTA. In a global, multi-cultural society, translation has emerged on center stage. That stage has shifted away from the Schulte’s Center for Literary Translation, but in doing so it has broadened its reach to wider communities and a new inclusive sense of what translation means. Schulte’s goal of creating a larger translation community in this sense can be judged a success.

### Degrees

The UTD School of Arts & Humanities offer two translation-related degrees, a Master of Arts and a PhD in Humanities. They are described on the website as non-traditional degrees in which the student, in consultation with faculty and advisors from the Center and from the School of Arts & Sciences, are allowed to design their own course of study within one of three scholarly areas: Literary Studies, History of Ideas, or Aesthetic Studies. With advisor approval, students can select from courses in other schools as well. Each student must take six hours in each one of these areas before specializing. MA students must pass a written non-English language exam and prepare a 60-page work of scholarship or a translation with critical commentary to be defended before a committee. The PhD program is designed with flexible hours and schedules, including evening and summer courses to help students graduate more quickly. The program website lists four current PhD candidates and three MA candidates.

UTD Center for Translation Studies founder Schulte helped shift the course of translation studies in the U.S. by making the connection between theory and practice, between academics and translators at a time when theory dominated the conversation about translation studies. Built

on a foundation of interdisciplinarity, inclusivity and the embrace of technological change, the Center provided a home for a nascent interdisciplinary translation studies discipline and its small but growing community. ALTA left this home in 2014 and now, as an independent non-profit, has become part of a larger U.S. community, with ever bigger conferences, new programs and partnerships, and innovative, expansive approaches to the study, practice and research of translation as evidenced by the 2019 ALTA Conference description. It is worth noting that in ALTA's move to the University of Arizona in Tucson, the annual conference is scheduled to be held there twice in the coming years, in 2020 and in 2022 (Swedlund). In 2019, a sense of excitement and promise surrounds the practice of translation and the academic discipline of translation studies. For the UT Dallas Center, however, the loss of ALTA may divert attention, and potentially resources, away from their own activities.

Schulte's vision for a community of translators, scholars, technologists and readers was developed and implemented during the last quarter of the twentieth century. His creation of ALTA, the *Translation Review* and the UT Dallas Center for Translation Studies helped change perceptions about the role of translation in the U.S. on and off campus. But at the time of this writing, heading into the third decade of the twenty-first century, the center of gravity seems to have shifted toward a new paradigm of translation training, research, practice and publishing being led by digital natives, such as Chad Post and Susan Bernofsky. In the digital century, the requirements for technological expertise and social media savvy may be outstripping the ability of longer established translation programs to stay at the center of the action.

### **Undergraduate Degree and Certificate Programs**

#### **Stanford University Undergraduate Minor in Translation**

“The most important thing is to understand your student body and how such a program can serve their needs and interests. After that, the most important thing is to engage faculty from multiple disciplines.” Indra Levy, Faculty Director, Minor in Translation Studies, Stanford University (E-mail interview)

Stanford’s undergraduate minor is an example of how U.S. research universities have begun to take translation studies into consideration for undergraduates. The Stanford minor identifies the new generation of students who are digital natives, multi-cultural and often multi-lingual global citizens who have family in other countries, travel widely, and consume media from many cultures and regions. The translation minor addresses the interests of this generation to prepare themselves to compete for jobs in globalized industries such as communications, law, business and technology. The trend toward offering translation studies degrees or certificates to undergraduates reflects acknowledgement that translation studies is a discipline that, founded in theory and philosophy, also embraces a wide range of research methodologies and pedagogical goals. The Stanford model is also interesting because it is very targeted to one minor degree, not a translation hub, center, or advanced degree program. It demonstrates that each institution can develop a program suited to the needs of that university and its students.

Key points:

- Launched in the fall of 2012
- Offered through the Division of Literatures, Cultures, and Languages (DLCL)
- Mission is to bridge language acquisition with other areas of study and impart critical thinking skills that hone student preparation for any profession
- Eleven students have earned the minor since 2012

## Influential Founder

This program reflects a shift away from the single influential founder toward collaboration among faculty as a path toward new program development. In the twenty-first century, the role of the single influential founder of a translation studies program is ceding ground to a more collaborative, inter-disciplinary faculty-based approach to creating new opportunities for students. At Stanford, faculty in the Division of Literatures, Cultures and Languages (School of Humanities and Sciences), collaborated to develop the Minor in Translation Studies. The single most important factor to successfully launching the minor, was broad collaboration among faculty, according to Dr. Indra Levy, Professor of East Asian Languages and Culture and Comparative Literature and faculty director of Stanford's Undergraduate Minor in Literary Translation: “. . . the only way to achieve an interdisciplinary approach is by means of active and engaged intellectual exchange among faculty. One or two literary scholars interested in translation can't do this on their own” (E-mail interview). Three faculty members worked two years to design the minor and get it approved.

## Socio-cultural context

Levy, herself both a translator and a translation scholar, described two factors driving the creation of the Stanford translation minor: The first is the strong growth in industry demand for trained translators and interpreters in a number of professional areas over the next decade, as reported by the U.S. Department of Labor Statistics in May of 2018 (U.S. Department). Undergraduates perceive this, and at Stanford there is “strong student interest in developing concrete skills” (E-mail interview). The second factor is a growing understanding of how central translation is to global communication. “In addition to foreign language training, serious attention to the ways in which translation effectively shapes our understanding of the world —

both inside and outside the university classroom — is one of the most effective means for breaking away from monolingual parochialism” (E-mail interview). Artificial Intelligence and machine translation, while not part of the Stanford Minor in Translation Studies course work, are an important contextual underpinning to the conversation about translation studies in general, Levy said. “As AI makes further inroads into the work of translation, thereby removing the element of human judgment from the process, the humanistic study of translation will be all the more critical to ensuring that we don’t continue to mistake mere information for real knowledge (E-mail interview).” Levy’s point is important. Human research of machine translation and its impact is critically important, as I argue in my research on *Google Translate* (King 2018) for the reason Levy mentions but also because humanist researchers and consumers of machine translation must understand that, in fact, the human element has not been removed. The human element, including human biases and cultural constructs, are deeply imbedded in machine translation code (King 2018 26).

### Geography

Stanford’s location in Silicon Valley and its reputation for producing technology startups that turn programmers into billionaires make it a draw for students from around the world. Just under a quarter of Stanford’s student body are international students and the number of international students has been growing by an average six percent a year (Stanford np). In 2013, a year after the new minor was launched, the student newspaper *The Stanford Daily* profiled it, in itself an indication of general student interest. It quoted Gabriella Safran, then chair of the division, as saying the timing was right for a minor degree of this kind. “Living here and having this base of students with such diverse languages and living in such a connected world makes us aware of the degree to which our lives depend on translation” (Moore).

## Community

The most important community the Stanford Minor in Translation Studies was created to address is the undergraduate community of language students and bilingual students interested in the role of translation in their career development (Levy). “This minor is a way to give students a context, a structure, in which they can take their knowledge of language further, explore foreign cultures and then do something with it,” Safran told the *Daily* (Moore). The article quoted a Computer Science student as appreciating translation courses connecting his experience with engineering to language and translation.

This program has no website, no magazine, no digital outreach. But because its stated public – Stanford undergraduates – is concise and narrowly defined, the program can be judged successful in understanding, reaching and serving them.

## Degrees

The Stanford Minor in Translation Studies requires language study, literary study, translation theory study and translation practice. Students can then choose from electives ranging from Anthropology and Classics to Computer Science. As a capstone project, students must complete a 20-page translation of a work approved by their advisor or a translation studies research project. The translation does not require additional analysis or commentary.

The program is highly interdisciplinary in that it is offered through collaboration between three divisions at Stanford: the DLCL, East Asian Languages and Cultures (EALC) and the English Department. The goal is to give students from a variety of different fields the ability to understand and grapple with the practical, theoretical and ethical issues brought up by translation in modern culture and industry.

Other universities that started with graduate translation programs have begun to offer degrees and certificates for undergraduates. As noted above, the University of Rochester offers an undergraduate Certificate in Literary Translation, and the University of East Anglia offers a full BA Degree in Translation and Interpreting. UTD Center for Translation Studies does not have an undergraduate translation program, nor does Columbia. In his recent book on teaching translation, Venuti invites a number of translation professors to describe the courses offered to their students. The contributions are arranged by type of degree. Professor Ben Van Wyke writes about teaching in the Undergraduate Certificate in Translation Studies Program at Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis (IUPUI), which resides in the Department of World Languages and Cultures. His course touches on theoretical, philosophical and ethical issues of translation as well as practical ones. In addition to readings on feminist interpretation of translations and postcolonial approaches, Van Wyke's students study the code of conduct of the American Translators Association and get training on computer-assisted translation tools. "The professions of translation and interpreting are never far away from the discussions as the students want tangible examples of how these broad theoretical concept matter for actual translation practice," he writes (Venuti 2017 21). He requires his students to use a variety of machine translation programs such as Google Translate, Systran, and BabelFish to analyze the quality of the translated text. Students also take terminology courses to help them focus on specific fields, including medicine, law, and business. As part of their coursework they must shadow an approved professional in one of those fields for six hours. The UPII Certificate Program is limited to French, German and Spanish language speakers. It requires coursework in grammar, writing, culture, translation history, terminology management and computer applications. The

capstone project is a 20-page translation in the target language and a presentation before their capstone committee.

The difference between these two programs highlights the varying perceptions of students' needs. IUPUI is focused on preparing students for specific jobs, as reflected in the requirement for internships with professionals in the fields of business, health care, legal, and law enforcement. Stanford is supporting students who want to strengthen their major degrees with an emphasis on language and translation. The important point is that the range of possibilities is wide enough to encompass undergraduate student needs in any university choosing to focus on them.

### **The “Hub:” Non-departmental Multi-Disciplinary Translation Centers**

“The Translation Initiative is an interdisciplinary program that promotes the study of translation’s impact in various literary, social, political, business, legal, technological, and medical practices throughout the world. Working with linguists, librarians, computer scientists, business executives, and health care professionals, the Translation Initiative conducts research, presents educational programs, and encourages education in translation at Yale and beyond.” (Yale)

In October, 2018, Yale’s MacMillan Center announced the launch of its new Translation Initiative. Yale, one of the most prestigious private U.S. research universities, has unveiled its approach to addressing the growing interest in Translation Studies: that of a center or hub that serves as an information clearing house, coordinates seminars across different disciplines and departments, and acts as catalyst for discussion and debate about the way forward.

Key points:

- A “center,” not a department, to promote the study of translation
- Distributed or “virtual” program with no central offices
- Managed by a director, co-director and post-doctoral associate with the title Working Group Coordinator
- Mission to evaluate options for developing possible translation degrees
- Sponsors and coordinates lectures, seminars and information sharing on translation research at Yale

The Yale University Translation Initiative is described on the program’s website as a “resource and a catalyst,” which brings together different departments and disciplines around translation scholarship. Its mission, as described by the Initiative’s Working Group Coordinator, Dr. Serena Bassi in a telephone interview, is to construct a community of people who work in translation and make everyone aware of the discipline’s importance. “We have one broad goal, which is leading the institution to understand that there are number of questions that need addressing about human migration and cultural globalization, about justice, access, literacy, citizenship.” The launch of the Initiative was a year in the making, begun by Translation Initiative Director Alice Kaplan, chair of the Yale French department, a translator from the French and a scholar of translation theory, and Associate Director Harold Augenbraum, a writer, editor, and translator from the Spanish, who is currently acting editor of the Yale Review and former Executive Director of the National Book Foundation. The two founders won funding from the MacMillan Center for the Coordinator role and hired Bassi, who earned her PhD in Translation Studies at the University of Warwick in the U.K. Bassi also teaches part time in the Yale Department of Italian Language and Literature. She said there are three constituencies for the Translation Initiative: graduate and undergraduate students, faculty and researchers, and the

administration. The graduate students in particular “are starved for this,” she said. “They have separate identities as translators. Many of them are already very successful published translators.” For faculty as well as students, the Initiative connects them to a translation community through monthly seminars to discuss translation theory, practice, and pedagogy. The Initiative’s website makes informational resources available on other translation studies programs and corporate and governmental organizations that provide translation services. Understanding where translation studies fits into Yale’s infrastructure is part of the conversation. “There are practical obstacles in the university organization. The task is to bridge the gap between languages and literature and social sciences,” Bassi said (Phone interview). Currently, the only translation courses at Yale are taught in the Comparative Literature and French Departments. However, one of the tasks of the Initiative is to keep an ongoing listing of any translation-related courses across the different departments. In January 2019, the Initiative website listed a number of translation-related courses, including an advanced French grammar course that deploys literary translation as a linguistic training tool; a Humanities seminar on Dante in translation, and a 400-level Natural Language Processing Seminar. This listing is a visual acknowledgement of the range of disciplines translation touches on at Yale, but there is even more. According to the Initiative website, 350 Yale professors currently include translation as part of their research and/or teaching.

The Initiative is housed under and funded by the Yale MacMillan Center, an interdisciplinary area studies center that supports several dozen internationally-focused research and academic programs including six undergraduate majors and three master’s degree programs (*Yale*). According to Bassi, one of her goals is to work toward an inter-disciplinary translation master’s degree track that brings together translators, translation scholars and the rest of campus.

“What’s important is breaking down the binaries between the published translator and the translation scholar. I really care about social scientists and comparative literature both realizing they are working on the same thing.”

The goals are similar at Yale as with other universities: acknowledge the important role of translation in multiple disciplines and find a way to address the needs of the students, researchers, and translators in developing an approach to addressing that role. Yale’s Initiative is unique from the others outlined in this document because it first seeks to create a community of interest around translation through its seminars, website, and other activities. The initial investment is minimal—one part-time faculty member who is an experienced translator and translation scholar. Through the effort of creating a community, Yale aims to collaborate toward a solution that is community-based and community-driven, not top down, and allow it to build over time.

Considered together, these case studies provide a first draft of a blueprint for R1 universities to consider when contemplating how to respond to the burgeoning interest in Translation Studies. The case study examples vary from the long-standing programs founded and led by a single influential leader, as with the UEA’s BCLT and UTD’s Center for Translation Studies, to the MFA writing programs that now embrace translation as a crucial component of creative writing, as does the LTAC at Columbia University. It is clear from the high public profile of the UR MALTS program that the combination of a digital communicator like Chad Post, a translation publishing imprint, awards, blogs and social media all contribute to broad public and industry recognition of a Translation Studies program. The Stanford model shows that universities can take big or small steps in developing a strategy, as long as it’s in line with the needs of the students.

In the next section, I will draft the relevant pieces from these programs into a blueprint of recommendations. The infrastructure: methodology, departments, courses taught, who teaches them, and how are they evaluated. The degrees: how to decide whether to offer an BA, MA, PhD, Certificates, minors, or professional education. And finally, the community: who's involved—corporate, research orgs, non-profits, libraries, and publishers.

## **PART TWO: GUIDELINES AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

“Translation refines the art of thinking. I would underline the necessity that there is definitely a growing need for translation studies in the context of the contemporary global world and training in translation studies can benefit undergrad, grad students, and professors of all disciplines, as well as professionals working in all kinds of businesses. Ultimately, society would benefit from this kind of training.” Rainer Schulte (E-mail interview)

### **Introduction**

In the second decade of the twenty-first century translations studies has evolved into an accepted academic discipline and scholarly pursuit. Dozens of U.S. universities offer translation courses, degrees and certificates, and the number is constantly growing (Venuti 5). But the discipline is still evolving and its acceptance is not universal. There are many universities that still have no translation studies programs, such as the University of Washington, despite demonstrated interest among faculty, students and employers. This section draws conclusions from the case studies to offer guidelines and examples for others considering how to build their own approach to a translation studies program organized in three sections: infrastructure, degrees and community.

### **Infrastructure**

“From the periphery of academia, the discipline has been growing and spiraling outwards, . . . reaching out to other disciplines in order to fulfil its potential, a potential that is marked by the inevitability of interdisciplinarity and globalization” (Millán & Bartrina 1).

The “who?” in the equation of developing a translation studies strategy at an R1 university is the single most influential factor. The individuals who drive the program will influence how it is organized, what is taught, by whom and to whom. It could be a single influential translator/scholar as in the case of Sebald at UEA’s BCLT and Schulte at the UTD Center for Translation Studies. Their vision and passion shaped the institutions they founded in different ways. Or it could be digital communicators like Chad Post and Susan Bernofsky who understand the contemporary power of blogs, social media, translation data, and digital video and audio to connect communities to their scholarly programs. More often, it will be a handful of passionate and expert professor/translators who take it upon themselves to change the status quo by working with both students and administrators to propose translation programs, courses and/or degrees appropriate to their own situations and institutions. The faculty members’ personal interests, experience and capabilities influence the shape of their programs. Chad Post perhaps said it best: “The academics made it happen” (Post interview). At the University of Rochester, the team included poet, translator and scholar Jennifer Grotz and author and professor Joanna Scott, both of whom teach creative writing and have been widely published. Their understanding of the book publishing world as writers, translators and educators germinated the idea, with colleagues from other departments, to embed a book publishing at the center of their translation studies program. They were lucky to have a supportive and innovative university president who backed and helped get funding for their idea. But in the end, it was the act of

reaching across departments, and working on an innovative approach they believed in that led to UR's new status as one of the more dynamic publishing-focused translation studies programs in the U.S. The UR example aptly illustrates the contemporary practice of Public Scholarship which "often takes the form of projects that combine research, teaching, creative activity, as well as publication" (Woodward 111). The model to follow, as Stanford's Levy advised, is to make sure that program planners include a cross-section of faculty from different disciplines (E-mail interview) —which other disciplines will vary according to the needs of the students, the interests of the faculty and the receptiveness of the university administration.

What should R1 universities teach in a translation studies program? In some universities this question might spark a debate about the nature of translation itself and whether it should be a focus of research or of training programs for practitioners. Instead, British translation scholar Munday emphasizes the multidisciplinary opportunities in translation studies by organizing different disciplines as having either a primary or secondary relationship with translation.<sup>34</sup> Munday's list is interesting in its breadth and it visually highlights the range of scholarly activities emerging in the field. I have organized his list into a grid, and added categories of my own and from the editor of the *Routledge Handbook of Translation Studies* (Millán). It is my belief that as the discipline of translation studies continues to evolve, the primary and secondary designations will fall away, and academic programs will be based on student need and interest rather than traditional teaching categories.

Primary relationships	Secondary relationships

<sup>34</sup> Munday cites Willard McCarty's 1999 paper "Humanities Computing as an Interdiscipline" which argues that traditional disciplines have primary or secondary relationships to a new "interdiscipline."

Linguistics, Computation Linguistics (King)	Computing, AI, Machine Translation
Modern Languages	Media, News, Advertising, Communications (King)
Comparative Literature	Law
Cultural Studies (Gender, LGBTQ, Post-Colonial)	Politics
Philosophy, Hermeneutics/Interpretation of the Bible	Medicine
Sociology	Finance
History, Classics	Science
Creative Writing	Publishing (King)
Audiovisual Translation Studies/Subtitles, Dubbing, Stage (Millán)	Education (King)
Quality and Ethics (Millán)	Globalization and Migration (Millán)
Multilingualism (Millán)	New Technologies (Millán)
	Translator Training

Munday's list doesn't connect creative writing to publishing, but many universities have. As we've seen, training translation students in the art and business of book publishing is at the core of both the UR's LTS and UAE's BCLT program. Translation as an educational tool also failed to make Munday's list in either category, while at the BCLT it is highlighted through a

partnership with the Stephen Spender Trust *Translators in Schools* program.<sup>35</sup> Computing, AI, and machine translation is not yet a primary focus for any of the translation studies programs surveyed here, but such programs do elsewhere.

Dublin City University (DCU) in Ireland is one of the very few examples of multi-disciplinary Translation Studies with technology at its core. The emphasis at DCU lies squarely on technology in their program is situated in the School of Applied Language & Intercultural Studies (SALIS). In their own words:

“The School of Applied Language and Intercultural Studies (SALIS) a research-intensive learning-centred, and globally-engaged School that is working toward a sustainable multilingual and multicultural society. We teach and research new developments in the areas of applied linguistics, translation studies, literary studies, citizenship education, migration studies, sexuality/gender studies.” (DCU SALIS)

The program includes a BA in Applied Language and Translation Studies, with the ability to study for a specialization in media and law; an MA in Translation Studies which emphasizes that the study of technology and translation together increases employability of graduates; and an MSc in Translation Technology. Both Master’s degrees are one year in length and are promoted as quick pathways to careers in publishing, broadcasting, diplomatic services, information technology, subtitling and localization. In addition, DCU does something few other translation

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<sup>35</sup>The Creative Translation in the Classroom program connects pairs of primary and secondary school teachers with translators to develop creativity and literacy workshops that can be shared across the system.

studies programs do: they promote their teaching and their research. Within SAIS is a research group called The Center for Translation and Textual Studies (CTTS). Their mission statement:

“Our mission is to collectively and individually study and understand the cultural and historical transformation of multimodal, multilingual and translingual communicative practices and their impact on the creation and consumption of ‘text’ in its traditional and modern forms. This applied research endeavour will impact on national and international models, policies and practices on the theoretical, industrial, pedagogical and societal dimensions.” (CTTS)

This self-described “robust” research group promotes its scope, expertise, relevance and interdisciplinarity. Its scholars research literature and technology, multiple languages, historical texts and digital communication. The information they produce is promoted as relevant to industry and government, as well as education. The impressive range of research areas bears citing: translation pedagogy, minority language policy, language in virtual worlds, human-computer interaction, computer-aided language learning, audio-visual translation, translation of children’s literature, machine translation and post-editing, and community interpreting. Their faculty includes Michael Cronin whose 2013 book *Translation in the Digital Age* I cited earlier in this text. European and Canadian universities in general have more advanced translation studies programs because of their socio-political context. Canada is a bi-lingual nation and the European Community is by definition multi-lingual. But as Venuti notes, the U.S. is starting to catch up and with great speed (2). Models such as DCU’s are relevant when any U.S. R1 university begins to think about what to teach in a translation studies program.

Another critical consideration in the development of translation studies are trends at universities to create new administrative departments, schools or centers to address student

interest in global studies, a move away from determining course of study strictly by nation or language. Shifting institutional frameworks allow students the freedom to create a course of study to follow their specific interests and tap into skills and knowledge they have or want to develop. The University of Oregon and Yale MacMillan Center for International and Area Studies are examples of this kind of re-alignment away from nation-specific or language specific studies to global culture. What was previously a narrow study of comparative literature (ie, books), broadens to embrace visual arts, sound production, video production and even online gaming. Language and politics, history, art, technology are studied in tandem, not separately.

The constant evolution of technology is raising even more fundamental questions about teaching and research in a Translation Studies program: What is a book? What is literacy? Who is an author? Projects to digitize books will weave a “single liquid fabric” of interconnected words and ideas, writes Kevin Kelly in *The Inevitable: Understanding the 12 Technological Forces That Will Shape Our Future*. As increasingly all of our information becomes digitized, Kelly predicts that books and other texts will become part of a “universal networked library” which will benefit mankind through access to knowledge, but it will also change the way we understand knowledge. “Why bother calling these things books?” Kelly asks. A book in the future is not a paper artifact but an “attention unit” (101). Just as the printing press and the mass production of paper books changed access to knowledge and the way people think, human interaction with information on a screen will have a profound impact on human culture. On a screen, words and books are liquid, Kelly writes, constantly changing or at least with the potential to change, instantly and without a trace. This is profoundly different from the stability of print on paper, in black-and-white. Words are also fluid in that they move and surround images, video, graphics. They become graphics. The book of the screen may be read in

collaboration with others, or written in collaboration with others. It may be constantly changing and edited, like a Wikipedia page. It has links to additional information, or an embedded video or an audio version you can easily switch back and forth to from the text, without losing your place. Kelly doesn't present this as a dystopia, just as inevitable and continued technological change. Cronin, however, is more concerned. He invokes Canadian philosopher Marshall McLuhan's "the medium is the message" framework to warn of unforeseen consequences of new technologies in human communication. For example, Cronin argues that human language is in the process of being simplified for ease of machine translation, which has implications for power and control in society (38). He calls this process transitivity, an approach to translation that is goal-oriented and has just one right way, and a specific, pre-defined end, a process that is driven in the digital age by technology and global commercial communication in translation (49). It is found in global communication in translation due to industry insistence on consistency and standardized outputs. In response, Cronin call for more "digital humanism," a movement that invites critical reflection of constant technological change, rather than "a roadshow of cyber cheerleading" (6). Describing the danger in an approach that attempts to universalize the human experience and erasing particular cultural experiences he calls for translators and translation scholars to construct communities rather than subsume them. Thus, the simple question: "What to teach in a translation studies program?" actually becomes a critical question about the future of knowledge and information.

In his new book *Teaching Translation*, Venuti also aims to answer the question about what is taught in Translation Studies programs. He invited five different experienced translation

studies scholars and professors, each from a different university<sup>36</sup>, to describe their Translation Studies courses in detail. Venuti organizes the descriptions by degree: undergraduate certificate, graduate certificate, MA, MFA, and PhD. As with the case studies in this dissertation, the courses described by the faculty that teach them reflect their creators' interests' and expertise, and an understanding of the students' needs. In his introduction to the text, Venuti draws attention to an unexpected finding. The same textbooks and course materials are often used for all the different levels and types of students, but are put to different uses depending on the focus of the class: a research-oriented course for doctoral students versus an undergraduate looking for a practical skills and certificate for career development. "The very notion of what constitutes translation theory is redefined in the movement between sections," Venuti writes. The "what" of a Translation Studies program will emerge from the "who" of the participants. One could imagine that at the University of Washington, where computer science and technology research and funding play such a huge role, a translation initiative might include machine translation researchers and computational linguistics specialists. But because the success of these programs depends on the dedication of the faculty promoting them, the configuration of a new translation program can't be predicted until its promoters appear. Meanwhile, source material for teaching translation has flourished. The 2013 *Routledge Handbook of Translation Studies* is a collection of essays and articles, encyclopedic in its survey of the history, theory, current practice and potential future of Translation Studies. It provides context and resources for a discussion of the institutionalization of translation as a discipline and for teaching an array of different aspects of translation, ranging from research on translator education to gender in translation to research paths in audio-visual translation. Munday, who is a professor of Translation Studies at the

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<sup>36</sup> Indiana University-Purdue University Indiana, Indiana University Bloomington, Kent State University, Queens College CUNY and the University of Ottawa.

University of Leeds in the U.K., first published his scholarly guidebook *Introducing Translation Studies: Theories and Applications*, in 2001. Reflecting how quickly the discipline is changing, Munday's book in 2016 reached its fifth edition (e-book version of 4<sup>th</sup> Edition), which incorporates a number of useful elements for the translation educator, including suggested discussion, research, and evaluation strategies for the concepts presented in each chapter. The edition includes a companion website with video presentations, interactive timelines, multiple choice questions for students and, for translation professors, ready-made PowerPoint presentations that can be downloaded and edited for the individual class needs. The answer to what to teach is not limited, as it was at the end of the last century, by a scarcity of support materials.

Where does a Translation Studies program sit within an R1 university? That question is answered by the case studies, at least in part. It sits within the department or school of its creators. The traditional home of translation studies, comparative literature departments, are not as prevalent. Instead, new translation studies programs, depending on their size and complexity, are finding their way into divisions and schools that focus on global language and culture. Language departments play a part, but in the context of students seeking interdisciplinary, and self-directed, opportunities for study. Yale's MacMillan Center is one example, as an international area studies organization within the university. The UR Translation Studies undergraduate certificate is administered by the Multi-Disciplinary Studies Center. One relevant and nearby example beyond the six case studies is the University of Oregon (UO) Translation Studies Graduate Specialization, which is administered by the UO Global Studies Institute. The Specialization track taps into faculty and students from a number of departments and incorporates "active professional community members" in its program. Launched in 2015, it is

an 18-credit program open to any graduate student at the University of Oregon. The program is comparable to the 16-credit UW Textual Studies Certificate, which is also interdisciplinary and administered under the UW Graduate School. Offering students flexibility to specialize across disciplines is being addressed in many ways by different universities. There are many models depending on the individual institution's needs.

While academia moves slowly, the current growth of translation studies programs seems to be accelerating. At Stanford, the undergraduate translation minor was two years in the making (Levy). The Yale Initiative, limited in its initial scope, was in development for a year before it launched (Bassi). But, as this dissertation project has demonstrated, university translators wishing to make a start toward a formal translation studies program, can find funding and support to develop a community of translation scholars, and organize lectures, conversations and presentations by expert colleagues and invited guests. As detailed in the introduction to this document, there have been a number of initiatives at the UW over the last five years to create short-term translation studies opportunities. The enthusiastic response to those programs is an indication that more is to come. It is inevitable. But students must see a clear path toward career goals and jobs to commit to a course of study, a degree or a certificate. The successful path to achieve this is through the organic evolution of programs, as described by Bartha and Burgett. The future of Translations Studies is not dictated top-down by the president of the university or the dean of a department, it is not fixed and unchanging, it is not exclusive and limiting, and it is not permanent because it will respond to the changing needs of students, faculty and the community.

But there is more work to do. These enthusiastic examples and guidelines possibly mute the challenges that still exist for Translation Studies at R1 universities. While the importance of

Translation Studies in a globalized society is more widely accepted, cultural, philosophical and institutional barriers in academia need to be addressed. Venuti outlines these barriers, which he calls “institutional antinomies” or “complications” for the evolution of Translation Studies at U.S. universities (2017 4), and he offers three examples in which academia claims to embrace but at the same time hinders the advancement of the discipline. The first antinomy is that too many new translation programs are staffed by faculty who neither translate nor research translation. This is in most cases a staffing problem in which departments have little or no budget to hire new instructors with that specialization. Some universities are overcoming that problem by hubs, such as Yale’s, where experienced translation specialists from different departments can collaborate on a program, bring the needed expertise across departments. The second antinomy is that translation scholarship is still not embraced by academic administrators responsible for awarding promotion and tenure, despite recommendations and guidelines from the MLA to do so (MLA 2011. “. . . [A] decision to dedicate one’s research and scholarship to translation in any form continues to be tantamount to jeopardizing one’s academic career” (Venuti 2017 4). My personal observation at a panel at the ALTA41 2018 conference on careers in translation scholarship bears this out. Tenured professors, un-tenured professors and graduate students spoke on the panel about the continued lack of support for translation scholarship across many different institutions. A graduate student described her experience being asked to both translate a full-length book and write a full-length master’s thesis analyzing and theorizing on her translation, in essence, doubling the amount of normal work for the degree. A tenured professor on the panel confessed that only now that she has tenure, is she able to focus on her principal interest which is translation work and research. The panelists described the problem as one of competing notions about the value of translation as “original” scholarship. Is translation an

original work, or a derivative work? Venuti believes the former. He argues that translation is both scholarship and an art, "...a kind of writing that should be valued for its learning or its creativity, or that might be learned and creative at the same time" (2017 6). The third antimony is what Venuti describes as an "entrenched" view in academia that translation "is seen as a reproduction or transfer of an invariant that is contained in or caused by the source text, whether its form, its meaning or its effect" (2017 6). He calls this insistence on the "invariant" nature of translation the "instrumental model," in which the source text is either easy to translate or impossible to translate, echoing Derrida's quote "I don't think that anything can ever be untranslatable—or, moreover, translatable" (Venuti 2012 369). This view tends to lock translation studies into the bygone binary of faithful versus unfaithful, and word-for-word versus sense-for-sense. Instead, Venuti argues, current critical orthodoxy in Translation Studies favors the hermeneutic model, using the theory and method of interpretation in the act and study of translation. "[T]he instrumental model of translation remains so entrenched in academic institutions that a hermeneutic model has yet to be developed and widely applied in all its conceptual and practical ramifications" (2017 6). This is illustrated by the fact that translations and translators continue to be invisible in so much contemporary scholarship. Otherwise expert research monographs fail to name the translator of the sources they cite, or even acknowledge that they are translations, Venuti notes. In addition, Venuti reviewed the offerings of 100 U.S. universities and colleges with comparative literature programs and found that only a quarter of them also offered introduction to translation courses so that their students could learn about the process that makes it possible for them to compare the different works of literature in the first place. This practice of using translated material in research and teaching without acknowledging the material as translated is for Venuti a profound "complication" of the current state of

translation studies in many universities: “. . . the formal and semantic features of that text, including its tropes and styles, plots and genres, narrators and characters, discourses and themes, are treated as invariants that are either transferred intact or misrepresented by the translation” (2017 7). These translated texts, according to hermeneutic theory, are neither intact nor misrepresented. They are always interpretations which must be examined and understood as part of the research process. “But (the interpretations) will become intelligible only if we abandon instrumentalism and adopt a hermeneutic model in our understanding of translation” (7).

Venuti’s hermeneutic model is also useful for evaluating translation scholarship. The 2011 MLA guidelines for peer review and administrative review of translation scholarship echo his hermeneutic model:

“Every translation is an interpretation; each one begins with a critical reading, then expands and ultimately embodies that reading. Given the importance of the endeavor and the expertise required to do it justice, a translation of a literary or scholarly work or another cultural document should be judged as an integral part of the dossiers submitted by candidates for academic positions and by faculty members facing personnel decisions. Institutions thus need to ensure that translations are subject to peer review on the same basis as monographs and other recognized instances of scholarly activity” (MLA 2011).

This model can be used to evaluate student performance in translation classes. Before the work begins, the professor outlines the goals of the project and the product is evaluated against how well the student interprets the text according to those goals. The instructor can present the variety of translation theories – history, post-colonial, gender, sociology, linguistic, corpus-based - and direct or invite students to deploy a specific approach. Like translation itself, teaching and

evaluating translation in the undergraduate and graduate classroom is a “project” defined by the professor and department offering it. As argued by professor of French and Translation Studies at Concordia University Sherry Simon, translation is fluid process and the translator owes her fidelity not to the author, not to the reader but to “the project.” Success lies in the appropriate match between text and translation project (14).

Finally, I propose a fourth antinomy to add to Venuti’s list, which is related to the third. Because of academia’s embrace of instrumentalism and perhaps somewhat innocent acceptance that Artificial Intelligence-driven machine translation is “accurate” because it is rendered by an algorithm, instructors use machine translation in their research and teaching without interrogating or even commenting as to the source or interpretation of that translation. In addition, some university professors and administrators have questioned, including questioning me, why, in the digital age, we even need to train translators when technology will soon be doing the translation for us. This view is troubling and I’m grateful to Venuti for articulating an answer so well through his critique of instrumentalism.<sup>37</sup> Once we understand and embrace the fact that translations are inevitably interpretations, it will become clear that examination of the translation itself must become part of the scholarship, whether the translation has been completed by a human being or a machine.

## Degrees

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<sup>37</sup> As an illustrative example of hermeneutic analysis, Venuti references Maysa Abou-Youssef Hayward’s “Teaching Mahfouz: Style in Translation” in *Approaches to Teaching the Works of Naguib Mahfouz* (2012), edited by Wail Hassan and Susan Muaddi Durraj: “...she acknowledges that the structural differences between Arabic and English as well as different linguistic and cultural norms make the translation no more than one possible interpretation of Mahfouz’s novel...Hence in the classroom, she turns the approximations and shifts (in the translation) to account, using them to teach United States-based students about the novel and the translation, about Arabic and English and about Egyptian culture and their own.”

“As a matter of fact, I don’t believe that anything can ever be untranslatable – or, moreover, translatable” (Jacques Derrida, translated by Lawrence Venuti 2012 369).

Venuti calls this quote by the French critic and philosopher the “Derrida paradox” (2016 202). Here, I apply it to Translation Studies: if nothing and everything is translatable, then it is impossible and at the same time inevitable that translation studies must be defined, taught and evaluated. It is also inevitable that all major U.S. universities will need to incorporate translation, at some point, into their programs in the coming years, just as it is impossible to predict exactly what that program might look like especially in an era of fast-moving technological change. It is possible, however, to structure and categorize thinking around options for creating a degree program at an R1 university. The first consideration is constituencies for a degree. A degree in contemporary universities is seen often as a product, an investment purchased by students (and their families) who are very aware of their status as customers. The needs of these customers, or constituencies, must be considered carefully before deciding how to develop a new degree or risk low attendance and failure. Professor Bassi from Yale’s Translation Initiative articulated three constituencies for translation studies programs: students, faculty and administration (Phone interview). I would add one more important constituency: employers. Several of the program directors in the case studies above directly addressed the need for their students to graduate with a skill set that is attractive to employers, whether the employers are book publishers, media, technology companies or universities. Savvy students look for degree programs, skills, and experiences that get them hired and have “voted with their feet,” as BCLT’s Large says when the correlation between degree and paid employment is not transparent.

“We found out the hard way that students are not going to take courses in literary translation if they are not persuaded that literary translation is a viable career choice and that studying a degree in it can lead more or less directly to a job in it afterwards. In the U.K., at least, university study has become a great deal more expensive in recent years, and students can literally no longer afford to take subjects which they do not perceive as direct investments in their future employability” (3).

Degree program developers have a number of options to gain an understanding of their potential constituencies. They can survey employers, faculty and prospective students directly, in person or by E-mail or online. This is a strategy used by the UW Continuum College (CC) in its work to develop a possible professional certificate in Translation Studies. In 2018, they surveyed by E-mail working professional translators in the Northwest, collaborating with NOTIS and regional institutions that hire translators and interpreters to develop the questions for the survey. The key question was what kind of professional education and training do you need and how much can you afford to pay for it? The response helped the CC refine its planning toward serving medical interpreters with a certificate program, instead of a general translation certificate program. Sometimes course registration is the top indicator of interest, as with Barnard College’s “Introduction to Translation Studies” course, which has been attracting 100 students a year since 2012 (Venuti 2017 5). Other programs are developed with a specific industry in mind. The Literary Translation Studies program at the UR was, as described in the case studies, specifically targets training students in skills, knowledge and experience in the publishing industry and the “employer” is the program’s own translation imprint Open Letter. Faculty are a key constituency for planning an interdisciplinary Translation Studies program because they will lead the way in

developing the actual coursework. One of the biggest challenges in creating a university translation training and research program is they are too often staffed with instructors and faculty who are neither translators nor translation scholars but have developed courses by “retooling” what they already teach (Venuti 2017 4). This trend underlines a continuing reluctance in academia to acknowledge translation studies as a discipline in its own right, Venuti argues. He encourages non-translation scholars to immerse themselves in translation history, theory and practical training pedagogies, but argues that this cannot replace expert scholarship based on ongoing translation research and publication. Because translation is by definition an “inter-discipline” some universities have professors in many different departments teaching translation in collaboration. The challenge is to identify the expert professors and create a community of translation instructors who contribute different areas of expertise to the program. For example, at the Institute for Applied Linguistics at Kent State University, the MA in Translation degree engages 10 full-time tenure-track faculty members each with a language specialization and a subject area specialization such as gender issues, research methods, or legal and commercial translation, psychology and communication (Massardier-Kenny 38).<sup>38</sup> This multidisciplinary faculty cohort reflects the interests and expertise of the faculty and the needs of the students, and Massardier-Kenny predicts that future hires for university Translation Studies programs will come from the growing number of graduates emerging from the new full-fledged doctoral programs (38). Administrators, who in turn have many constituencies of their own, must be presented with achievable options based on data and experience from a multidisciplinary cohort of faculty seeking the degree. Referring again to the Bartha and Burnett recommendations for developing meaningful graduate education programs, to address the needs of the R1 university

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<sup>38</sup> The Institute has about 50 full-time MA in Translation students of whom about 40 percent are international (Massardier-Kenny 38).

administration as a constituency, it is important to navigate institutional cultures and shape programs to specific institutional contexts to be successful, and to think creatively about new forms of administration (39). The latter includes possibly difficult discussions about removing some programs to make way for others. It is interesting to note that a number of Translation Studies programs reside under the umbrella of less traditional schools, departments or institutional organizations, such as the University of Oregon's Global Studies Institute, or Yale's Translation Initiative in the MacMillan Center.

The first U.S. translation degree programs began in the 1950s with an MA in translator training at the Middlebury Institute for International Studies at Monterey and in the 1960s with the creation of workshops in creative writing programs at the University of Iowa, Columbia University among others (Venuti 2017 3). The number of translation studies degree programs at universities around the world has grown significantly and continues to grow, although an accurate and up-to-date list of them is elusive.<sup>39</sup> PEN American has a list of 100 universities with translation studies options that appears to have been last updated in 2012.<sup>40</sup> In the 2013 edition of the *Routledge Handbook of Translation Studies*, translation scholar Jose Lambert references 150 Translation Studies programs worldwide, but doesn't cite the source (10). In his introduction to his 2017 *Teaching Translation*, Venuti cites the European Society for Translation Studies (ESTS) list of 350 TS institutions worldwide (1). My own check of that online list in January of

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<sup>39</sup> This is an area ripe for further research in the form of a survey of U.S. universities. A good survey model is the report *Publishing Translation in Europe, A Survey of Publishers -2012* carried out by the Mercator Institute for Media, Languages and Culture, at Aberystwyth University, Wales, U.K.. The Institute operates *Literature Across Frontiers (LAF)*, a "European Platform for Literary Exchange, Translation and Policy Debate." LAF sponsors translation events, workshops, resources and research, including an excellent survey of European publishers of literature in translation. This *Publishing Translations* model could be adopted to survey U.S. universities offering translation programs. <https://www.lit-across-frontiers.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/Publishing-Translations-in-Europe-a-survey-of-publishers-2012.pdf>

<sup>40</sup> <https://pen.org/translation-programs/>

2019 found the ESTS page estimating 500 institutions on their worldwide list, but also acknowledging the list was out of date.<sup>41</sup>

Because TS as a discipline offers the possibility of a many different kinds of degree programs in different fields, it is useful to imagine specific possible examples. In the case of the UW, for example, anecdotal evidence suggests that an undergraduate certificate in translation studies or localization might be popular among the large community of international and multicultural students.<sup>42</sup> In many of my Spanish language courses over the last five years, students in pre-medicine, technology and sciences have told me they are studying languages to enhance their career opportunities in their specific fields. A translation certificate would support them by verifying their language skills and their ability to use them in their work. A graduate certificate or MA in translation studies could attract several different constituencies, depending on how it was focused. One track might be a traditional MA with a translation research-focused track leading into a PhD program in partnership between departments of History, Politics or Classics and language study. Another potentially popular MA might be a technology-focused track in partnership between language study, computational linguistics, and the school of computer science, with potential support and funding from local technology companies and non-profit research organizations. An audio-visual translation track in partnership with cinema and media studies, communications studies could be developed with support and funding from locally-based global gaming, entertainment and production companies and non-profits.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> <http://est-translationstudies.org/resources/online-translation-studies-resources/>. The list is by country. On January 15, 2019, I opened the U.S. list and counted just two dozen listings. In addition to being out of date, the page formatting appeared to be misaligned and was difficult to read.

<sup>42</sup> About 16 percent of UW students are classified international. <https://studentdata.washington.edu/quick-stats/>

<sup>43</sup> In 2018, the UW Spanish & Portuguese Department partnered with the Seattle Latino Film Festival to screen a number of their films. The Festival director Jorge Enrique Gonzalez Pacheco spoke to me about subtitling for the films, and was intrigued by the possibility of partnering with the UW to develop a subtitling translation project with students.

Alternatively, or additionally, an MFA focus for Translation Studies could tap into the English department's creative writing program and by extension into the robust Seattle community of translation publishers. An MA in Translation studies, could incorporate electives that tap into all those possibilities, in terms of student interest. The challenge, as Venuti wrote, is qualified instruction. At the PhD level, it's clear that a robust research group of scholars working on innovative projects attracts attention, more scholars, and more students to a program. Dublin City University's School of Applied Language & Intercultural Studies boasts 28 PhD students.<sup>44</sup> The UEA's BCLT has two PhD students, and the program director Duncan Large has made it his strategic goal to build the BCLT Research Group to attract more research grant funding (Large 5). The UTD Center for Translation Studies lists four PhD candidates. By comparison, the University of Ottawa's School of Translation Studies and Interpretation lists 11 PhD candidates. Finally, there are potential graduate and undergraduate certificate opportunities for language departments to take advantage of the growing need for translators in health care, law, social services and government, especially in a growing city like Seattle with large immigrant communities. For example, the Spanish department could partner with the medical school to create a translation and interpretation course and certificate.

The possibilities for generating a Translation Studies program are enhanced by the creation of a "hub," a center of communication and information on campus that could assist faculty interested in stepping up to get a degree or certificate started, teach a course, or partner with another department, company, or community outside campus. Yale's Translation Initiative comes closest to this idea. It's a clearing house and a support service for incubating ideas and expertise that emerges from expert faculty and even students. A relatively small investment in a

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<sup>44</sup> <https://www.dcu.ie/salis/research/masters.shtml>

hub that can pull together all the disparate strings of translation activity could make a big difference quickly to bring an important R1 university up to speed in a critical area of research and teaching.

### **Community**

“One of the very virtues of the idea of the public - as opposed to a community which is usually understood as local - is that it is un bounded and general.” (Woodward, “The Future of the Humanities” 118)

A translation hub is needed to connect publics. The rise of interest in literary translation is being driven in part by a surge in public interest in translation, which sees translators, aspiring translators and passionate consumers of translation coming together with translation scholars and businesses who need and use translation to form a new kind of global literacy. This is a new public for translation, connected digitally and physically, to each other and increasingly to academia, the humanities. It is through this connectivity of different publics that translation studies will grow at U.S. R1 universities. Quay and Veninga write that there are three types of literacy that should be incorporated into higher education in the digital age: multicultural, civic and community. Civic and community require interaction with physical communities in addition to digital “communities of interest.” “Americans may find it easier to communicate with a like-minded colleague in a distant city than talk with a contrary neighbor,” the authors write. They identify the twenty-first century problem of digital “communities of interest” elbowing out a sense of neighborhood communities. Quay and Veninga’s paper was published in 1990, and debate around public humanities in higher education continues almost 30 years later. The authors were impressively prescient. Rewriting the humanist dictum of the past as prologue, they invited readers to consider the present as prologue and imagine the role of the humanist in the twenty-

first century. What the authors imagined was a possible future role for “non-professional” humanists. Today that musing is easily connected to a whole new category of practitioners, the hyphenated citizen: the citizen-journalist, the citizen-author, the citizen-coder, the citizen-investigator, the citizen-philosopher (aka, “blogger” perhaps?). In 1990, it would have been impossible for the authors to imagine the rate, breadth and depth of technology-driven change in society. And yet they do identify key trends that have led us to where we are today: global migration, population growth, the development of information technologies, and the evolution of media and communications. What they didn’t anticipate was the ability of anyone (with enough money to buy one) with a device that fits in the palm of your hand to connect instantly to information, data, libraries anywhere in the world, not only as *consumers* but as *producers* of information through social media platforms. Nor did they anticipate the “post-fact” society, which, flooded with data and “content” have lost the ability to sift fact from falsehood. Certainly, the role of public humanities is both for the scholar to learn from the citizen but also to help society at large develop the critical capacity to differentiate fact from fiction, a new kind of literacy for the digital age. This new literacy could not exist without translation. Thus, the role of a translation program at an R1 university is to create communities of translators and translation scholars who connect in person on and off campus as well as creating digital communities around the world. The community, or publics, for translation studies begin with university faculty and students in virtually every discipline. As described in the introduction to this monograph, the UW is an example of an R1 university with rich vibrant pockets of mini-communities of translators and translation scholars. Both UW faculty and graduate students have begun organizing the pockets, sporadically, and connecting them to off-campus publics, like publishers, book stores, technology companies and professional translator groups. It seems

inevitable that these efforts will multiply until at some point, a group of faculty members will develop a plan, seek funding from non-profit grants and potentially for-profit corporations, and win support from the university administration. The UW, with its strong engineering and computer programming focus, could be poised to develop a nation and world-leading role in connecting the science of machine translation with translation research in the humanities and in educating students at all levels – undergraduate, graduate and continuing education – in the practical, theoretical and ethical implications of translation technology on our society.

Broadening the view to non-academic communities, it is clear that an R1 university can become, as UT Dallas CLT did in its day and as LTS at UR is doing today, a hub for many different communities interested in translation. A publicly funded research university has the duty to become center of knowledge and understanding of translation studies across the region. It is a public space and a physical place where communities can meet and connect. Award-winning poet and co-founder of Seattle writer’s center Hugo House<sup>45</sup> Frances McCue based her 2001 Columbia University PhD dissertation *The Triggering Place* on the idea that creating a physical space for a community of writers and readers is very much like writing itself. “When writers fumble around with words on a page, they are opening new worlds (...) So, there are two spaces that really open – the first is inside the writer and the text, and the second is between the writer’s work and a community of readers. In this second space, other opportunities can arise” (1-2). McCue argues that writers don’t exist without readers, and the interaction between the two in a physical setting forges a community where learning and creativity are transformed. “...I align writing a poem to creating a program,” McCue writes (10). Hugo House is a community-based

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<sup>45</sup> Richard Hugo (1923-1982) was a Seattle-born poet with a national profile. His 1979 collection of essays on writing poetry *Triggering Town* inspired McCue’s dissertation project and her approach to developing Hugo House, named for the poet.

non-profit literary arts center which hosts a variety of activities from writing classes, speaker series and author book presentations and on its website describes itself as a “hub” for “writers and readers to meet and build audiences for new work” (Hugo House). It opened in October, 1998 with a three-day symposium titled “The Power of Place: A Celebration of Richard Hugo” and 20 years on has evolved sufficiently that the original building housing the organization has been torn down and replaced by a new building designed for further growth in line with Seattle’s surging profile as a U.S. and global literary center. McCue’s analysis of the connection between writing, community and physical space is a model for building a Translation Studies Hub at an R1 university. McCue envisions her “triggering place” as a poem: “Like (Richard) Hugo’s deliberate focus on these people and places, we too wanted to find them and include them in the physical place that was our “poem” (McCue 46).

I envision a triggering place that is a translation: a transmission across languages, cultures and disciplines that connects publics and promotes knowledge, learning and understanding. The triggering place can be a blank page, a page full of words; it can be a room, a building, street, a neighborhood, city and region. Hugo House’s success has been a combination of the right “triggering” place at the right time with the right people. McCue and co-founders Linda Breneman (nee Jaech) and Andrea Lewis were not just writers but social and creative entrepreneurs. Both Breneman and Lewis worked in the early days of the technology industry in Seattle and emerged with the assets<sup>46</sup> and the startup know-how to develop and launch a new organization (Hirschfeld). Seattle has long been recognized as a city of writers, readers, independent book stores and now book publishers. With the advent of the technology startup culture starting in the 1980’s the combination of interest, need and competencies combined to

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<sup>46</sup> Breneman provided 100% of the Hugo House startup funding including purchasing the building housing the non-profit and allowing it to operate there rent-free (Hirschfeld).

produce a successful Hugo House literary arts center. Seattle and the surrounding region are in a similar growth period at the time of this writing and the region is perfectly situated geographically, with the perfect socio-political context, and a ready-made community with a top R1 university and an ever-growing constellation of publics for translation. Major technology companies such as Amazon, Google, Microsoft and Nintendo have already expressed interest in translation studies activities at the UW and have participated in lectures and seminars on a variety of translation topics. As with the BCLT, Rochester and UT Dallas, the elements are in place for a new Translation Studies hub in Seattle. I have drawn up the blueprint and laid the theoretical and practical foundation through this written text and through my research and community-building activities. The time, place, context are perfect. All that's need now is for a handful of passionate campus-based translation scholars to step forward and help build out this Blueprint for Translation Studies in the Digital Age.

### **Conclusion**

While academia may be slow to change, once change begins, as with the development of translation studies programs in U.S. universities in the early twenty-first century, momentum picks up and begins to mushroom, burgeon and explode. This project started with a question I asked myself a decade ago: why isn't Luis García Montero, one of the most famous, frequently-cited, widely-read, award-winning and published writers in contemporary Spain, translated for publication into English? Grappling with that question led me to become a published literary translator myself and ultimately to decide to enter this PhD program. My goal become two-fold: sharing the question about Spain in translation as an ongoing conversation through my website and database, and contributing to the creation of translation studies program at the UW that could begin to

answer that and many other important questions related to translation. Based on my research and case studies, I believe that the development of a translation hub in Seattle, at the UW or elsewhere, is inevitable and will now appear relatively quickly. The academics, as Chad Post would say, will make it happen. This dissertation project describes and models the wide variety of options available. It is a blueprint on which the next passionate and influential translation studies leader can build.

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## Can Google Translate be Taught to Translate Literature?

*Abstract: In September of 2016, in a flurry of fanfare and news coverage, Google announced a major upgrade to Google Translate, its free online multi-language translation tool. Long the butt of jokes, stand-up comedy routines and social media memes, Google Translate (GT), company officials said, was now making a millennial leap forward by incorporating a new kind of computer code, Neural Machine Translation (NMT), that would mimic the learning process of the human brain. Thus, they said, GT would now be able to “learn” and improve its ability to translate over time. This study examines that claim on a micro-level. As a literary translator I have been working to bring *Alguien dice tu nombre* (Someone Speaks Your Name), a novel by Luis García Montero, from its original Spanish into English. Over the last nine months I have been testing my translations against GT’s and feeding back corrections through the GT tool in an effort to “teach” it to improve. The results of this experiment are consistent: over time the Google Neural Machine Translator (GNMT) rendering of paragraphs in this novel from Spanish to English retained the same number of errors and at times introduced more. Google’s flawed translations of these passages have not changed in response to repeated feedback through the official feedback tool. The results are then compared to similar experiments by two internationally recognized literary translation scholars, Esther Allen, professor of French and Latin American Cultures at City University of New York, and Duncan Large, Director of the British Centre for Literary Translation. They also found that while the new neural machine translators have improved results on certain kinds of texts, GT is still far from producing a suitable outcome when translating complex prose, novels and poetry. But for how long? And what of the claim that neural machine translators “learn?” The answer is that they do learn, in response to “training” by their human creators. Research reports that detail the process of*

*creating, training and testing a machine translation tool (Wu, Kogan, Toral and Way: Machine-Assisted...) show how human intervention shapes the outcome of translation tools. Wu et al. are Google researchers who detail the process of testing, including human review of results, before launch of Google Translate's new neural machine translation program, demonstrating the complexity involved in testing for and ensuring accuracy. Toral, a computational linguist, and Way, a computer programmer, partner to develop their own machine translation tool specifically designed to test literary translation. In "How Neural Networks Are Trained," Kogan, a programmer and blogger, describes the very human process of training a neural machine translation tool as descending a mountain in the dark. In addition, other studies (Bershidsky, Caliskan, Greenwald, Hern, Knight, O'Neil, Schiebinger, Ungerleider, Yu) reflect a growing concern that humans introduce algorithmic biases into translation tools that, unless their creators carefully screen for them, go unchallenged and accepted as accurate. This research demonstrates that translators, translation scholars, and humanists in general need greater training and awareness of how these tools work, and that multidisciplinary teams need to develop scholarly investigations into the challenges presented by ubiquitous and often uninformed use of advanced artificial intelligence tools such as machine translation.*

At the London headquarters of Google, Inc., a lavish press event was under way in which the company's CEO Sundar Pichai was to make a major announcement about a breakthrough in the ability of machines to translate human language (Lewis-Kraus).<sup>47</sup> London's English- and

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<sup>47</sup> *The New York Times Magazine* article by Lewis-Kraus highlights details of the pre-conference reception, such as fortune cookies whose paper fortunes inside were in non-English languages with an invitation to download the Google Translate app to get the translation. All descriptions of this event are sourced from the Lewis-Kraus article, which says the London news conference took place in mid-November 2016. Other news sources cite interviews

Urdu-speaking mayor Sadiq Khan welcomed the several hundred journalists, advertisers and technology entrepreneurs in attendance. When Pichai took the stage, behind him on a huge projector screen, was a quote in Spanish by the renowned 20<sup>th</sup>-century Argentine poet, author and translator Jorge Luis Borges: “Uno no es lo que es por lo que escribe, sino por lo que ha leído.” Next to the original were two translations into English, one by the “old” Google Translate (GT) tool and one by the “new” tool, the focus of the day’s event. Pichai read both out loud:

“One is not what is for what he writes, but for what he has read.” (Old GT, Lewis-Kraus)

“You are not what you write, but what you have read.” (New GT, Lewis-Kraus)

In addition to translating Borges’ words accurately, Pichai told the gathered journalists, the new tool was able to learn and improve its ability to translate over time. The media received the announcement with applause and adulation. Google had created a machine that could learn *and* translate literature, they wrote. The news conference sparked a worldwide wave of interest, and concern, about advances in artificial intelligence and how The Machine would soon be literally doing the talking for us. This paper tests that claim and argues that translation scholarship must quickly start to incorporate a close study of technology’s influence on the process and study of translation in the digital age. I first analyze Google’s results in translating the Borges quote. Then I analyze my own test of GT in translating a specific sample of Spanish prose to English compared to my own translation of the same text. I then show how two other leading translation scholar achieved similar results using GT. And finally, I describe how machine translation works and argue that this knowledge is important for all translation scholars.

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and announcement by Pichai in London on November 15 and 16, 2016. Pichai tweeted, “Hello from London!” on November 14. <https://twitter.com/sundarpichai/status/798235415434166272?lang=en>

How does Pichai's new tool improve over the previous version? Translations from the old GT tool are literal and begin with the archaic, formal register of "One is" then switch to the masculine pronoun "he." The syntax is garbled: "One is not what is for..." The translation doesn't match the rhythm and music of the original phrase — *Uno no es / lo que es / por lo que escribe*. But the older translation is understandable, clear in its transferred meaning, and perhaps acceptable for the purposes of travel communication, business transactions or even media and news reports. Technologists rate the quality of translations in terms of accuracy, as expressed in percentages (see Toral and Way, "Machine Translates Literature and About 25% Was Flawless"), which instantly raises the question of what is an accurate translation and who decides. The question also triggers the "sense-for-sense versus word-for-word" debate about translation accuracy that dates to St. Jerome and St. Augustine's debate over translations of the Bible and which Robinson calls "the repressive dualism of Western thought" (24). In fact, the question of reviewing, critiquing and rating the quality of translations is one of the most vexing debates in the translation community today and the focus of a Modern Language Association (MLA) paper on evaluating translations when awarding degrees, promotions and tenure (MLA 2011). In the case of developing computer algorithms that translate language, the answer to who decides the accuracy of the machine's translation is people: The code writers (the trainers) choose experts who review and rate the quality of the machine translations using criteria they themselves have established, as interpreted by the expert reviewers. None of this complex background was addressed in the media launch of the new GT version of the Borges quote, which was presented as an important improvement. The updated translation improves on the previous version in several ways: the syntax problem has disappeared; the phrase is grammatically correct; the register is arguably more informal than the original Spanish (Borges

uses “one is” not “you are”), but not completely casual and conversational. For example, “you are not” instead of “you aren’t” and “you have” instead of “you’ve.” Like the first version, the updated translation fails to recreate the poetry of the phrase. But for those gathered at the news conference, and for the world, Google’s message seemed clear: they wanted to demonstrate how the improvement to GT’s new English version of the Borges quote demonstrated that the company’s upgraded algorithm also worked on literature, not just on E-mails and menus.

The choice of a Borges quote for the sample translation was obviously not coincidental, but Google’s intention behind it is unclear. Borges was himself a prolific translator and advocated for creative approaches to translation, rejecting the notion that there is only one “accurate” way to translate a text and that the best translations are the embellished ones, not the word-for-word faithful ones. He argued that translations can improve on the originals in some ways, and that the interest lies in examining multiple versions (Venuti 74). Was Pichai’s message that day in London simply that the new Google translation tool was more accurate? Or was he trying to say the tool could now act like a human brain, endowed with creativity and the ability to produce various versions of a literary piece of writing? At the news conference, Pichai explained that the new GT tool is based on an algorithm that replicates what neurons do in a human brain: it takes in data, codes it, puts it into some sort of context, and then re-codes it for output. This is called Neural Machine Translation (NMT) and Google’s version of it is called Google Neural Machine Translation (GNMT). It replaces the previous phrased-based, or statistical machine translator, which analyzed word pairs based on frequency of use across massive amounts of digitized data. Based on the example Pichai shared at the press conference, observers were invited to conclude that the new GNMT is working. Since its launch, media commentators and GT users in social media have been hailing its improvement but scholars and

technology writers (Bershidsky, Caliskan, Greenwald, Hern, Knight, O'Neil, Schiebinger, Ungerleider, Yu) have raised questions around important issues and potential dangers of the technology. They cite poor quality of translations, the introduction of human biases, and what translation scholar Emily Apter calls “linguicide” (133), in which the translation zone becomes a war zone, riddled with conflicts over what gets translated and published and who gets left out — mostly local communities and minority languages — as translation becomes mainly a focus of commerce. The dialogue around translation and technology must continue to avoid “myopic, self-enclosed regionalism, and a eulogistic acceptance of new technologies of mediality for their own sake” (206). The advance of artificial intelligence is a crucial phase of the digital age and should become the focus of more intensive investigation and support for translation scholars who choose to focus on it. Cronin describes the impact of technology on translation — and, by extension, on human culture and society — as no less than a revolution, with a profound, radical and far-reaching impact (2). He writes that translation specifically faces a constant evolution in reading practices as we move from paper to screens, reading on ubiquitous smart phones that offer machine translation for almost every reading, listening, watching and interacting event. While these are exciting developments, Cronin’s enthusiasm is mixed with confusion about the possibilities these changes offer. “Students, scholars and indeed anyone interested in the future of human cultures and languages would be well advised to watch carefully what is happening to translation in a digital age” (2). In times of change and confusion, it is crucial to marshal resources to study and understand technology.

This paper seeks to contribute to the understanding of how neural machine translation tools are created, making what turns out to be a human-influenced process easier for the technology layperson to comprehend. It analyzes the benefits and limitations of Google

Translate, with its highly promoted new “neural” process, as a reliable tool for professional translators and scholars working to render complex texts from one language to another by testing it over a nine-month period to translate a literary prose text from Spanish into English. The results of this test parallel results produced by Allen and Large in that they show GT translations of complex literary texts range from close but imperfect to deeply flawed. For example, I was not able to replicate the “successful” Borges translation presented at the Google Translate news conference. When I entered the Spanish-language original into Google Translate at intervals through 2018, the translated versions changed each time. (see Fig. 1):

“One is not what he is because of what he writes, but because of what he has read.” (GT, January 27, 2018)

“One is not what he is by what he writes, but by what he has read.” (GT, December 2, 2018)

This January 2018 GT translation is *accurate*, if in fact accuracy is the goal, and grammatically correct. It reintroduces the more formal “One is...” and retains the conjunction-free verbs. The December 2018 version introduces new grammatical errors: “by what he writes.” Neither version captures the poetry of the original in a way that inspires the same emotional and intellectual reaction in an English-language reader as the original would for a Spanish-language reader.

Borges might ask, does that matter? Allen argues that each translation is a scholarly and artistic act whose purpose and goal are determined by the translator’s intent (Allen, “Footnotes”). Is the fact that GT produces different versions over time of a given translation a human-like characteristic? If, as Allen says, translation is an act of scholarly insight as well as artistic interpretation, is it possible for an algorithm to produce “art” and “scholarship” in a result?

Internationally renowned translator scholar Sherry Simon cites French translator and translation scholar Antoine Berman's view that the consideration of any translation must include the "total context" of the work, respecting the original and the reader but also interrogating and sometimes confronting the original and the needs of the reader (Simon 36). When a named human translator performs that act, we can analyze the result in the context of her choices. When a globalized machine translation tool such as Google Translate, which serves billions of users at once, performs that act through an algorithm, the decision-making process is no longer transparent. "[Berman's] ethics of translation takes into account the total context of mediation in which translation takes place...." (Simon 36).<sup>48</sup> The consequences of the globalization of translation are profound. Cronin describes globalized communication as "controlled languages," which involves the simplification of language for the ease of machine translation, an approach to translation that is goal-oriented and has just one right way, and a specific, pre-defined end, a process driven by global commerce and a desire for a common global digital language to facilitate it. This insistence on consistency and standardized outputs, even for something as complex as language, has implications of power, control and ethics in literary translation. What is the line between "digital authorship and digital interaction"? Cronin asks (5). The question is important because "language does not simply "mirror" reality; it contributes to it" (Simon 14). Reality in the digital age inevitably includes continued technological evolution at a blinding pace.

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<sup>48</sup> Simon summarizes the core of both Berman's and her own argument: "Dismissing the long-standing but sterile standoff between literalism and freedom, source-oriented and target-oriented translation, Berman argues that, 'Every significant translation is grounded in a project, in an articulated goal. This project is determined both by the position of the translator and by the specific demands of the work to be translated' (36) (Berman 95:76).

Developing high-quality artificial intelligence tools, which encompass machine translation, is a hotly competitive business. AI is already at work across our digital profiles on smart phones, photos, search engines, facial-recognition and voice-activated programs like Siri, Alexa and Google Assistant. Pichai has spoken on a number of occasions about shifting Google from a “mobile first” strategy to an “AI first” strategy,<sup>49</sup> (Fig. 2) which in lay terms means that machine learning — the ability of the software programs to “learn” on their own and improve their performance — underpins all of its products, from the Android phone to Google photos to Google search. The key word here is “learn.” In order to learn, Google Translate and all AI programs need first to be “taught” by human input. So how *does* Google teach its translation tool to translate? Google reported that in 2016 about 500 million people used the tool each month and that a total of 3.5 million people had made 90 million contributions into GT’s official feedback tool (Turovsky). Is each search a contribution to the tool? Are all contributions equal? What most GT users don’t realize is that each machine translation tool is different. Facebook, Amazon, Apple and Microsoft invest heavily in research and development to create the best and most used machine translation tool, and each company has its own secret algorithm, databases, training and testing approach.

Literary translators and scholars in particular should, therefore, take a critical interest in how these software programs are developed or “taught” because the outcome has a direct impact on the evolution of the publishing industry’s approach to bringing non-English works of scholarship and literature into English. Professional translators report that they are seeing an increase in work being offered as editors on first drafts produced by machine translation, a trend

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<sup>49</sup> Pichai detailed the strategy at the May, 2017 Google Developers conference.  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y2VF8tmLFHw>

that potentially has a huge impact on the publishing industry and the work of literary translators because translation results can vary widely depending on what machine translation tool is used (American Literary Translators of Association ALTA Conference 2018).<sup>50</sup> In addition, a small but increasing number of scholars are experimenting with machine translation in their own corpus-based translation studies projects (Toral, “Machine...”). Scholars in the 21st century must be able to learn to use, or at least understand, the technology underlying these trends lest they be left behind in isolation in a burgeoning industry of translation practice and translation training increasingly driven by technology. As argued by O’Hagan, the lack of interest by translation scholars in machine translation “brings home the fact that technology is something that has been missing from the heart of the discussion in translation theories, leading to their lack of explanatory power in relation to translation phenomena rapidly unfolding from technological developments” (507).

With this theoretical framework and context in mind, the research questions posed here are whether and how Google Translate learns, and whether it can learn to translate literature to a specific goal, in this case of a suitable quality to be published by a major U.S. publishing house. The answer is yes and no. GT can learn and does change, but it only learns what its creators teach it, or what the creators program it to learn, not necessarily what users think it should learn.

From April 2017 to February 2018, I experimented with using GT translations in comparison to my own work on a novel I am currently translating from Spanish into English. *Alguien dice tu nombre (Someone Speaks Your Name)*, by Luis García Montero, is a coming-of-age narrative about León, a young man in 1960s Francoist Spain who has just finished his first

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<sup>50</sup> Panel discussion, “Promoting Translations in a Digital World,” ALTA41, November 3, 2018. [www.literarytranslators.org/conference/alta41](http://www.literarytranslators.org/conference/alta41)

year studying literature at the University of Granada. He views the world through his obsession with literature and poetry and wants to become a writer. The novel is his diary as he starts his first summer job selling encyclopedias, and he uses the journal to record his experiences and to experiment with his writing. The narrative ranges from pedantic and petulant teenage observations about Spanish life and culture under the Franco dictatorship to worshipful mimicking of his favorite authors as he experiments with creating his own sometimes embarrassing rhetorical excesses. He is an unreliable narrator, and the register of the writing careens with his adolescence moods. In essence, this readable, brisk narrative is filigreed with layers of poetic references, literary allusions, cultural references and at times complex word play. It is the poetic voice of García Montero, renowned for his poetry more than his fiction, rendered into a lightly autobiographical narrative showing how literature opens the doors to intellectual, sexual and political enlightenment. What I sought to test was GT's claim that the Google Neural Machine Translation (GNMT)<sup>51</sup> algorithm would "learn" over time to translate text from this novel well, as human translators do during the course of a translation project.

For this experiment, I chose to focus on the opening lines of the novel, arguably the most important of any work. In this case, the text is particularly difficult, as our protagonist narrator starts his story by waving his idiosyncrasies in the reader's face. He proclaims that words are more important than numbers, so he forgoes numerals and writes out the names of years with letters. He tries to display his teenage erudition with an extended metaphor for time standing still and two gilded hendecasyllabic verses. Below is my translation of the first paragraph in the

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<sup>51</sup> While there are a number of other Neural Machine Translator (NMT) tools available, I've chosen to focus only on GNMT because it has the biggest user base and, for now, the biggest impact on public perception of Machine Translation.

novel, a first-person self-introduction by the prickly and yet intriguing protagonist, followed by the Spanish original:

The calendar in the bar is suspended in time and place. Nothing changes, no one can escape from here. It displays the nineteenth of April. It doesn't show the last eleven days of April or any of May or June. As Vicente Fernández pointed out to me later, it also hasn't shown the last two hundred and fifty-six days of nineteen sixty, or nineteen sixty-one or nineteen sixty-two, or the first one hundred and eighty-one days of nineteen sixty-three. I prefer the arts to science and I like to write out numbers with letters... although when I write poetry, I count out the syllables with numbers. *We all exist in a suspension of time*, eleven syllables, that's a hendecasyllable. *An angel with its tremendous wings for chains* is another. Eleven syllables.

El calendario del bar está detenido en el tiempo y en el espacio. Nada cambia, nadie puede escaparse de aquí. Marca el diecinueve de abril. No han pasado por él ni los últimos once días de abril, ni mayo ni junio. Como luego me señaló Vicente Fernández, tampoco han pasado los últimos doscientos cincuenta y seis días de mil novecientos sesenta, ni mil novecientos sesenta y uno, ni mil novecientos sesenta y dos, ni los primeros ciento ochenta y un días de mil novecientos sesenta y tres. Soy de letras más que de ciencias y me gusta escribir con letras los números... aunque cuando escribo poesía cuento con números las sílabas. *Vivimos en un tiempo detenido*, once sílabas, eso es un endecasílabo. *Ángel con grandes alas por cadenas*, otro. Tiene once sílabas (García Montero 1).

There are many challenges in these few lines, some of which I've underlined above. My focus has been on how GT handles them over time. The answer is, that over nine months of my experiment the errors and imperfections in the first translation remained, and then new imperfections were introduced into subsequent translations. I tested this paragraph from April 2017 to January 2018, at a rate of about once a month, and in November 2017 several times in one week, to observe whether increased frequency had an effect. The only variant to the results occurred in October 2017, when new errors started to appear and have remained since.<sup>52</sup> Each time I used GT to translate this paragraph, I "corrected" the version in GT's own feedback form to see if my feedback produced any changes. To date, it hasn't. Below is my first use of GT on this paragraph.

Google Translate Version April 1, 2017

"The calendar of the bar is stopped in time and space. Nothing changes, no one can escape from here. It marks the nineteenth of April. They have not gone through it not the last eleven days of April, nor May, nor June. As Vicente Fernandez pointed out to me, neither the last two hundred and fifty-six days of nineteen hundred and sixty, nor nineteen hundred and sixty-one, nor nineteen hundred and sixty-two, nor the first hundred and eighty-one days of nineteen hundred and sixty-three. I am of letters more than of sciences and I like to write with letters the numbers ... although when I write poetry I

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<sup>52</sup> Google Translate regularly updates its algorithm with new features and corrections. Each update is a new version. In 2017 it introduced 10 new versions, including one on September 28, Version 15.13.0. I have no direct evidence to tie this new version to the changes in my experiments with the García Montero text, but I note the date as anecdotal connection. As of December 2017, GT was on Version 5.15.0.

<https://www.apk4fun.com/history/6483/>

count with numbers the syllables. *We live in a detained time*, eleven syllables, that's a hendecasyllable. *Angel with big wings by chains*, another. They have eleven syllables.”

A mathematical analysis of this translation might rate it fairly high. Almost 50 percent of the word-for-word translations are accurate. For literature, is that acceptable? For publishing by a mainstream U.S. book editor, the answer is no. This first GT translation of this experiment was the best one of the nine-month experiment. Word choices can be debated. I chose “suspended” instead of “stopped” in the first sentence to convey possibility of renewed action. I chose “place” instead of “space,” which is the literal translation because I wanted to ensure there was no hint of sci-fi or outer space in the opening lines. These are artistic choices that can vary from one translator to another. GT grapples with syntax issues, however, offering literal translations of “write with letters the numbers” and “count with numbers the syllables” that don’t work in English. Contextually “por” should be “for.” The contextual word “later” is missing to indicate when the Fernandez character starts to intervene. The Spanish verb “detain” is used in the first sentence of the original and echoed in the first hendecasyllable verse, while two different verbs are deployed in the GT version (as in mine). The conjunction of “that’s” is the correct register in this teenager’s diary. At no point was GT able to translate the verses as hendecasyllables. One notable success was GT’s accurate, if grammatically unusual, use of words to write out the years, one of the protagonist’s self-proclaimed quirks. Rendering the year as “nineteen hundred and sixty” is not as good as “nineteen sixty” but it’s close and could be acceptable. That “success” disappeared in November 2017 when GT began to render it into a full number, one thousand nine hundred and sixty, rather than to express it as a year (nineteen sixty) as below in the second example.

Google Translate, October 15, 2017

The calendar of the bar is stopped in time and space. Nothing changes, no one can escape from here. It marks the nineteenth of April. They have not gone through it the last eleven days of April, or May or June. As Vicente Fernandez pointed out to me, neither the last two hundred and fifty-six days of nineteen hundred and sixty, nor nineteen hundred and sixty-one, nor nineteen sixty-two, nor the first hundred and eighty-one days of nineteen hundred and sixty three. I am of letters more than of sciences and I like to write with letters the numbers ... although when I write poetry I count with numbers the syllables. We live in a detained time, eleven syllables, that's a hendecasyllable. *Angel with big wings by chains*, another. It has eleven syllables.

Google Translate, November 1, 2017

The bar calendar is stopped in time and space. Nothing changes, no one can escape from here. It marks the nineteenth of April. Neither the last eleven days of April nor May nor June have passed through it. As Vicente Fernandez pointed out to me, the last two hundred and fifty-six days of one thousand nine hundred and sixty, nor one thousand nine hundred and sixty-one, nor one thousand nine hundred and sixty-two, nor the first one hundred and eighty-one days of one thousand nine hundred and sixty and three. I am of letters more than of sciences and I like to write with letters the numbers ... although when I write poetry I count with numbers the syllables. We live in a detained time, eleven syllables, that is a hendecasyllable. *Angel with great wings by chains*, another. It has eleven syllables.”

Google Translate, January 27, 2018

The bar calendar is stopped in time and space. Nothing changes, no one can escape from here. It marks the nineteenth of April. Neither the last eleven days of April nor May nor June have passed through it. As Vicente Fernandez pointed out to me, the last two hundred and fifty-six days of one thousand nine hundred and sixty, or one thousand nine hundred and sixty-one, or one thousand nine hundred and sixty-two, nor the first one hundred and eighty-one days of one thousand nine hundred and sixty-three. I am of letters more than of sciences and I like to write with letters the numbers ... although when I write poetry I count with numbers the syllables. We live in a detained time, eleven syllables, that is a hendecasyllable. *Angel with great wings by chains*, another. It has eleven syllables.

Each time I tested the translation, I would use the GT feedback tool to insert my English translation as the “correct” one (Fig. 3). My feedback appears to have had no impact on how GT translated this text over the last 10 months. As part of this experiment, I joined the Google Translate Community (Fig. 4), where users are invited to translate correct language pairs for the benefit of all: “Your help will enhance translations for millions of users.” This public-facing process of checks and balances on the Google Translate tool is carried out by a self-selected community of volunteer translators who use a Google verification tool to translate phrases provided by Google in the tool and to “verify” translations done by others. Google awards “badges” to contributors based on the number of translations or corrections they complete. It’s not clear if quality is part of the criteria for badges (Fig. 4), but the site does make clear that volunteers are never paid for this work.<sup>53</sup> Volunteers are invited to participate in the GT

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<sup>53</sup> See Dolmaya for a detailed description of the widespread phenomenon of internet users volunteering their time and expertise to translate content for Google, Twitter, Facebook, Wikipedia, and TEDTalks and others, and her analysis of what motivates these individuals to work for free.

Translation Community Forum, which allows for discussion threads on questions, feedback and problem-solving among translators and the occasional Google Translate staff project manager.<sup>54</sup>

This community problem-solving approach is common to large technology companies; the difference with Google is scale. In July 2018, in his quarterly earnings report, Google CEO Pichai announced that GT transacts 143.3 billion translations per day<sup>55</sup>. The implications of this huge volume for GT users is that GT cannot be all things to all translators, and translating literature with this particular tool may never be a satisfactory experience.

The results of my experiment with García Montero’s prose match similar tests of GT on literature by other researchers. Award-winning Spanish-to-English literary translator and translation scholar Esther Allen tested the first sentence of her translation of Mario Benedetti’s novel *Zama* intermittently over the course of six years, ending in 2016 a few months before the launch of the GNMT algorithm. Though based on the “old” GT algorithm, which tested word pairs in comparison with vast number of digitized books, the Spanish-to-English versions it produced for Allen were, like mine, partially successful, although they also contained completely unacceptable “bloopers” that did not go away over time and got worse (Allen). The first line of *Zama* in the original Spanish is:

“Salí de la ciudad, ribera abajo, al encuentro solitario del barco que aguardaba, sin saber cuándo vendría.”

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<sup>54</sup> [https://productforums.google.com/forum/#!msg/translate/JGrKwzVYZUY/\\_P3sljAeCQAJ](https://productforums.google.com/forum/#!msg/translate/JGrKwzVYZUY/_P3sljAeCQAJ)

<sup>55</sup> <https://www.businessinsider.in/Google-CEO-Sundar-Pichai-revealed-a-jaw-dropping-fact-about-its-translation-app-that-shows-how-much-money-is-still-sitting-on-the-table/articleshow/65111657.cms>. In the context of the earnings report Pichai said that Google is not yet monetizing that usage either by charging for it or by placing ads on the pages, which, as with Google search, it could easily do. While Pichai did not suggest that a shift to monetizing the translation tool is imminent, if it does happen it could affect how it is used and the quality of the results.

In her article, Allen shares four versions of that line as translated by GT between 2010 and 2016. Below is the 2016 GT version that Allen generated and her own translation of the line that appears in the published work.

*“I left the city, river bottom, to meet the boat alone waiting, not knowing when to come.”*  
(GT, generated by Allen, 2010)

*“I left the city, riverside down to meet the boat alone waiting, not knowing when it would come.”* (GT, generated by Allen, 2012)

*“I left the city, riverside below, solitaire game boat waiting, not knowing when to come.”*  
(GT, generated by Allen, 2014)

*“I left the city and made my way downriver alone, to meet the ship I awaited without knowing when it would come.”* (Allen, Zama, 2016)

As all of Allen’s experimentation took place before the launch of the GNMT algorithm, it seemed important to me to test GT on this same sentence once more with the GNMT as I was drafting this paper. Here’s what it produced:

*“I left the city, shore below, to the solitary encounter of the ship that waited, without knowing when it would come.”* (From GT generated by King, January 28, 2018)

As Allen points out in her article, the first phrase “I left the city,” is so common and straightforward that it didn’t present a challenge to GT in any of these versions. The rest of the sentence was, and still is beyond GT’s capabilities. The important question in ongoing assessments of machine translation tools is not “Is it right?” The question should be “How do we

know how it works?” Allen expressed that concern in her 2016 article: “many people still run phrases through Google Translate and assume that the results are some sort of unvarying, literal, mathematical, algorithmically precise translation” (Allen). Allen’s answer to the question of whether Google can translate literature is, emphatically, no.<sup>56</sup>

Duncan Large, director of the British Centre for Literary Translation (BCLT), recently performed a similar micro test of GT, alongside competitors MS Bing and DeepL, in translating Shakespeare into German. Large presented his findings in a speech titled *Could Google Translate Shakespeare?*, which is available on *YouTube*. Large’s test was a one-off, not over time, and his answer to the title’s question is yes, embarrassingly badly. He shares examples of “Bottom’s Song” from *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* as rendered by the three machine translators into modern German (Fig. 5), of which Large is a professor. The audience reacts with hilarity as Large details the errors of all three machine translation tools. He qualified the machine translation output as “doing little better than groping forward.”<sup>57</sup> The importance of his 53-minute presentation lies in two critical questions he poses to the audience: Who decides what a “satisfactory” translation is and what is the purpose of a literary translation? He concludes that machine translation may liberate human creativity, that the “artistic license of a translation project” may flourish in the future because machines will take over projects that are not art. He aptly points to the development of photography in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, which some feared

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<sup>56</sup> “No, Google Translate was in no way useful to my translation of the 1956 Argentine novel *Zama*: let’s get that out of the way first thing.” (Allen)

<sup>57</sup> Almahasees (2017) concludes the same after testing GT and Bing neural machine translation tools to translate Khalil Gibran’s *The Prophet* from Arabic into English. “Machine Translation is still far away from reaching translation quality that achieved by human translators.”

would bring an end to portrait painting. Instead, Large notes, this same period ushered in an era of creative portraits such as those by Picasso. “I’d like to suggest that the rise of the machine translation might have the same galvanizing and liberating effect on the human translators if they allow themselves to be liberated from the shackles of faithful chain of equivalents narrowly defined to and freed up to become their inner Picasso.”

Although optimistic, Large’s view doesn’t address concerns by critics that the growth of machine translation and artificial intelligence in general is largely unsupervised and unregulated, and the rules that underpin it are too opaque and difficult for non-specialists to decipher. Mathematician and data scientist Cathy O’Neil, in her book *Weapons of Math Destruction*, warns against blind trust in these new AI algorithms. She argues that these mathematical models are created by fallible humans, and once created are not held to the same standards. She calls for transparency in all commercial and government data programs, disclosure of input data and results of testing and targeting, as well as audits. “These are powerful engines, after all. We must keep our eyes on them” (O’Neil 218). Some of the translators and translation scholars I cite in this paper are beginning to do just that, working to test and understand the opportunities and limits of machine translation. It’s clear from my experiments and those by other literary translators and scholars that GT isn’t good enough — yet — for use on poetry or sophisticated prose and not even as a Computer Assisted Translating (CAT) tool.<sup>58</sup> Nevertheless, millions of people are using it in many different ways because it is free and ubiquitous.

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<sup>58</sup> CAT tools are used extensively by professional translators of medical, legal, technical and literary translations. They include features such as a glossary, which records how the translator renders a word or phrase in a text and offers it up as an option when it appears again. Most popular tools include Linguee and SDL Trados Studio.

Now I will turn my attention to describing how literary translators, educators and scholars without a math or science background can understand NMT and put it into context for their own work. My experiment with trying to “teach” GT over time seems to confirm that single-user feedback does not influence GT, yet Google encourages individuals to contribute feedback to its translation tool. Why? What is the impact on how the tool learns? There is no doubt GT is evolving, but in response to what? I saw changes in translations during my experiment when GT shifted from “nineteen hundred and sixty” to “one thousand nine hundred and sixty.” From my perspective, this exacerbated the inadequacy of the translation. Why did GT make this change? What caused the shift? Was it one of GT’s version updates? What was it correcting for? Based on how the rendering of numbers has changed, I could hypothesize that algorithm “tweak,” if there was one, might be reflecting a bias toward mathematical accuracy, since the writers of the algorithm are mathematicians. Large draws a similar conclusion when he notes that all three MT tools translated “fortune” in Hamlet’s “...slings and arrows of outrageous fortune” in the financial sense, rather than as fate, because the code was written by people in a business setting. What is important to understand is that Google Translate is used by millions of people for innumerable tasks and that it performs some tasks better than others. As translators and translation scholars begin to learn and use machine translation more, we can and should learn how to develop our own tools that work more effectively for the specific task of translating and researching literature. For example: two European researchers recently published a report on their experiment to create a neural machine translator specifically designed to translate literature. Antonio Toral, a Catalan computational linguist, and Andy Way, British data scientist, machine translation expert and professor at Dublin City University, built their own machine translators in an experiment comparing English-to-Catalan translations of novels by a statistical machine

translator, a neural machine translator and humans. The goal was to use literature to train and test the machine translation tools. In their article “What Level of Quality Can Neural Machine Translation Attain on Literary Text?” the two scholars describe training their machine translation tools, one statistical, the other neural, with a corpus of hundreds of novels — “over 100 million words” in Catalan and in bilingual Catalan-English.<sup>59</sup> They then developed a two-stage test of the tools’ abilities to translate literature from English into Catalan.

For the first stage of testing, they used a standardized algorithm called BLEU<sup>60</sup> (bilingual evaluation understudy) to automate a comparative evaluation of the two different types of machine translations against the professional human translations of the same text. They then selected 12 well-known English novels by authors such as James Joyce, Ernest Hemingway, George Orwell, and J. K. Rowling that had already been published in Catalan translation. While the Google Brain team tested GT using single isolated sentences from *Wikipedia*, Toral and Way evaluated large portions of their selected novels.<sup>61</sup> BLEU evaluated how well the machine translations matched the professional human translations. The results, the authors write, show that the neural machine translator outperformed the statistical machine translator by a “significant” margin. The results seem to suggest that when a NMT is trained with large amounts of literary data, the quality of the literary output can improve, to a certain degree.

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<sup>59</sup> The data included 133 “parallel” or bilingual novels (the authors’ designation) totaling 1 million sentence “pairs,” 1,000 books (it’s unclear whether these are novels) in Catalan only, and 1,600 books in English. Interestingly, they also incorporated language pairs from the crowd-sourced subtitle translation site *OpenSubtitles.org*. Without saying so explicitly, the authors have designated the subtitle in translation genre as literature.

<sup>60</sup> BLEU (bilingual evaluation understudy) is a popular tool used by computational linguists to evaluate translations across a large body of data.

<sup>61</sup> The percentages of sentences evaluated from each novel range from 46.65 to 82.93 percent.

For the second stage of their test, the authors used humans. Two native Catalan speakers<sup>62</sup> reviewed three different translations (human, statistical and neural) of 10 randomly selected passages of 10 sentences each from three books and ranked them. The books were Orwell's *1984*, Rowling's *Harry Potter #7*, and J. D. Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye*. The two evaluators were blind to which was the human translation (Fig. 7). The results showed that between 17 and 34 percent of the translations produced by the neural machine translator were rated by native speakers of the target language (Catalan) as equivalent quality to translations produced by a professional human translator. On the face of it, this is a good result, though it came after extremely laborious training of a machine translation tool that required time, expert people, resources and intent. In summarizing, the authors write that the next phase of their research will focus on whether a NMT tool can assist in the translation of a novel, something it would need to be highly trained to do.

This kind of research is certain to increase as more translation scholars begin to embrace the inevitability of the technology. Throughout history, human response to unsettling new technology has ranged from laughter to terror. Popular culture interprets these reactions through the creation of fictional symbols such as Frankenstein's monster, Hal the Computer from *2001 Space Odyssey* and, of course, the Terminator, the machine that has become "self-aware." In the case of Google and its AI-driven machine translation, the reaction has been laughter and ridicule in the form of online jokes, internet memes and YouTube videos demonstrating how funny the

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<sup>62</sup> Unlike Wu, et al., Toral and Way not only described the number and qualifications of their human evaluators, they also named them (26).

“bad” GT translations are.<sup>63</sup> Both the fear and the fun are probably overstated. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics reported in 2016 that job opportunities for interpreters and translators would grow by 18 percent, much faster than average, between 2016 and 2026, driven by globalization and a world-wide increase in the population of English-speakers (*Occupational Outlook Handbook*). In literature, the University of Rochester’s *Three Percent Blog* reports consistent year-on-year growth of literature and poetry in translation into English over the last decade. Literary translators, often anonymous and unnamed, are now being acknowledged and celebrated in their roles, sharing literature recognition with the original author and literary prizes.<sup>64</sup> Amid this growth and success for literary translators, looms concern about the rise of machine translation as a threat to translators’ job security and as a little-understood phenomenon with a potentially broad impact on modern life, automating imperfect translations of important works of scholarship and literature. In order to illustrate the challenge of understanding how machine translation works, from a non-specialist perspective, I have summarized a report by Google Brain, the AI research division of Google, on their development and testing of the GNMT tool. The report had more than 30 authors, and access to all of Google’s proprietary data for training and testing. As with the Toral and Way translation tool, this report demonstrates that the work of machine translation tools is regulated by the humans who “teach” them.

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<sup>63</sup> The Tonight Show with Jimmy Fallon broadcast a series of performances titled “Google Translates ...” by stars singing lyrics “translated” by the Google Translate tool. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4GC83wOz0ec> They are very funny to watch, but probably not as funny to the GT developer team.

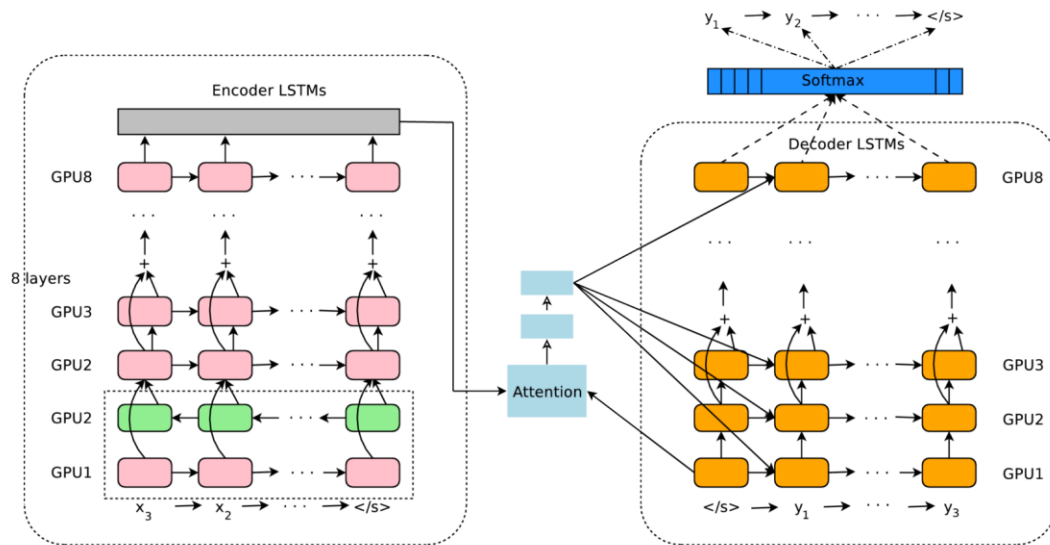
<sup>64</sup> In 2016, the prestigious Man Booker International Prize changed its focus to honor a work in translation to English, splitting the award and prize money equally between author and translator. In 2018, for the first time the U.S. National Book Foundation began awarding a prize for translated literature. <https://www.nationalbook.org/awards-prizes/national-book-awards-2018/?cat=translated-literature>

The Google Brain team's *Bridging the Gap* report accompanied the release of the new GNMT tool and sought to demonstrate how the new algorithm improved over the earlier version, a statistical or phrase-based model. The statistical model analyzed word or phrase pairs from massive databases and found common pairings. In other words, if "perro" in Spanish was most often associated with "dog" in English in the corpora, the algorithm would select "dog" rather than say "hound" or "pup" or even "rogue." Language is much more complex than simple word pairing, thus sentence structure, syntax, grammar and register have been beyond the reach of MT algorithms. Neural network programming advances the process by evaluating whole sentences at a time with layers of code — sequential information — that includes feedback loops. The information is taken in, encoded, processed and then decoded at the other end.<sup>65</sup> The *Bridging the Gap* report is highly technical,<sup>66</sup> but it reveals some information for non-specialists about how the machine translation process works.

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<sup>65</sup> MIT has developed an open-source NMT project that displays a useful graphic to illustrate how this process works. <http://opennmt.net/>

<sup>66</sup> One helpful Google-produced video explains the process, including a description of Tensor Flow, the machine learning library of algorithms and production models. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oZikw5k\\_2FM](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oZikw5k_2FM)



Google Brain graph depicting the sequential coding programs and feedback loops that process source text and translation into a target language. (Wu, et al. 4)

The authors begin by describing neural networks, including identifying inherent weaknesses in any Neural Machine Translation program. The weaknesses are: 1) the time and “computational resources” needed to create an effective tool, 2) lack of robustness in translating “rare” words and, 3) a tendency to leave out words in the translation process. This third tendency appears in my own experiment. GT’s translation of the first paragraph of *Someone Speaks Your Name* consistently drops the word “luego” or “later” from the text. It also appears in how GT renders a number when the original is spelled out in words. It makes no attempt, for example, to translate the Spanish “mil novecientos sesenta” as “1960” instead of “nineteen sixty,” a publishing style nuance that is unlikely to have appeared in its training. The challenge of time and computational resources, though, is where the real work of teaching the machine happens, and thus it is key to understanding how the tools work. Computation resources refer to the corpora, or sets of data, used to train algorithms. It also refers to the amount of computing power

being used, literally machines and software. Working with large data sets require both. Research by Wu et al. refers explicitly to “computationally expensive” programs (9).

What does it mean to “train” an AI program? German programmer, artist and author Gene Kogan describes it in an article on his blog *ml4a* (machine learning for artists) through the metaphor of descending a mountain in the dark. You test the direction that feels promising to go down, go a few feet then test again in a “gradient descent” which is a mathematical term for analyzing and optimizing an algorithm. In other words, to train a machine translation tool, humans have to feel their way by writing a computer algorithm, feed it data, test it, correct it, and continue until they are satisfied with the result. Both the algorithms and the databases used in the process can be proprietary or open source, or a combination. In “How Neural Networks are Trained,” Kogan writes that perhaps too many people rush to use pre-trained machine learning libraries without knowing how they were trained. Other researchers have already begun find that AI tools such as machine translators can absorb and deploy human biases, including race and gender bias (Caliskan). The biases can originate in the semantics of the vast text corpora, the basic building block of machine translation, which have long been acknowledged to include cultural stereotypes, according to these reports. For example, in their 2017 summary of findings published in April 2017 in *Science*, Caliskan et al. describe a research project that aimed to test whether and how machine learning algorithms picked up and replicated human biases. The researchers used publicly available, “off-the-shelf” machine learning components (algorithms) called GloVe<sup>67</sup> to create a machine translation tool for testing on public web-based corpora sets of “everyday” language. The results showed that “machine learning absorbs stereotyped biases

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<sup>67</sup> GloVe (Global Vectors for Word Representation), is an open-sourced “unsupervised learning algorithm” developed and maintained by Stanford computer scientists. <https://nlp.stanford.edu/projects/glove/>

as easily as any other (type of bias)” (183). The researchers wanted to make the point that these publicly available machine learning components could “propagate to artificial intelligence (AI) technologies in widespread use”. The implication is that potential biases in machine translation could cause possible broad misinterpretation of translated communication and, in the process, the erasure of voices and cultures. “Like other forms of representation, language does not simply “mirror” reality; it contributes to it. [Translators] can use language as cultural intervention, as part of an effort to alter expressions of domination, whether at the level of concepts, of syntax or of terminology” (Simon). This observation is not a suggestion that machine translation should never be used but a contribution to the argument that translators must understand the tools they are using and the impact they have. The best way to do that is to promote true multidisciplinary approaches to translation scholarship that include training for scholars on the different technology developments.

The Google Brain report includes details of the training process of its model, some of it understandable to a lay reader, some of it accessible only to specialists. The authors explain that they trained the GNMT model for their test using publicly available, pre-processed sets of data<sup>68</sup> and Google Translate’s internal production data, which isn’t public. It’s not clear from the report what this data includes. After training the GNMT tool on these huge data sets, the researchers then tested the efficacy of the tool by deploying human beings to evaluate the results. The human evaluators reviewed three different translations of 500 randomly selected single sentences from Wikipedia and news sites. The human evaluators, fluent in both languages, read the three versions of each translation side by side with the original text and rated them from zero to six,

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<sup>68</sup> In Wu, et al. the researchers used MT14 for English to French and English to German.

with “six” being a “perfect translation: the meaning of the translation is completely consistent with the source, and the grammar is correct,” and a “zero” indicating “complete nonsense.” The rubric does not include evaluation for register, tone or context. The report does not say how many evaluators participated or what their qualifications were. The translations were performed by 1) a statistical, or phrased-based machine translator (PBMT), 2) by Google’s Neural Machine Translator (GNMT), and 3) by an unspecified number of human translators.

Table 10: Mean of side-by-side scores on production data

	PBMT	GNMT	Human	Relative Improvement
English → Spanish	4.885	5.428	5.504	87%
English → French	4.932	5.295	5.496	64%
English → Chinese	4.035	4.594	4.987	58%
Spanish → English	4.872	5.187	5.372	63%
French → English	5.046	5.343	5.404	83%
Chinese → English	3.694	4.263	4.636	60%

The Wu et al. table above shows the results (19). There is relative improvement of translation quality from old machine translation algorithms, to the new neural machine translation system to human translation. The GNMT algorithm has reduced errors by 60 percent over the PBMT algorithm (Fig. 6), the authors report. That significant improvement made headlines. The context of the results, as I’ve described here, has been under reported. The authors also note that GNMT was highly successful in translating some of the simple and “isolated” phrases from these Wikipedia and news articles, producing results almost identical to human translation. This is a similar result to my own and Allen’s experiments. The machine gets the simple stuff right. The Google Brain authors write that successful translation of longer and

more complex language would need to be the subject of future research. The authors also note that the human evaluators reviewed individual sentences, without the benefit of context and thus may not have been able to rate them accurately. Finally, the authors point out that although the highest level of translation rating was a six (perfect translation), the human evaluators never awarded the human translations that perfect score. The Google researchers speculate that this is because of “ambiguities” in the human translations, “non-calibrated” evaluators, or varying levels of proficiency among the evaluators. As any literary translator or translation scholar knows, no two translations of a work of art are ever alike. So, if human beings, who train the machines that translate, can’t agree on what constitutes quality in a literary translation, then how can an algorithm perform that function?

The Wu et al. and Toral and Way research projects illustrate in their different ways the complexity of training NMT tools and how that training can provide different outcomes. Google, a for-profit corporation, provided few details about the training and evaluation of their GNMT test; we don’t know the specifics of their internal production data nor do we know how many human evaluators they used or who they were. Thirty-four authors are listed on the Google Brain report. Toral and Way are non-profit scholars who worked with open-source tools and trained their NMT on publicly available tools and data, which they listed in detail. They named their evaluators. The total team was four people. These experiments demonstrate the importance of intent — how do you want the NMT to work? — and of human decisions about “training” the AI tool. What will the tool be used for, profit or knowledge creation? How will this affect its development? And while this research goes on, working literary translators and translation scholars know that even the new neural machine translation algorithm is not good enough to produce the quality needed even as a support tool for their work. Even video game translators,

who are steeped in technology, so far doubt the ability of software to capture cultural context in translation, which for their literary output — immersive game narratives — is crucial. In a 2016 interview, Tom Lipshultz, an XSEED company localization<sup>69</sup> expert told FACTOR magazine. “My personal motto is ‘translate the meaning, not the words.’” The company doesn’t even use CAT tools, other than to build their own glossaries because they believe quality would be compromised (Ingham).

In conclusion, what started as a simple but practical question — can GT learn to translate literature? — evolved into a voyage of learning and discovery for myself as a translator, scholar and educator about Artificial Intelligence and Neural Machine Translation. In my graduate studies in literature and translation, I tried to reach out to engineering and computational linguistic departments to seek training in this area but was told I needed to have expertise in coding before I could take any classes. So, it has been through my own experimentation and research that I now better understand how Machine Translation works. The process has convinced me that it is critically important for translation scholars to study this technology, its opportunities and its inherent dangers. A good example of this kind of cross-disciplinary training comes from a speech by Criminology Professor Richard Berk at the Wharton School at the University of Pennsylvania in February of 2018. He told a packed classroom of MBA students that they must ask questions about information produced by algorithms: How was the data gathered and quantified? How was the algorithm trained? Who wrote the code and how? Who

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<sup>69</sup> Localization is the term software and online services companies (Microsoft, Google, Facebook, Nintendo) use for the process of rendering their digital tools, products and services into different “local” languages and contexts.

are the humans making the decisions about how the algorithm is used? Berk advised the students to “Push as hard as you can for transparency when using proprietary algorithms and models.”<sup>70</sup>

The development of neural machine translation programs by Google and others is an extraordinary success in a number of important areas, without a doubt a breakthrough with significant impact on how human beings will get information and communicate with each other in the future. It would be facile to dismiss these evolving translation tools as “never” good enough for poetry or literature, despite experiments that show their current inadequacy. Beyond the debate over quality, lies the question of transparency and intent, who is developing these ubiquitous tools? And how are they being used and toward what ends?<sup>71</sup> These questions can best be answered through multi-disciplinary and multi-platform approaches to research and education in translation, the arts and technology, an idea long promoted by advocates of digital humanities in higher education.<sup>72</sup> It is at this intersection of technology and the arts, practitioners and scholars where we can best meet the challenges and embrace the opportunities of artificial intelligence and machine translation, while holding their human creators accountable for ensuring quality and controlling for potential biases. There are a number of ways this could happen. As argued by Davidson and Goldberg in “A Manifesto for Humanities in a Technological Age,” the most effective strategy to encourage multi-disciplinary innovation in

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<sup>70</sup> <https://www.wharton.upenn.edu/story/machines-learn-bias-9-lessons-leaders-correct/>

<sup>71</sup> Google is aware of the challenges of algorithm bias, as this video shows, and has launched a campaign to educate users and promote ethical use. [www.youtube.com/watch?time\\_continue=18&v=59bMh59JQDo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=18&v=59bMh59JQDo) <https://deepmind.com/applied/deepmind-ethics-society/> Google also participates in a consortium of global technology firms collaborating to confront the ethical challenges of AI, called the AI Now initiative <https://artificialintelligencenow>.

<sup>72</sup> See Davidson and Goldberg, “A Manifesto for the Humanities in a Technological Age,” and Jockers and Underwood, “Text-Mining the Humanities,” for examples of multi-disciplinary research projects and muscular argumentation for closer collaboration between technology and the humanities.

teaching and research in higher education is for institutions to develop a system to reward, with promotions and tenure, humanists who create innovative partnerships and programs across departments and disciplines (2). But the authors also point out that the change that this would require must come from the faculty and students themselves, developing projects piece by piece until an overall shift in policy is achieved. For example, at the University of Washington, there are projects underway by graduate students and professors involving technology and translation<sup>73</sup> but they are siloed in their respective departments without much, if any, communication with other scholars. The UW is lucky to have close relationships with major technology companies and organizations, such as Microsoft and the Allen Institute for Artificial Intelligence. Several UW professors<sup>74</sup> who are experts in artificial intelligence and machine translation divide their time working for the Allen Institute for Artificial Intelligence. If a criminology professor can lecture MBA students at the University of Pennsylvania, it must be possible for the faculty and students at the University of Washington and other universities to collaborate to provide an introduction to machine translation for any and all humanities students. The first step is to ask the question, which is the real purpose and intent of this research into Google Translate as a tool for translating literature.

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<sup>73</sup> See in particular the UW Newbook Digital Texts project, led by UW faculty in Near Eastern Studies, Slavic Languages and Literature, English and Digital Humanities. Graduate students in a number of different departments participate in digitizing, translating and interpreting texts and publishing them online for scholarly reference. <http://www.newbookdigitaltexts.org/>

<sup>74</sup> Yejin Choi, Noah Smith, LU.K.e Zettlemyer.

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## Figures

Fig. 1. Screen grab of Borges quote translated by GT generated by King, 27 Jan. 2018.

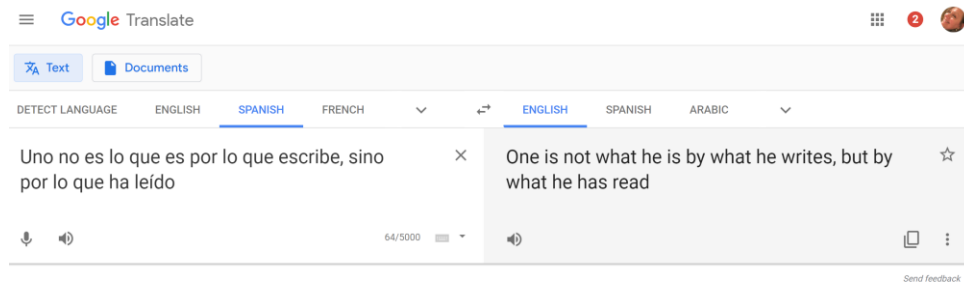
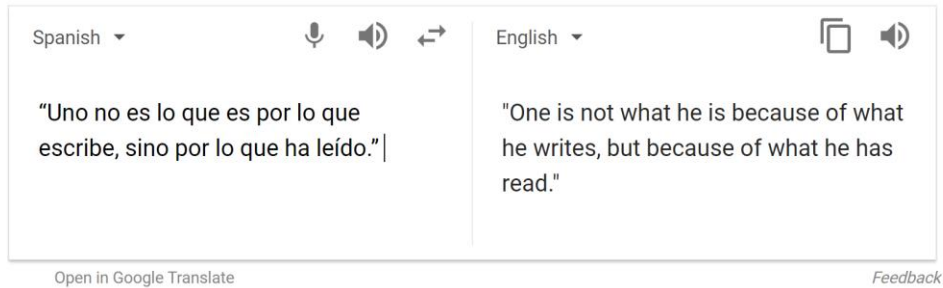


Fig. 2. Screen grab of Pichai speaking to a Google developers meeting about shifting corporate focus to AI first, May 2017.

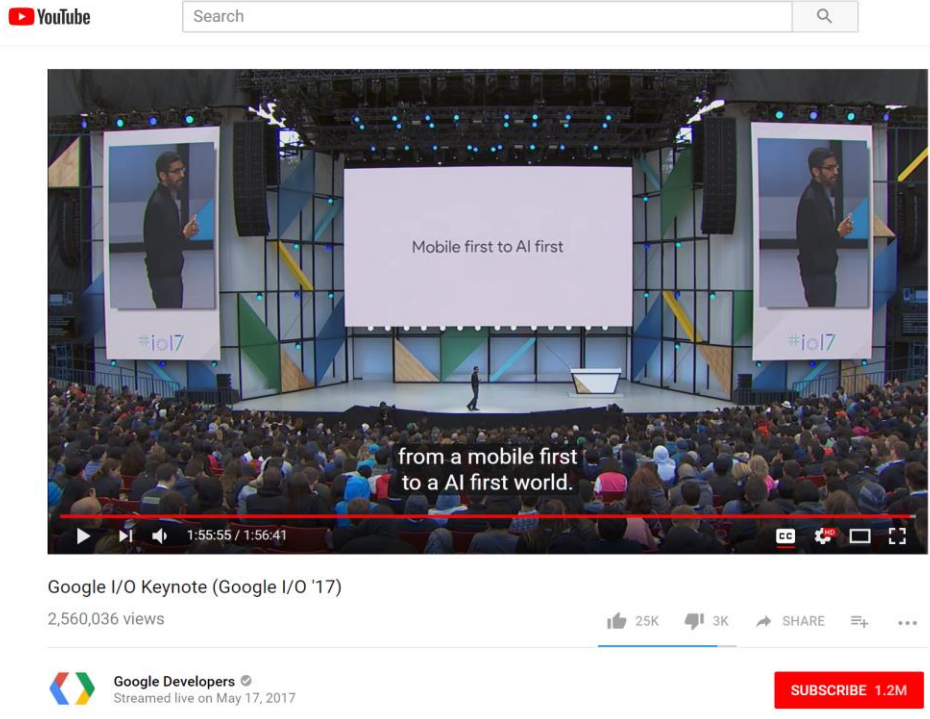
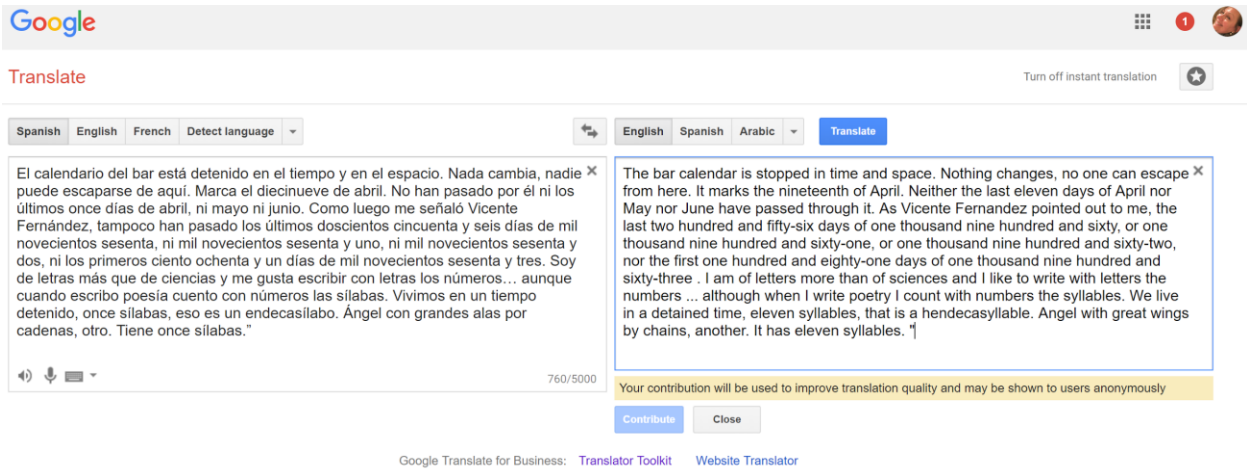


Fig. 3. The GT tool requesting feedback.



Google Translate

Turn off instant translation

Spanish English French Detect language

English Spanish Arabic Translate

El calendario del bar está detenido en el tiempo y en el espacio. Nada cambia, nadie puede escaparse de aquí. Marca el diecinueve de abril. No han pasado por él ni los últimos once días de abril, ni mayo ni junio. Como luego me señaló Vicente Fernández, tampoco han pasado los últimos doscientos cincuenta y seis días de mil novecientos sesenta, ni mil novecientos sesenta y uno, ni mil novecientos sesenta y dos, ni los primeros ciento ochenta y un días de mil novecientos sesenta y tres. Soy de letras más que de ciencias y me gusta escribir con letras los números... aunque cuando escribo poesía cuento con números las sílabas. Vivimos en un tiempo detenido, once sílabas, eso es un endecasílabo. Ángel con grandes alas por cadenas, otro. Tiene once sílabas.

"The calendar in the bar is suspended in time and place. Nothing changes. No one can escape from here. The calendar shows the nineteenth of April. It doesn't show the last eleven days of April or May or June. As Vicente Fernández pointed out to me later, it also hasn't shown the last two hundred and fifty-six days of nineteen sixty, or nineteen sixty-one or nineteen sixty-two, or the first one hundred and eighty-one days of nineteen sixty-three. I prefer the arts to science and I like to write out numbers with letters...although when I write poetry, I count out the syllables with numbers. We all exist in a suspension of time, eleven syllables, that's a hendecasyllable. An angel with its tremendous wings for chains is another. Eleven syllables."

Suggest an edit View original translation

Thank you! Continue improving translation quality

Fig. 4. Google Translate Community contribution tool.

Google Translate Help

Describe your issue

Google Translate Help forum

### Help improve Google Translate

You can help make our translations better, and even add new languages, as part of the Google Translate Community.

#### Join the Google Translate Community

- Go to the [Google Translate Community](#).
- Sign in with your Google account.

After you've joined, when you visit, you could see the option to translate or validate words, phrases, or sentences in your languages.

[Translate a new word or phrase](#)

[Validate an existing translation](#)

#### Help add new languages

You help us add new languages to Google Translate quickly by translating and validating.

We pay special attention to written languages that native speakers can help us translate and that are used a lot on the web.

Help

- Show your site in another language
- Help improve Google Translate

Google Translate Community ktking@gmail.com


ENGLISH · PORTUGUESE   ENGLISH · SPANISH   PORTUGUESE · ENGLISH   PORTUGUESE · SPANISH   **SPANISH · ENGLISH**   SPANISH · PORTUGUESE

You've finished a set

Thanks for improving Google Translate!

SPANISH · ENGLISH

**33 submissions**





100 Club

**67 to go for Level 1**

HOME   CONTINUE

MY BADGES




MY STATS


**33** SPANISH · ENGLISH


Google Translate Community ktking@gmail.com

ENGLISH · PORTUGUESE   ENGLISH · SPANISH   PORTUGUESE · ENGLISH   PORTUGUESE · SPANISH   **SPANISH · ENGLISH**   SPANISH · PORTUGUESE



 TRANSLATE

Your help will enhance translations for millions of users.

 VALIDATE

 SHARE

MY BADGES



MY STATS

**33** SPANISH · ENGLISH

SEND FEEDBACK

Fig. 5. BCLT director Duncan Large lecture on using neural machine translators to render Shakespeare into modern German, with examples.

YouTube

Search

**Modern MT Hamlets**

**Google**  
Um zu sein oder nicht zu sein, das ist die Frage:  
Ob es edler im Kopf ist zu leiden,  
Die Schläudern und Pfeile des unerhörten Vermögens,  
Oder Waffen gegen ein Meer von Schwierigkeiten zu nehmen  
Und durch das Gegeneinander beenden sie.

**Microsoft**  
Zu sein, oder nicht zu sein, das ist die Frage:  
Ob: 'Tö' edler in dem Geist zu leiden  
Die Schlingen und Pfeile von unerhörtem Vermögen,  
Oder die Waffen gegen ein Meer von Schwierigkeiten zu nehmen  
Und gegen Ende Sie.

**DeepL**  
Sein oder Nichtsein, das ist die Frage:  
Ob es edler im Gemüt ist, zu leiden.  
Die Schläudern und Pfeile des unerschämten Glücks,  
Oder Waffen gegen ein Meer von Unruhen zu nehmen,  
Und indem man ihnen entgegengesetzt, beendet man sie.

**INAUGURAL LECTURES**  
AUTUMN 2017

**UEA**  
University of East Anglia

**UEA**  
University of East Anglia

21:43 / 53:10

Inaugural Lectures: Could Google translate Shakespeare? | University of East Anglia (UEA)

80 views

1 Like 0 Comments

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**University of East Anglia**  
Published on Dec 20, 2017

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Translation technology has made very rapid advances in recent years, and we now expect our devices to provide us with serviceable translations of many kinds of text at the touch of a screen. Literary texts are still viewed as an exception to this trend, but is it only a matter of time before we

SHOW MORE

Fig. 6. Screen grab of Google Research blog example of GNMT text improvement. Errors reduced by 55 to 85 percent. Captured 27 Jan. 27, 2018

Using human-rated side-by-side comparison as a metric, the GNMT system produces translations that are vastly improved compared to the previous phrase-based production system. GNMT reduces translation errors by more than 55%-85% on several major language pairs measured on sampled sentences from Wikipedia and news websites with the help of bilingual human raters.

<b><i>Input sentence:</i></b>	<b><i>Translation (PBMT):</i></b>	<b><i>Translation (GNMT):</i></b>	<b><i>Translation (human):</i></b>
李克強此行將啟動中加總理年度對話機制，與加拿大總理杜魯多舉行兩國總理首次年度對話。	Li Keqiang premier added this line to start the annual dialogue mechanism with the Canadian Prime Minister Trudeau two prime ministers held its first annual session.	Li Keqiang will start the annual dialogue mechanism with Prime Minister Trudeau of Canada and hold the first annual dialogue between the two premiers.	Li Keqiang will initiate the annual dialogue mechanism between premiers of China and Canada during this visit, and hold the first annual dialogue with Premier Trudeau of Canada.

An example of a translation produced by our system for an input sentence sampled from a news site. Go [here](#) for more examples of translations for input sentences sampled randomly from news sites and books.

Fig. 7. Screen grab showing an example of the testing interface of Toral and Way's blind testing of machine translation results versus humans (Toral and Way 18).

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Antonio Toral and Andy Way

All of a sudden, he said, "For Chrissake, Holden. **This is about a goddam baseball glove.**" Cold as hell.

— Source

**NA NA NA**

— Reference

Rank 1  Rank 2  Rank 3

**Això és sobre un guant de beisbol.**

— Translation 1

Rank 1  Rank 2  Rank 3

**Això va d'un cony de guant de beisbol.**

— Translation 2

Rank 1  Rank 2  Rank 3

**Es tracta d'un coi de guant de beisbol.**

— Translation 3