



# SELF-TRANSLATION AS A PATH TO RECOGNITION AND CREATIVE AUGMENTATION IN THE CONTEXT OF TRANSCULTURAL LITERATURE: A PERSONAL JOURNEY

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## 1. Introduction

In an era of global mobility and transcultural exchange, writers who develop bilingual proficiency and engage in translanguaging practices often deal with self-translation to bridge linguistic and cultural divides. For many migrant or exilic writers, self-translation becomes a strategic tool for gaining recognition within the literary landscape of their adopted countries (Dagnino 2019a, Grutman 2018). However, this practice is fraught with tension. Critics have described it as a form of linguistic excision or even as a concession to linguistic neo-colonialism, especially when it entails a shift from minority to majority languages (Hoffman 1998, Whyte 2002). Others, however, view self-translation as an empowering act of creative augmentation that produces «second originals» or «dual texts» (Bassnett 2013, Hokenson, Munson 2007) and subverts traditional notions of textual hierarchy (Cordingley 2013, Grutman 2011) and rigid ideas of cultural identity.

This paper offers a reflective analysis of self-translation through the lens of my personal journey as a bilingual writer working between Italian and English in the Canadian context. Drawing on theoretical frameworks and creative examples, I argue that self-translation serves as both a tool for inclusion in new cultural and linguistic contexts and a means of expanding textual meaning and one's creative potential. Furthermore, I propose that self-translation operates as a triangulating process, introducing multidimensional layers of meaning that enrich literary texts. This exploration



situates self-translation as a dynamic and transformative practice within the broader field of transcultural literature.

I will seek to illuminate the multifaceted practice of self-translation drawing from my dual roles as a bilingual writer and academic researcher in transcultural studies. My journey of self-translation from Italian into English and vice-versa within the Canadian literary context exemplifies how this practice can foster inclusion in new cultural spaces while also enriching creative expression.

After situating myself within the broader field of transcultural literature, I will discuss the motivations for self-translation, followed by a brief discussion on the different approaches I have adopted. I will also include practical examples from my own work to demonstrate how self-translation functions both as a cultural bridge and as a tool for creative enhancement and new insights.

## 2. Contextualizing self-translation: a personal and academic perspective

My professional journey has encompassed journalism, literary translation, creative writing, and academia, culminating in my exploration of self-translation. This path has taken me across multiple countries and four continents, reflecting a deeply transcultural orientation.

Upon re-entering academia to pursue a doctorate in sociology and comparative literature, I integrated my creative practice with theoretical frameworks in cultural studies, translation studies, and mobility studies. My research, creative work, and translation practice all find their niche within the broader landscape of transcultural studies, an arena to which I have contributed through my book, *Transcultural Writers and Novels in the Age of Global Mobility* (2015). In this work, which ties together my various interests, experiences and contributions, I delve into the concept of the transcultural, both as a model for individual cultural identity formation and as an interpretative lens for analyzing cultural artifacts and phenomena, including translations.

Over the past decade, I have drawn on my experience in self-translation to develop theoretical insights into this multifaceted practice. Self-translation has seamlessly evolved into a natural extension of my academic

research and creative pursuits, serving as a bridge between the linguistic and cultural spaces I inhabit as an Italian-Canadian writer. Through this process, I have honed my approach, embracing self-translation as both an artistic expression and a theoretical framework that allows me to explore broader questions of language, identity, and creativity.

### 3. The motivations for self-translation

The reasons writers engage in self-translation are complex and multifaceted. During a postdoctoral research project at the University of Ottawa, I conducted interviews with bilingual writers who self-translate, identifying recurring themes in their motivations. These insights were informed by the foundational work of Grutman (2011, 2017), Cordingley (2013), and Van Bolderen (2021), among others. In a paper summarizing the outcomes of my research, I systematize the reasons guiding these writers towards self-translation into three main interrelated categories or thematic classifications: literary inclusion, cultural negotiation, and creative enhancement. I also produced a table that visualizes the results of my research. In that regard, it's important to note that the identified categories often exhibit overlap, given the intricate and multifaceted nature of lived experiences. Thus I call this table (see box) a transcategorization, since in any translational practice categories are never as distinct as they appear and usually tend to overlap.

Reason for translating	Group	Output (type of self-translation)
sell the book / get the book published	the sellers	the sellable
widen the readership / expose the work to an international market	the wideners / the exposers	the widened / the exposed
maintain a degree of ownership and authoriality of one's own work	the maintainers / the authorialists	the owned / the authorised
reflect one's bilingual identity and bicultural intermediation	the bireflectors / the intermediaries	the bireflected / the inter-mediated

exploté / exploit self-translation as a creative device	the explorers / the exploiters	the explored / the exploited
majorize a language	the majorizers	the majorized
decentralize a language	the decentralizers	the decentralized

Whether self-translation arises from personal choice or external circumstances such as exile, economic hardship or forced migration, one of the primary motivations for bilingual writers to engage in this practice is the desire to establish a literary home, integrate into the literary landscape of the host country, gain social recognition, and actively participate in its cultural context (Dagnino 2019a, 2021). For migrant and diasporic writers, self-translation often serves as a vital pathway to inclusion within local literary networks, allowing them to contribute to and gain visibility in the dominant cultural and linguistic context. This process becomes especially significant when the host language holds sway over the national and international literary landscape, as is frequently the case with English in North America.

However, this endeavour is not without its challenges. As previously noted, critics such as Hoffman (1998) and Krause (2016) have framed the linguistic shift involved in self-translation as a form of self-amputation, where the mother tongue is seemingly forsaken in favour of the adopted language. This phenomenon may also be interpreted, critiqued and at times opposed as a pernicious and subtle form of linguistic neo-colonialism or even as a betrayal of the national mother tongue. Such criticism is particularly pointed when self-translation involves abandoning a minority language in favour of a majority one (Dagnino 2019b, Whyte 2002, Bandia 2014).

It is important to address the relative nature of the concept of a “minority” language, which varies depending on the cultural and geographical context in which a bilingual writer operates. For instance, in certain Italian regions with special statute, such as Trentino-Alto Adige or Valle d’Aosta, Italian may be regarded as a majority language. By contrast, in Canada, Italian is classified as a minority language, ranking as the ninth most spoken language after the two official languages (English and French) and others such as Punjabi, Mandarin, Arabic, Cantonese, Spanish, and Tagalog. In this Canadian context, my self-translation can be considered a form of «supra-translation», employing Grutman’s framework and terminology. Henceforth and for the purposes of my research, I define a minority language, any language which a bi/plurilingual writer perceives as not being

the dominant one in the socio-cultural and linguistic context in which s/he is creatively active.

Conversely, as Cordingley (2013), Grutman (2017), and Grutman and Van Bolderen (2014) point out, self-translation often ensures that both versions of a text remain autonomous, thereby questioning notions of linguistic betrayal or diminishment. This autonomy also disrupts the traditional hierarchy that privileges the source text over the target text. By describing this phenomenon as «supra-self-translation», Grutman (2011) emphasizes its potential for self-promotion within broader linguistic contexts. The creation of «new originals» (Hokenson and Munson 2007), «second originals» (Grutman, Van Bolderen 2014) or even, as Michael Eskin suggests, «multiple originals» (cited in Marshall 2020: 28) further demonstrates how self-translation enables authors to challenge the primacy of original texts while simultaneously bridging linguistic and cultural divides (*ibidem*).

My personal motivation to self-translate stemmed from a desire to engage fully with the Canadian literary landscape. Through this practice, I was able to establish a presence as a Canadian writer, gaining recognition, securing membership in both the Writers' Union of Canada and the Literary Translators' Association of Canada, and obtaining public funding for literary projects. This journey highlights the dual role of self-translation as both a pathway to cultural integration and a tool for personal expression.

#### 4. Personal experiences and different approaches in self-translation

##### **Consecutive self-translation in collaborative mode**

My first significant foray into self-translation involved translating from Italian into English my novel *Fossili* (2010, Fazi editore, Roma), set in post-apartheid South Africa and inspired by my work there as an international reporter. The book was published in Canada as *The Afrikaner* (2019, Guernica Editions, Toronto). Later on, I self-translated from English into Italian the creative nonfiction work which is contained in the first section of my book *Transcultural Writers and Novels* and which was published in Italian in 2021 as *Il quintetto d'Istanbul* (Edizioni Ensemble, Roma).

In accordance with Grutman's classification, both instances of self-translation would fall into the category of "delayed" or "consecutive" self-translations.

In both cases, I adopted a particular mode of collaborative self-translation, which, in a previous study, I have labelled «dialogic assisted self-translation» (Dagnino 2019a). This method mirrors the approach used by many bilingual writers today who rely on the assistance of native language collaborators, such as colleagues, spouses, editors, and friends, throughout the self-translation process to refine and enhance the target text (Cordingley, Frigau Manning 2017).

This collaborative approach also extended to adapting my novel *The Afrikaner* into a screenplay working together with Ernest Mathijs, a Professor in Cinema and Media Studies at the University of British Columbia. By adopting what I call «cinematic English», we transformed the text into a filmic narrative, demonstrating how self-translation can also adapt to different creative mediums. By «cinematic English» I mean a style of writing and adaptive translation that draws influence from the language and narrative techniques commonly found in cinema or film. In this context, «cinematic English» indicates that the text has been re-worked to read like a screenplay or cinematic narrative, complete with vivid descriptions, dramatic pacing, and other elements typically associated with film.

Self-translating into global English also serves as a strategic means of gaining recognition on the international stage. English, as a dominant global language, significantly enhances a text's visibility and accessibility, opening doors to a broader readership and new opportunities for translation into other languages. In this particular case, the book's English self-translation not only garnered increased visibility but also facilitated its subsequent translation into German and Arabic, thus extending its reach across diverse linguistic and cultural contexts. Interestingly, it was re-translated in 2022 into Italian by Stefano Gulmanelli as *Le impronte di Eva* (Ensemble, Roma), presenting a compelling case study of how self-translation can influence a text's life cycle and trajectory. This re-translation raises questions about the interplay between the source language and its adaptations, as well as the evolving identity of the text as it moves through multiple linguistic landscapes. Such instances underscore the potential of self-translation to act as a catalyst for global literary circulation and cross-cultural dialogue.

### **Simultaneous self-translation**

Subsequently, I embarked on a poetry project titled *Seaborn Eyes* (2021, Ekstasis, Victoria, BC), composing the collection first in English and then immediately producing its Italian translation, *Occhi di mare* (2022, Puntoacapo Editrice, Pasturana, Alessandria), exemplifying what Grutman (2009) describes as «simultaneous self-translation».

The project allowed me to promote the book on both sides of the Atlantic, supported by a travel grant from the Canada Council for the Arts for my promotional efforts in Italy and by presentation grants provided by the Writers' Union of Canada for events held within Canada. These experiences underscore how self-translation has become a pivotal aspect of my literary journey, allowing me not only to reach broader audiences but also to establish myself as a recognized author in the Canadian literary landscape. Furthermore, self-translation has facilitated access to public funding for both the production and promotion of my work, demonstrating its role as a bridge between cultural and linguistic contexts.

Additionally, I was awarded funding from the BC Arts Council to write my next novel in English – a project I am currently halfway through. This support reflects the growing recognition of my bilingual and cross-cultural contributions to literature and further affirms the essential role of self-translation in advancing my career as a writer within a global and multilingual framework.

### **Bidirectional self-translation**

In my most recent work, I have been composing poems that oscillate between Italian and English, creating a back-and-forth translation movement. This process, which Grutman (2009) refers to as «bidirectional self-translation», enables bilingual readers to engage with the texts — conceived as “diptychs” — as distinct yet interconnected entities.

Such an approach largely characterizes my poetry collection *To Die Like a Poem. The Ballad of a Soldier-Bard in Times of War* (2025), published in Italian as *Morire come una poesia. La ballata di un bardo-soldato in tempo di guerra* (2025).

In this context, the act of translation becomes an integral part of the creative process, fostering a dynamic interplay and a creative synergy between the two languages. This interaction goes beyond a mere linguistic transfer, enabling nuanced cross-linguistic dialogues that complexify the textual landscape of both versions. By engaging in this process, the author

opens up new interpretive possibilities, allowing each version to inform, challenge, and expand the other. The resulting dialogue between the texts not only deepens their individual meanings but also bridges cultural and linguistic divides, offering readers a multifaceted experience that transcends the boundaries of a single language. This symbiotic relationship ultimately enhances both works, dissolving the boundaries between source text and target text to form a unified literary duality that transcends the individual identity of each version, resulting in a creation greater than the sum of its parts.

## 5. Creative augmentation through self-translation

In my experience, self-translation functions as a creative augmentation, enhancing and, at times, even subverting the meaning within a text. It becomes a method for presenting related yet distinct facets of a subject, allowing bilingual readers to establish connections and draw comparisons between the two versions of the resulting diptych. Francesca Maria Frittella (2017: 1) compares this process to «triangulation», a concept borrowed from navigation, where new meaning emerges at the intersection of two linguistic points.

Building on this idea, I introduce the term «3D-self-translation» to describe the multidimensional interplay between languages which aligns with my broader 5D-model of transcultural orientation. In this framework, self-translation is not merely a linguistic exercise in adaptation but a creative act that generates new meanings and multiple layers of interpretation. This third interpretive layer offers readers a richer, multidimensional experience, inviting them to explore the complexities of both texts in a deeper way.

To illustrate what I have been discussing so far, I will provide two examples.

The first example is a bilingual reading of my short poem *Blue Moon*, from the collection *Seaborn Eyes*. When read first in English and then in Italian, the poem reveals subtle shifts in meaning, encouraging readers to engage with the text on multiple levels and deepening their interpretation across both languages.



*Blue Moon*

If only,  
just once,  
she could get out of  
herself

and cling,  
like sailor do,  
to her magic pallor.

*Luna piena*

Se solo  
per una volta  
potessi uscire  
da me stessa.

Per aggrapparmi  
anch'io,  
coi vostri occhi,  
alla magia  
del mio pallore.

Let's begin with the title. A "blue moon" refers to the second full moon that occurs within a single calendar month. The phrase "once in a blue moon" is commonly used to describe something that happens very rarely or infrequently. However, there's also a deeper emotional resonance in the term – a reference to the blues, evoking the melancholy of a solitary moon that cannot rely on others, much like humans often do. Additionally, the title alludes to the famous 1961 song *Blue Moon* by The Marceles, a doo-wop group known for their contribution to rhythm and blues music.

For the Italian title, I initially considered "Luna blu" – which would refer directly to the colour – but I realized it didn't fully capture the poem's layered meanings. "*Luna blues*" didn't quite work either. Eventually, I settled on "Luna piena", which translates to "full moon", allowing for a broader interpretation. This choice opened up a new way of expanding the meaning of the poem, connecting the concept of the full moon to a sense of completeness and contrast with the loneliness suggested in the original English title.

Here I provide a literal translation of the Italian text:

If only  
for once  
I could step outside of myself.  
And cling too,  
with your eyes,  
to the magic  
of my pallor.

As you will notice, there is a shift in perspective within the poem: the subject moves from "she" to "I", indicating a change in voice that brings a personal, more intimate tone to the piece. This shift is not just a change in

pronouns but also in the relationship between the speaker and the addressee. Whereas the English version presents a more externalized viewpoint, the Italian version now brings the speaker into direct connection with the reader. The addressee becomes “you” in the plural, addressing all of humanity.

In Italian I have translated the verb “cling” with *aggrapparmi* (instead of *restare appesa, rimanere attaccata, stringermi a*), which carries a particular weight in this context. The act of clinging is a physical and emotional gesture evoking vulnerability and survival, suggesting that the speaker, like sailors desperately clinging to the ropes of a ship during a violent sea-storm, seeks to hold onto something in the face of life’s overwhelming forces. By using the word *aggrapparmi*, I aim to evoke a sense of fragility and longing, as if the speaker is not merely reaching out but holding on to something essential – whether it be the connection to others, to a sense of purpose, or to the magic of being seen.

The second example is a bilingual reading of my poem *In Spite of My Brilliant Brain / A dispetto della mia brillante mente*, published in 2024 in both English and Italian in “Strade dorate. Osservatorio diaspora italiana e italofona”. The poem serves as an homage to the figure of Hannah Arendt, exploring her complex personal life.

*In Spite of My Brilliant Brain (for Hannah Arendt)*

An inconvenient woman  
in inconvenient times, I grew up  
with men falling under my charm,  
the depths of my exotic gaze, they’d say,  
rivalling the reaches of my mind.

The first time Herr Professor  
pressed his mouth against  
my lips, I felt like a leaf  
in the raging wind of History.

Yet, each time he groped my breasts  
with veneration, each time he thrust  
his raider’s rod between my thighs,  
I would demand free access  
to his throbbing mind.

Trained in will to power, I bloomed  
into a scandalous Jewish flower, while  
even my most secret lover fell prey  
to the hubris of Nazi power.

I left Martin to his wife, the children,  
the Aryan hate, turned myself into  
a recalcitrant femme fatale –  
scathing, defiant, cérébrale.

Across an ocean, others  
flew to my honey, the eroticism  
of an unconventional mind.  
But I didn't forget my despicable  
professor – his sun uneclipsed,  
my tears preserved unspilled.

Until, years later, I found him anew,  
the cottage, the wife, the darkest wood.  
Again, he stood behind a lectern,  
again piercing into my heart.

And I... I could no longer deny  
the unutterable truth: whether  
butterfly or moth, I was still trapped  
in the glasshouse of his mind.

In spite of my brilliant brain,  
my tongue – razor-sharp, with no restraint –  
I could only truly exist in that native embrace,  
that rotten love of my disgrace.

*A dispetto della mia brillante mente (per Hannah Arendt)*

Fui donna scomoda, nell'era di un male  
tutt'altro che banale. Crebbi ignara  
di annegare i miei prussiani spasimanti  
in occhi profondi, dicevano,  
quanto il mio cercare.

La prima volta che Herr Professor  
mi palpò il seno con venerazione,  
tremai, diciottenne, come foglia  
nel vento storto della Storia.

Ma sapevo a cosa mirare oltre i trastulli  
di un marito esemplare. Ogni volta che  
lui affondava fra le mie cosce  
la sua verga di razzatore, io mi aprivo  
agli incendi del suo pensare.

Addestrata alla volontà di potenza,  
sbocciai in un fiore scandaloso,

mentre pure il mio profano professore  
si ammantava di ariano furore.

Lasciai Martin alla moglie,  
ai figli, alla selva oscura.  
Forgiai una nuova me –  
sprezzante, indocile, cerebrale.

Oltreoceano, altri accorsero  
al mio miele, l'erotismo  
di una mente non convenzionale.  
Eppure mai rinnegai quello spregevole  
segreto, il suo sole non tramontato,  
le mie lacrime non versate.

Finché anni dopo ritrovai Herr Professor,  
il cottage, la moglie inasprita.  
Lui di nuovo fieramente in cattedra,  
a trafiggermi nella nuda luce.

Ed io... io non potei più negare  
l'impronunciabile verità: bruco  
o farfalla, rimanevo intrappolata  
nel cristallo del suo ideare.

Nonostante la mia brillante mente,  
la mia lingua svelta, tagliente, (r)esistevo  
solo in quell'abbraccio primigenio,  
in quel marcio amore di gioventù.

For context, Hannah Arendt (1906-1975) was a distinguished German-American political theorist of Jewish descent. In the 1920s, at the age of 18, she had a romantic affair with Martin Heidegger, her professor at the University of Marburg. This relationship had a profound impact on both their personal lives and intellectual development. However, it became strained due to Heidegger's affiliation with the Nazi Party in the 1930s, which deeply troubled Arendt. In the face of escalating political unrest, Arendt was able to flee to the United States and escape the Holocaust.

After World War II, Heidegger underwent denazification proceedings, during which his involvement with the Nazi Party was scrutinized. He was classified as a "Mitläufer" (fellow traveller), a designation indicating a lower level of Nazi affiliation compared to more active members. Some of Heidegger's defenders argue that his association with Nazism was driven more by opportunism and career advancement than by

ideological commitment. However, critics maintain that his support for the regime, even if motivated by personal gain, lent legitimacy to the Nazi government and had serious consequences.

Despite these controversies, Heidegger's philosophical works continue to be influential and are regarded as significant within the field. Nonetheless, his personal and political choices remain subjects of ongoing debate and ethical scrutiny. In 1949, Arendt visited Heidegger in his retreat in Germany, where she also met his wife, marking a pivotal moment in their complex relationship.

Here is a literal translation of the poem:

I was an inconvenient woman, in an era of an evil  
far from banal. I grew unaware  
of drowning my Prussian admirers  
in eyes, they said,  
as deep as my lust for searching.

The first time Herr Professor  
fondled my breast with reverence,  
I trembled, at eighteen, like a leaf  
in the crooked wind of History.

But I knew what to aim for beyond the trinkets  
of an exemplary husband. Every time  
he sank between my thighs  
his stud stallion's rod, I opened myself  
to the fires of his thinking.

Trained in the will to power,  
I bloomed into a scandalous flower,  
while even my profane professor  
draped himself in Aryan fury.

I left Martin to his wife,  
his children, the dark forest.  
I forged a new me –  
disdainful, unruly, cerebral.

Across the ocean, others flocked  
to my honey, the eroticism  
of an unconventional mind.  
Yet I never denied that contemptible  
secret, its undying sun,  
my unshed tears.

Until, years later, I found Herr Professor again,  
the cottage, his bitter wife.  
He once more proudly at the podium,  
to pierce me in the naked light.

And I... I could no longer deny  
the unspeakable truth: caterpillar  
or butterfly, I remained trapped  
in the crystal of his thinking.

Despite my brilliant mind,  
my quick, sharp tongue, I existed  
only in that primal embrace,  
in that rotten love of youth.

In the first stanza, I directly engage with Hannah Arendt's famous concept of «the banality of evil» (la banalità del male) a central theme in her analysis of the 1961 trial of Adolf Eichmann, a key figure in the Holocaust. Arendt's phrase, which has become widely recognized and debated, suggests that evil is not always perpetrated by monstrous or overtly villainous individuals, but rather by ordinary people who unthinkingly conform to bureaucratic structures and ideologies.

In the Italian version of the poem, I intentionally incorporate rhyming elements, which contrast with the English version, where such patterns are not as prevalent. This choice is meant to evoke the rhythm and musicality of a ballad, a literary form often characterized by a consistent structure and rhyme scheme. By utilizing rhymes like *male* (evil) and *banale* (banal) in the first stanza, I aim to create a sense of cohesion and flow, drawing attention to the interplay between words as they reflect the central themes of the poem.

For instance, the pairing of *Storia* (History) and *foglia* (leaf) in the second stanza hints at the fragility and transience of individual lives within the larger, sometimes oppressive forces of history. Similarly, the rhyming of *professore* (Professor) with *furore* (fury) and *cerebrale* (cerebral) with *convenzionale* (conventional) serves to underline the tension between intellectualism and blind adherence to power, two key motifs in Arendt's analysis of the banality of evil.

These rhyming pairs are not just stylistic choices; they are also thematic. As I said, they invite the reader to engage with the poem as a ballad, which traditionally tells a story through repeated structures and motifs. In doing so, I aim to provide a sense of narrative continuity while simul-

taneously enhancing the poem's emotional resonance. The rhyme creates a rhythmic propulsion that mirrors the cyclical nature of the speaker's reflections on power, identity, and betrayal, while also evoking the haunting, almost sing-song quality of a ballad. This lyrical quality reflects both the personal and the collective dimensions of the poem, highlighting the tensions between individuality and the broader societal forces at play.

In both the English and Italian versions, I have retained the German expression "Herr Professor", which is a common way students address a male professor in German. This choice is deliberate, as it not only preserves the original cultural and linguistic context, but also introduces a subtle wordplay. The phrase «Herr Professor» can be read as «her professor» in English, which creates an intriguing layer of meaning, particularly when considering the poem's exploration of gender, power dynamics, and personal relationships.

By maintaining this expression, I am able to preserve the specific cultural reference while also allowing for a double entendre in the English version. The wordplay subtly underscores the complex and often contradictory roles that authority figures, such as professors, play in the lives of their students – simultaneously figures of intellectual respect and personal entanglement. It also reinforces the theme of power dynamics, which is central to the poem, as it reflects the tension between the formal academic relationship and the more intimate, even exploitative, connection between the speaker and the professor.

In the Italian version, the expression «Herr Professor» remains intact, ensuring that the same resonance and cultural specificity are preserved. This duality of meaning is key to the poem's exploration of personal and historical entanglements, adding depth to the portrayal of the speaker's relationship with the professor.

In the next-to-last two stanzas, the poem delves into how an adult Arendt remains ensnared, like a butterfly, within the crystal of the professor's intellectual framing. Her Jewish identity and enduring love for him are exposed in all their fragility and complexity. The English phrase «the glasshouse of his mind» is expanded in the Italian version to «the crystal of his thinking», intensifying the imagery of entrapment and the vulnerable display of her Jewishness.

In Italian, the word *cristallo* evokes sharp transparency but also the "crystal case" used by entomologists to preserve and display butterflies, where the insects are pierced with a pin after being euthanized. This meta-

phor also subtly alludes to *Kristallnacht*, the pogrom against Jews in Nazi Germany on the night of November 9-10, 1938. The shards of broken glass from Jewish-owned buildings gave the event its name, symbolizing the inflicted upon the Jewish community.

Within this layered context, the line «piercing into my heart», used in English, emphasizes the invasive and painful nature of this intellectual and emotional control. In the Italian version, I have intensified the image by using the phrase «pierced in the naked light», which not only reinforces the violence of the act but also introduces the stark exposure of her identity and vulnerability under the harsh “light” of Heidegger’s gaze and thought. Glasshouses or display cases, where the butterflies are shown, are transparent yet imprisoning – a symbol of the way Arendt’s Jewishness is exposed and yet contained, subjected to external observation and judgment.

In the final stanza, the phrase «Arendt’s native embrace» in English suggests a connection to her homeland or a deep cultural identity. However, the Italian version shifts the focus to «primal embrace» evoking an instinctual, unconditional bond. This choice reinforces the idea of a love that transcends reason or morality, one that continues to tie Arendt to her complex and controversial professor despite their divergent paths and his troubling affiliations. The contrast between the two versions enriches the poem’s exploration of love, identity, and the interplay between intellectual and emotional captivity.

As demonstrated, the act of self-translation in this instance provided a unique opportunity to explore the dynamic interplay between language, memory, and identity across two distinct cultural and linguistic contexts. This process enriched the thematic resonance of the poems, introducing additional layers of meaning and interpretation that deepened their emotional and intellectual impact.

## 6. Conclusions

This paper underscores the profound impact of self-translation on an author’s literary practice, cultural integration, and creative expression. Through consecutive, simultaneous, and bidirectional self-translation, I have explored and expanded the boundaries of my work, leveraging collaborative methods, linguistic strategies, and creative adaptations. The exam-



ples provided, ranging from prose to poetry and from novels to screenplays, highlight how self-translation functions as a dynamic interplay between languages, enriching the textual and interpretive layers of my work.

Self-translation emerges as a critical practice in establishing a writer's presence within global and national literary landscapes. By self-translating into English, I not only accessed the Canadian literary market but also increased the international visibility of my work, enabling further translations into German, Arabic, and Italian. This strategic use of global English underscores its role in amplifying the reach and impact of self-translated texts.

Additionally, the practice of simultaneous and bidirectional self-translation demonstrates how translation becomes an integral part of the creative process. This approach encourages nuanced dialogues between languages and versions, resulting in diptychs that challenge traditional distinctions between source and target texts. The model of 3D self-translation, introduced here, highlights the multidimensional nature of this creative act, allowing for the emergence of new meanings and interpretive possibilities.

Ultimately, self-translation not only bridges linguistic and cultural divides but also enriches the writer's creative output. It opens doors to funding, collaborative opportunities, and broader audience engagement. My journey demonstrates that self-translation is not an act of renunciation but one of expansion – an opportunity to amplify voice, meaning, and cultural resonance.

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## Bibliography

### ARIANNA DAGNINO

#### *Self-Translation as a Path to Recognition and Creative Augmentation in the Context of Transcultural Literature: A Personal Journey*

This paper explores the practice of self-translation as both a creative and academic pursuit within the broader field of transcultural studies. Drawing from personal experience as a bilingual (English/Italian) writer and researcher, it examines self-translation's motivations, processes, and outcomes. Anchored in theoretical frameworks and supported by research conducted during a SSHRC-funded postdoctoral fellowship, the study investigates how self-translation shapes literary identity and fosters integration into diverse literary landscapes. The discussion also reflects on self-translation as a tool for creative augmentation, offering a multidimensional lens for interpreting bilingual texts.

**Keywords:** self-translation, translation studies, transcultural studies, creative output, bilingualism, collaboration, identity, culture, Canada, Italy.