"IT'S NO FAULT OF YOURS IF YOUR LIFE SONGS ARE BIGGER THAN A CONTINENT": SELF-TRANSLATION, CREATIVITY, AND THE SPECTER OF SELF-BETRAYAL

Emily Marie Passos Duffy[*]
Universidade Católica Portuguesa

ABSTRACT: The present paper aims to engage with contemporary conversations on self-translation by writers and translators who grapple with questions of identity, resistance, and their place in the global system of literature as intercultural subjects for whom linguistic hybridity is a fact of their literary production. Through analysis of essays compiled and edited by Wiam El-Tamamin in the special section on self-translation of *ArabLit Quarterly*, it will consider the experiential aspects of self-translation as well as what is at stake when authors self-translate work that reflects their own linguistic hybridity in its form and content. The self-translated text is hybrid, and it always points to an original-in-flux. Whether that source text is published, written in a private journal, or exists orally or in the writer's imagination or body– it is a necessary and corresponding part of a bricolage whole.
KEYWORDS: Self-Translation, Linguistic Hybridity, Creativity, Intimacy, Literary Translation, Arabic Literature in Translation.

1. Introduction

For certain writers, irrespective of whether they identify as translators, self-translation and linguistic hybridity are facts of their literary production. Authors who occupy interstitial cultural and linguistic spaces are "living in translation," and their work often reflects a "contact zone" (Pratt, 1991) where literature is produced against the backdrop of asymmetrical power relations and their aftermath. With this complexity in mind, the present paper aims to circle in on contemporary conversations on self-translation by writers and translators who grapple with questions of identity, resistance, and their place in the global system of literature as intercultural subjects for whom linguistic hybridity is almost an inevitable part of their craft. In order to better understand how living authors grapple with their own linguistic hybridity as it pertains to their work as authors and translators, I will examine essays compiled and edited by Wiam El-Tamamin in the special section on self-translation of *ArabLit & ArabLit Quarterly,* with essays by Mona Kareem, Khalid Lyamlahy, Deena Mohamed, Dunya Mikhail, and Ali Shakir. The authors represented in this special section use metaphoric language to describe the experience of translating their own work, and pose questions such as, "Which self is supposed to do the translation?" (Shakir, 2022). This small corpus of author-translator testimony offers a useful window into the experience of writers for whom self-translation is a manifestation of their own multilingualism and linguistic hybridity. In this paper, I am making the argument that a self-translation is a linguistically hybrid text because it is always tethered to its "other." The source text and target text are woven together, and they exist as two sides of a coin by nature of the fact that they were both created by the same, multilingual writer.

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[*] eduffy@ucp.pt

Additionally, a self-translation destabilizes the boundaries between source text and target text, among many other categories.

Degrees and types of self-translation have been categorized as naturalizing, decentred, and (re)creative according to Michael Oustinoff (Benabed, 2017, p. 77). These degrees represent different types of adherence to a source text and different strategies for the self-translation in respect to the relationship between the source text and target text. Guldin (2007) writes, "In this unstable context where gender and power-roles have lost their unilateral meaning, one is constantly forced to betray oneself in order to remain true to oneself" (3). This paradox of self-betrayal within the context of self-translation complicates certain traditionally held metaphors of translation relating to fidelity and intimacy. Translation theorists of the 20th and 21st centuries have explored the connections between intimacy, relationship, and translation (Spivak, 1993; Chamberlain, 1988; Basile, 2017; West, 2012; Santaemilia, 2017), with these metaphors most often pertaining to translations that the author of the source text does not perform. What could it mean to apply Spivak's adage of translation being the most intimate form of reading to self- translation? This paper will analyze the contents of the special issue to examine what is at stake when authors self-translate work that reflects their own linguistic hybridity in its form and content. This paper makes the argument for self-translation as a de facto expression of linguistic hybridity. A self-translated text is always and necessarily hybrid in nature and part of a whole, "like those half heart necklaces in search for the other half" (Mikhail, 2019). Within a composite of possible selves, the shattered glass of a mirror becomes a mosaic— resisting categorization and upending traditionally held notions regarding the divisions between languages, identities, and texts.

To the extent that self-translation is often a highly fraught (and therefore embodied and embedded) creative process, which disrupts the monolingual mindset as well as monodirectional views of translational operations, it can also be considered through the lens of experiential translation.

2. Self-translation, multilingualism, and hybridity in the field of translation studies

Despite the fact that it is a practice with a long and varied history (Hokenson and Munson, 2007), self-translation remains a relatively under-examined area. When framing a contemporary understanding of self-translation, it is necessary to adopt a diachronic view of linguistic hybridity. Self-translators occupy a transcultural position– they have competencies in at least two languages and have lived experience in multiple cultural contexts (Cordingley, 2013; Grutman, 2009). The monolingual mindset, which dominated translation theory for a large part of the twentieth century, has often been criticized for oversimplifying the translation process, as it ignores the complex cultural and linguistic differences between languages that can affect the meaning and impact of a text. Mona Baker (2018), in her book, *In Other Words: A Coursebook on Translation*, describes the monolingual mindset as "an approach to translation that assumes a one-to-one correspondence between linguistic units in the source and target languages, as well as a

degree of equivalence between the cultures in which the two languages are used" (Baker 2018, p. 15). Self-translation as an expression of linguistic hybridity disrupts the monolingual mindset by highlighting the fact that the boundaries between languages are not always clear-cut and that many languages have been influenced by and borrowed from each other over time. The concept of linguistic hybridity can be seen as an antidote to the monolingual mindset in translation studies, as it challenges the idea of fixed and pure languages and emphasizes the importance of cultural and linguistic mixing and hybridization in the production of translations.

Prior to the reification of written languages in the early modern period, linguistic hybridity was accepted before and during the medieval period due to prevalent linguistic borrowing and mixing. In Renaissance Europe, for example, poets translated their own "Latin musings" as finger exercises (Grutman, 2009, p. 257), pointing to the dexterity and fluidity with which those who were literate moved between languages. The nineteenth and twentieth centuries ushered in the siloing of languages associated with the rise of the nation-state (Venuti, 2009; Hokenson and Munson, 2007). And after that, "[...] in the troubled wake of linguistic nationalisms of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, in canon formation as in comparative philology, this peculiar onus on the bilingual writer, as citizen of no language or perhaps traitor to two, has continued to taint critical reception of the bilingual texts – in both languages– and poses a unique problem to translation theory" (Hokenson and Munson, 2007, p. 3).

In the 20th and 21st centuries, a relationship between language precarity and self-translation can be observed. For example, there are cases of writers from outlying republics of the former Soviet Union self-translating their work as well as instances of English/Gaelic bilingual editions (Grutman, 2009). There are also well-known authors of the 20th and 21st centuries, such as James Joyce, Samuel Beckett, and George Steiner who have all translated their own work between their various languages. Lebanese-American poet, essayist, and painter, Etel Adnan is another contemporary example who, as Mona Kareem (2022) reminds us, "[wrote] in French then self-translated, but no one can tell unless she told them so." She goes on to reflect on the intimacy of Adnan's self-translation, this hybridity being an aspect of the artist's self and creative process that she is not obligated to make public: "There are texts of Etel where we don't even know whether they were first written in French or English. I giggle at her art of deception. No one is entitled to this knowledge, other than the poet herself" (Kareem, 2022). For translation studies, it is important to understand why a self-translation occurs. Understanding factors such as language precarity and the geopolitical reality of a certain linguistic region is paramount. And, as the authors included in the special section articulate, self-translation can be a delicate endeavor on several valences —as multilingual authors engaged in this work, they reflect on how this particular and hybrid situation points to possibilities for both creative liberation and potentiation as well as the possibility of self-betrayal.

3. A case study on *ArabLit Quarterly*

In order to more thoroughly examine contemporary notions of self-translation, as well as their implications for the area of translation theory and translation metaphors, it is important to turn to those doing the work. To this end, I have chosen as a case study corpus a special section from the journal *ArabLit Quarterly* on self-translation, published online in 2022. The section, edited by Egyption writer, translator, and literary editor, Wiam El-Tamimi, includes six pieces by authors and author-translators Mona Kareem, Khalid Lyamlahy, Deena Mohamed, Dunya Mikhail, and Ali Shakir, reflecting on "what it means to transport their writing from one of their languages to another" (El-Tamami, 2022). The authors come from a range of cultural, linguistic, and artistic backgrounds—their hybridity is not only reflected in their language abilities, but also in the types of work they produce. I will begin with an introduction of each author included in the special section, and then move into a more in-depth look at dominant themes present in the contributions and their significance for considering self-translation as an expression of linguistic hybridity.

Mona Kareem is a Kuwait-born, Bidoon[1] poet, translator, and scholar of literature. She is the author of three poetry collections, and her most recent book, *Femme Ghosts,* is a trilingual chapbook that includes poems in Arabic, English, and Dutch. According to the publisher, "In this series of eight poems, Kareem continues her echoing of women's voices—the pirate women, busy with their dreams, dwelling on future pasts, indulging in their loneliness" (Publication Studio). In an essay published by The Common, she offers perspectives on growing up as a stateless person in Kuwait. Kareem (2021) writes, "'What is *Bidun*?' is a question that I will always struggle to answer—how to define someone by negation. Stateless persons and communities in the Gulf have varied stories and travels, but they were all made stateless by the violence of nation-state building." As an asylum-seeker in the U.S., her writing was informed by feelings of exile and precarity; "I understood that I was expected to become unrelated to my past being. My life was 'lagging' for four years in America, until it was finally allowed to restart when the asylum acceptance letter arrived in the mail" (Kareem, 2021). For Kareem, this liminal sense of "un-belonging," whether as a stateless person in Kuwait or an asylum-seeker in the U.S., is a key aspect of how she conceives of her own linguistic and cultural hybridity in respect to self-translation. Her contribution to the special section, titled "Self-translation Never Lands" does the work of framing self-translation as an eternal condition and survival tactic.

Khalid Lyamlahy is a Professor of French and Francophone Studies at the University of Chicago, with a varied professional history that includes civil engineering and project management. His research focuses on Francophone North African Literature, and he is also a fiction writer. In a guest post for *Africa in Words* on Moroccan Francophone literature, Lyamlahy writes on the cultural and literary trends in Morocco following the country's

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[1] "Bidoon (short for bidoon jinsiya, meaning 'without nationality' in Arabic, and alternately spelt as Bedoon, Bidun and Bedun) are a stateless Arab minority in Kuwait who were not included as citizens at the time of the country's independence or shortly thereafter." Available at: https://minorityrights.org/minorities/bidoon/ (Accessed: 23 July 2023).

independence in 1956; "Writing in French was not only an attempt at 'writing back' to France, but also a multifaceted challenge aimed at reinventing the use of language and exploring new areas of creation and self-critique" (Lyamlahy, 2016). This speaks to the second-generation postcolonial strategy of appropriating a colonial language in order to repurpose it, or, as Homi Bhabha (1985) articulates in the case of English, "the attempt to transform the literatures of English into a counter-language, the attempt to appropriate the power and force of English, its resilience, its elasticity, into a language of resistance against its own imperializing force" (157). Khalid Lyamlahy's essay in the special section on self-translation also addresses the more technical challenges presented by self-translating his novel. He writes:

> Self-translation is no easy work. For me, it was an arduous confrontation not only with the act of re-writing but also with my language practices and preferences. I grew up in Morocco, speaking Moroccan Arabic ("Darija"), and learning Modern Standard Arabic and French before English. Multilingualism has always been an integral part of my everyday life, although I now work mainly in French and tend to use English exclusively for academic work. When I started translating the four excerpts, I quickly realized that the novel was slipping through my fingers. I had to control a distant self who was constantly looking over my shoulder (Lyamlahy, 2022).

The characterization of self-translation as an "arduous confrontation" as well as a negotiation with a "distant self" speaks to both the technical and existential problems faced by multilingual authors who inhabit a hybrid position in their work. For Lyamlahy, self-translation is a mediation of the multiple "selves" that work with different languages in respective contexts, (academic, creative, etc.).

Deena Mohamed is an Egyptian comics artist, writer, and designer. She is the author of *Shubeik Lubeik*, a graphic novel trilogy that depicts a world where wishes are for sale; "In Arabic folktales, Shubeik Lubeik is the first part of the rhyme a genie speaks once released from a lamp. It means 'Your wish is my command.'" (Mel, 2023). The novel, written in English, draws from Arabic folklore, making it an intercultural (Bandia, 2021) as well as a multimodal text. Her graphic essay for the *ArabLit Quarterly* special section articulates the complexities of moving between languages as well as cultural contexts in the act of self-translating.

Dunya Mikhail is an Iraqi-American poet who was born in Baghdad. Her poetry reflects a reality of exile, although in her own words, she does not see her work as explicitly political in nature. In an interview with Lillian Pearce with MQR, Mikhail shares

> My poetry is not political, even though it's influenced, to some extent, by political issues. As an immigrant writer, it's natural for me to develop a strong sense of place. I always transfer in my mind between my motherland and my fatherland, like how a child moves between the parents. When the parents fight, the child gets frustrated. But I found that poetry is my homecoming wherever I am. (Pearce, 2023)

Her sense of toggling back and forth between sense of home, of place, and of culture, belies a sensibility I will discuss further in this paper. As a poet who engages in self-translation between English and Arabic, this metaphor of toggling also applies to the written form of the languages she writes in—with English being written left to right and Arabic written right to left. Her contribution to the special section of *ArabLit Quarterly* speaks to the possibility for self-translation as a vehicle for mediation, democracy, and even love.

Ali Shakir (2022) reaffirms the multiplicity of the self and asks, "which self is supposed to do the translation?" His writing on self-translation points to the bifurcations in identity that don´t exclusively fall between linguistic or cultural boundaries. As an architect, author, and translator who was born in Iraq and is based in Auckland, his varied personal and professional experiences give him a singular perspective on what it means to self-translate. He also has articulated the complicated and estranged feelings that an author with multinational ties can feel. In an interview with *Surreal Horizon* (2016), when asked about how he feels when he looks at Iraq now, Shakir responds:

> I see it as a foreign country, something happening in a totally foreign country. Just like watching news on Afghanistan. All the pictures I see don't even relate to what I saw when I was there. I do sympathise with people living there, but it doesn't feel like it is my country now.
> And you know, I feel like Baghdad was sort of like a girl I really loved and she cheated on me. And being cheated on hurts, right? That's how I feel, looking at it in a different way.

These feelings towards his country of origin as a "foreign country" shows Shakir's geographical and also emotional distance from Iraq as he watches events unfold from his home in New Zealand. His sense of betrayal, and the metaphor he uses about the infidelity of his home city, Baghdad, points to the complicated relationships that these writers have with space, place, and their own identities.

The themes present in these pieces of writing from the special section of *ArabLit Quarterly*, which range from commentary on craft, to reflections on identity, echo many of the current debates on self-translation and the complications it presents for an author-translator. For these multilingual writers, self-translation is a fact of their literary production, and each one has a different relationship to it, as unique as their writing style itself. I will highlight examples from each and comment on some threads of continuity as they pertain to relevant debates on self-translation. A textual analysis and close reading of the six pieces reveal a multiplicity of attitudes towards the craft of self-translation. The authors describe self-translation as a fraught process, both on a craft level and on an identity level. They are acutely aware of what is at stake in the process of translating their own work—particularly when translating into English. These works speak to both the challenges and possibilities for liberation present in self-translation, affirming Guldin´s (2007) articulation of the "inner tension" and "duality, division, discord" that the task brings up for multilingual writers; "a hazardous, but fundamentally creative endeavor." For the

multilingual author, there is always both risk and possibility involved. These risks carry implications across the continuum of personal to political.

4. Self-translation and sociopolitics

Illustrator and author, Deena Mohamed offers graphic representations of what self-translation feels like and the complex socio-political implications of conveying oneself, not only in a different language, but to a different audience. In her visual essay, "On Drawing Self-Translation" (2022), she uses text and images to communicate the complexities of moving between linguistic contexts and presenting her work in English.

Figure 1. Deena Mohamed, "On Drawing Self-Translation" *Arablit & Arablit Quarterly* (2022)

In the above comic, we can observe the need to address Islamophobia when she speaks and writes in English. In Arabic, she notes that she feels she can speak about the issue of feminism with more liberty. This shows an attentiveness to the target audience, as well as an awareness of stereotypes regarding Islam and Muslim women through the Western gaze. In her book *Feminist Accountability*, Ann Russo (2018) critically points out how the U.S. invasion and occupation of Afghanistan and later Iraq has impacted the way that Western feminists view Muslim women, noting how imperialism can be recast in a feminist way; "the United States must act in order to 'save Afghan women' and to support women's human rights" (p. 185). Deena Mohamed´s comic shows that she is aware of this narrative

and cautious of perpetuating the idea that Muslim women are engaged in a feminist struggle to a Western audience, lest it is co-opted by the logics of imperialism. In a way, this strategy could be read as engaged with Oustinoff's notion of a "naturalizing" self-translation which, "bends the text to the standards of the target language by eradicating any interference from the source language […] erasing all the traces of the source language and culture" (Benabed, 2017, p. 77). While, in the above example, Mohamed does not erase all the traces of the source language and culture in representing how she translates her work, she does modify both visual and textual elements with a Western audience as a target culture in mind.

This self-awareness points back to a larger issue related to self-translation in situations of linguistic hybridity that necessarily include contact zones, struggle, conflict, and asymmetrical power relations. Resisting easy categorization can be seen as a life-affirming survival strategy for authors who engage in the act of self-translating, reifying their agile multiplicities in the texts they produce. Mona Kareem writes, "It's no fault of yours if your life songs are bigger than a continent, if literature has been oppressively labelled and organized into a Walmart. All you can do for now is to pass your hand over the shelves, aisle to aisle—and, whenever possible, fuck up their inventory" (Kareem, 2022). Here, self-translation is also seen as a way to disrupt sociopolitical and linguistic hegemony.

Mohamed's reflection on how she produces different work for English-speaking audiences, exercising caution about opening the door for narratives about Muslim women needing to be saved to be projected onto her work, shows an awareness of what is at stake in the act of self-translation. Kareem's comment about literature being "oppressively labelled and organized into a Walmart" offers a critique of a global literary capitalism that wants authors or works to be just one thing—or, only exist in one language.

5. Self-translation and the mirrored self

As the authors represented in this special section point out, the notion of a stable "self" is difficult to sustain when examined in the context of self-translation. Khalid Lyamlahy (2022) refers to a critical self that is always "looking over the shoulder" when he is translating his own work. These other selves could also be seen as a kind of mirror—a funhouse hall of reflection with each fragment offering a slightly different image of the self. The mirroring, or doubling present in Deena Mohamed´s comic, this notion that a different self is present in the work depending on the language, is also articulated by poet Dunya Mikhail (2022), who self-translates her poetry between Arabic and English. She writes, "To capture the poem in two lives is to mirror my exile, with all of its possibilities and risks." Mikhail also observes how it feels to switch directions in self-translation—the bi-directionality of moving between Arabic and English causes her to physically move from left to right to right to left, a constant motion reflecting a larger theme of uprooting and displacement:

> It was annoying to me in the beginning when my poem pulled me right and left, but just as people say to "follow your heart," I always follow my poetry. Well, to justify my choice, I

would claim that allowing such a dialogue between the two texts is democratic, and I'm even hopeful that East and West may meet in that crossing line between two languages. But this is not to say that I've achieved linguistic utopia. To produce a text in two languages is to always hold a mirror to the first text while the mirror behaves as if that text is actually her mirror. The poet is at home in both texts, yet she remains a stranger. (Mikhail, 2022)

The sense of possibility and estrangement articulated here shows a hope for self-translation as a kind of mediation for the fractured self—a way to reconcile the linguistic and cultural hybridity present within the poet, and also across cultural and geographical lines. This mirrored belonging represents the potential for generative relationships across differences.

The notion of multiple selves, represented through mirror or mosaic, is also present in Ali Shakir´s meditation on self-translation. He asks, "What does the ´self´ in ´self-translator´ stand for?" (Shakir, 2022). Shakir reaffirms the multiplicity of the self and further inquires about which ´self´ is supposed to perform the translation:

A hand that slices a bilingual author´s entity in half, yielding pieces where different tongues are spoken?

Or is it a bridge that links the terrains on their opposite shores?

Is it a buffer zone, a messenger, a part of some un-holy trinity?

What is the self anyway?

A two-dimensional plane, or an uncontainable organism?

The child self, the adult self. The happy self, the not-so happy self, the miserable self. The foolish self, the wise self, etc. …Which self is supposed to do the translation? (Shakir, 2022).

This panoply of metaphors and naming of different possible states of being offered by Shakir highlight the bifurcations in identity that don't exclusively fall between linguistic or cultural boundaries. The self, here, is an unstable entity with many possible expressions. In the article, "I believe that my two tongues love each other cela ne m'étonnerait pas": Self-Translation and the Construction of Sexual Identity" Rainer Guldin (2007) follows Lori Chamberlain and Rosemary Arrojo and notes how the phenomenon of self-translation disrupts those metaphors for translation that reinforce binaries across gendered and colonial divides. These metaphors include fidelity and references to motherland, with the translator seen as feminine—performing a kind of reproductive labor that is ultimately devalued. Guldin (2008) argues that self-translation destabilizes these binaries: "these clear-cut divisions break down as author and translator happen to be the same person. In this unstable context where gender and power-roles have lost their unilateral meaning one is constantly forced to betray oneself in order to remain true to oneself." In the next section I will examine how notions of intimacy and fidelity are complicated through linguistic hybridity and self-translation.

6. Self-translation and intimacy

Following Spivak´s (1993) adage that "translation is the most intimate form of reading," what could it mean for an author to cultivate that intimacy with themselves?

Returning to the essay from Iraqi-American poet, Dunya Mikhail, her view offers an acknowledgement of the technical challenges of self-translation, as well as the perspective that her two languages are in intimate concert with one another: "I do faithful translation when I translate someone else, but with my own work I feel free to make changes as I see fit. I feel that the relationship between the two texts (the Arabic and the English, in this case) is something like true love. I mean that the two texts develop together without imposing too much on each other." (Mikhail, 2022). Here, she acknowledges the liberty and the intimate possibility that self-translation offers for her as a writer. Betrayal and love are two sides of the same coin; the "infidelity" to the self, or rather, the self that wrote the first text does, in fact, make it beautiful. And yet, the two texts coexist and potentiate one another. Self-translation is seen as an artistically challenging endeavor, and also one that presents freedom and possibility. There is also resentment and the specter of self-betrayal. Mona Kareem (2022) further speaks to this fraught relationship with the self, as well as the task of self-translation when she mentions "The anxiety, guilt, alienation, displacement, but also the fluidity, worldliness, and awkward freshness." These are all words that could apply to situations of both intimacy and exile.

Mikhail (2022), for her part, sees her languages, English and Arabic, as lovers. And the act of self-translation facilitates their co-mingling. The poetic meeting of the two languages destabilizes the boundaries between them. In an interview, she offers agency to her texts, allowing them to find their way away from and back towards each other: "I just simply found that my poem had a dialogue (sometimes an argument) with its other self, and I allowed it, feeling good about my 'democracy.' The poem was not demanding changes from its companion other; rather, the two versions enriched each other and developed together like true lovers" (Mikhail, 2019). This romantic view of the self-translation process offers an example of Spivak's intimacy in practice. This intimacy offers transformation when the rigidity of linguistic and cultural boundaries are loosened and the author allows herself to be "unfaithful" (Mikhail, 2022). This perspective on self-translation could be seen as a form of Oustinoff's (re)creative self-translation, which "involves another creation. The author allows themselves considerable liberty in rewriting the text." (Oustinoff, in Benabed 2017, p. 77). In Mikhail's (2019) own words, in the preface to the English version of her collection of poems published simultaneously as الغريبةبتائها المربوطة and *In Her Feminine Sign*, "I didn't translate [the poems]; I only wrote them twice."

The atomic intimacy present in self-translation for writers who are multilingual and intercultural reminds us of the shaky and porous nature of imposed boundaries between languages, cultures, texts, and bodies. The self-translated text is often liberated from the notion of an original, yet also remains tethered to it. It is hybrid, and it always points to an original in-flux. Whether that source text is published, written in a private journal, or exists

orally or in the writer's imagination or body – it is a necessary and corresponding part of a bricolage whole.

7. Conclusion and further research questions

For the writers represented in the special section on self-translation in *ArabLit Quarterly,* betraying oneself vis-a-vis self-translation can open up aesthetic, literary, and strategic possibilities. That is, the possibility for self-betrayal is always looming and immanent. However, it seems important to be clear about the role of the self in literary production—as well as which "self" is doing the translation. The authors describe self-translation as a fraught process, both on a craft level and on an identity level**.** They are acutely aware of their positionality and what is at stake in the process of translating their own work, especially into English. This corpus affirmed for me the importance of reading translator interviews and testimonies—as all the author contributions to this special section illuminated or exemplified something about translation theory. Each had something to say about their work on the craft and/ or identity-based or theoretical level.

As for applying Spivak's hypothesis to self-translation, that translation is the most intimate form of reading, I found it noteworthy that the author who most explicitly mentioned love and intimacy in respect to the self-translation process is a poet (Mikhail, 2022). Perhaps there is something about the medium of poetry that allows for more freedom, experimentation, and intimacy on a craft level than something like a novel does. This could be an area of further inquiry: examining self-translation and author testimonies comparatively by genre. However, this research question could be further problematized by arguing that genre itself is also an unstable category. There are multimodal works, and hybrid-genre works, for example. Still, this could be a question taken up by future research.

Overall, these contributions to the special section speak to both the experiential challenges and possibilities for liberation present in self-translation, affirming Guldin´s (2008) articulation of the "inner tension" and "duality, division, discord" that the task brings up for multilingual writers; "a hazardous, but fundamentally creative endeavor." A self-translated work can "reflect exile with all of its chances and risks" (Mikhail, 2019). There is danger and possibility present in this task–with the potential for new horizons. On the future of self-translation, Mona Kareem (2022) articulates a possibility: "I can see that this mode, this condition, is slowly becoming second nature to me. I sometimes remind myself to stop questioning it, or to at least accept that the answers will continue to change, or even be shuffled around. I can also see how, in a world where mass displacement is the new norm, self-translation will reach a point of no-question." If we are to heed this prediction, vocabulary and theoretical frameworks for self-translation as an expression of multilingualism and linguistic hybridity will reflect the transient, fluctuating, and ever-evolving nature of the bodies and subjectivities that produce these texts.

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About the author: Emily Marie Passos Duffy is a poet, writer, researcher, and performing artist. She is a doctoral student in Translation Studies at the Universidade Católica Portuguesa, a member of the CECC research center and a proofreader for Diffractions: A Graduate Journal for the Study of Culture.