BILINGUALISM AND IDENTITY: THE PRACTICE OF SELF-TRANSLATION AMONG ROMANIAN AUTHORS



Ecaterina FOGHEL, Lecturer, PhD
("Alecu Russo" Balti State University,
Republic of Moldova)

kateafoghel@gmail.com,
https://orcid.org/0009-0003-5072-4736

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Abstract

This research explores the complex interplay between bilingualism, identity and literary creation, focusing on the practice of self-translation among Romanian and Moldovan authors. It delves into the historical roots of linguistic diversity in the region, examines prominent literary figures who navigated multiple languages, and analyzes the unique challenges and opportunities presented by self-translation as a creative act. At first glance, self-translation may appear to be an ideal solution to many of the challenges posed by literary translation. However, a closer examination reveals that self-translation is a far more complex and demanding process than it initially seems. It requires not only a deep mastery of both languages but also the ability to recreate literary style, tone and cultural context without compromising artistic integrity. Due to these high demands and the pressure to meet rigorous literary standards in more than one language, self-translation remains a rare and exceptional practice in the literary world.

Keywords: *bilingualism, identity, self-translation, translation, exile, re-writing*

Introduction

Literary translation poses unique and significant challenges. The main difficulties often stem from psychological, sociological, cultural and pragmatic factors. A literary translator must go far beyond merely rendering individual words into another language. They must convey a wide spectrum of symbols, implied meanings, emotional tones, ethnocultural nuances, the original author's distinctive style and many other subtle elements that together give a literary work its true value.

Ideally, a translator should act as a neutral mediator between the original and the translated versions of a literary work. This aligns with the principle

of the "translator's invisibility", as explored by Laurence Venuti. However, in practice, the translator inevitably leaves a personal "fingerprint" on the final text.

Given the many challenges and risks involved in literary translation, it may seem that the most logical solution is self-translation. This approach effectively eliminates one of the major issues: the quest for the translator's invisibility. When the author translates their own work, they inherently understand its ideological and intentional framework, there is no need to bridge the gap between two different minds. This removes the necessity for intellectual compatibility between author and translator. At least on the surface, self-translation appears to simplify many aspects of the process.

However, self-translation is not something just anyone can undertake. It requires a high level of proficiency in at least two languages and it is something that is not widely attainable in all societies. Yet, in the case of Romanian-speaking countries, the situation is more favorable in this regard, as multilingual competence is relatively common.

Bilingualism has been part of the social reality in Romania and the Republic of Moldova for several centuries, due to certain objective geopolitical factors. Located in Southeastern Europe and bordering countries with diverse linguistic traditions (such as Hungarian, German, several Slavic languages), the linguistic landscape of the two Romanophone territories has been strongly influenced by these languages.

In Romania the historical interactions with neighboring cultures were particularly strong in border regions such as Transylvania, Banat and Bukovina. These regions have undergone numerous waves of colonization and settlement, resulting in a diverse and complex blend of languages and cultural traditions. In modern-day Romania, a diverse range of ethnic communities coexist, preserving and speaking the languages of their ancestors, alongside the official Romanian language. The descendants of the Transylvanian Saxons speak their German dialects. In Bukovina, but also in Harghita and Covasna counties, there are the Szeklers, representing a subgroup of Hungarian origin, who have managed to maintain their linguistic and cultural identity over centuries (Stroschein, 2012, p. 204). Ukrainian linguistic and cultural presence is most evident in northern Moldavia and Maramureş. The Hutsul (or Hutzul) communities in the Carpathian Mountains speak a local dialect that blends elements of Ukrainian, Polish, German and Hungarian (Mattalia et al. 2020). Serbian linguistic and cultural influence is particularly prominent in the Banat region, encompassing parts of Timiş, the Danube Gorge and highland areas east of Timişoara (Djurić-Milovanović, 2012, p. 118). The presence of all these ethnic groups in the region has shaped its multilingual character, where Hungarian, Romanian, Ukrainian, Serbian and other languages coexist.

In the Republic of Moldova, the Romanian language has historically been shaped by contact with various linguistic communities, including Hebrew, Ukrainian and Greek. However, the most profound and enduring influence has been exerted by the Russian language. This dominance stems primarily from the intense process of Russification initiated after 1812, when the region being then known as Bessarabia, was occupied by Tsarist Russia (Branişte, 2012, p. 162). Over the course of the 19th and 20th centuries, especially during the Soviet era, Russian was systematically promoted as the official language of administration, education and public life. This state-driven linguistic policy led to a significant shift in language use, particularly in urban centers and continues to impact Moldova's sociolinguistic landscape to this day.

Considering the historically rooted linguistic and cultural influence across both Romania and Bessarabia (modern-day Republic of Moldova), it is unsurprising that many literary figures from these areas were fluent in two or more languages, thus making bilingualism or at times multilingualism, a common trait among writers and poets. This linguistic versatility often reflected the multicultural environments in which they lived, as well as broader political and educational contexts that exposed them to multiple languages.

For example, Mihai Eminescu, widely regarded as Romania's national poet, was fluent in German, having pursued his studies in Vienna and Berlin. His philosophical and literary worldview was profoundly influenced by German Romanticism, particularly the works of Schopenhauer and Kant. He also translated works by Schiller and Goethe from German. Moreover, there is documented evidence suggesting that Eminescu not only read and thought in German, but also occasionally wrote or experimented with texts in this language (Spircu, 2021).

Another example is the poet and philosopher Lucian Blaga, originally from Transylvania and a graduate of the German-Romanian school. He was a respected translator of Goethe and a proficient speaker of German. In some studies, he has even been referred to as a "German writer in the Romanian language" (Bako, 2021, p. 9), a metaphor that reflects the close connection between the two languages and cultures within Blaga's identity.

In Bessarabia, Alexei Mateevici, a prominent figure in early 20th-century Moldovan literature, was fluent in Russian, Church Slavonic and Greek, reflecting both his religious education and the Russian imperial context of his time. He wrote his doctoral thesis with the intention of publishing it in Russian in Kiev and in Romanian in Bessarabia (Eremia, 2021, p. 180). His famous poem „Limba noastră" ("Our Language"), which later became the national anthem of the Republic of Moldova, was written in Romanian as a deliberate cultural assertion in response to the rising influence of Russification.

During the Soviet period, Moldovan writers such as Ion Druță, Grigore Vieru, Leonida Lari, Andrei Lupan and others, mastered Russian in addition to Romanian, often navigating censorship and ideological constraints while preserving national identity through their writings. Their bilingualism was both a practical necessity and a tool for cultural survival.

Thus, bilingualism among Romanian and Bessarabian literary figures was not merely a personal asset but a reflection of the region's complex linguistic history and geopolitical dynamics.

1. The challenges of Literary Translation

Many Romanian-speaking writers have been, and continue to be, widely translated into various languages worldwide. In numerous cases, the translators themselves are native Romanian speakers, as they can more easily capture and convey the socio-linguistic nuances present in the authors' works, reflecting the cultural and historical contexts from which they originate.

The translation process often involves not only linguistic accuracy but also a deep understanding of the cultural and socio-political realities that shape the text. A literary translator deals with a text which involves linguistic, pragmatic, cultural and aesthetic elements (Colenciuc, 2015, p. 128). Translation difficulties or the problem of untranslatability of certain parts of texts, may arise on any of these levels: from issues related to language and style to those involving practical use and artistic expression, all of which influence the way meaning, tone and cultural background are transmitted.

For instance, when translating the works of Mihai Eminescu, a key figure in Romanian literature, translators who are familiar with the Romanian rural landscape and historical struggles can better preserve the essence of his work. His poems' references to Romanian folklore, language and national identity are deeply embedded in the nation's historical context, making it easier for a native speaker to capture their significance compared to a translator unfamiliar with the cultural backdrop. Moreover, the original lyrical essence of Eminescu's poems contains acoustic nuances and subtle connections that are impossible to replicate in translation if conveyed in a different manner, in a different language (Chișu, 2010, p. 100).

Similarly, translating the works of authors such as Mircea Eliade, Tudor Arghezi and Lucian Blaga, as well as Ion Druță, Dumitru Matcovschi or Grigore Vieru, poses significant challenges. Their writings are deeply rooted in themes of Romanian spirituality, identity and cultural transformations. Translators undertaking this task must be capable of preserving the complexity of the religious and philosophical dimensions embedded in the texts they work with. They must also ensure that the cultural references and nuanced meanings, holding particular resonance for Romanian readers, are not lost in translation. Additionally, certain graphic symbols embedded in

the rules of the original language, along with specific wordplay or elements of culturally rooted humor, cannot be effectively conveyed in a translation.

However, it is not only the translator's ethno-cultural background or native language framework that matters, equally important is their personal interpretation and internalization of the text. The translator's individual sensitivity, intellectual formation and emotional response to the work play a crucial role in shaping the final version. Translation is, after all, not a mechanical transfer of meaning, but a deeply subjective act of re-creation, where the translator becomes a co-author, engaging with the original through their own cultural lens and personal insight.

The choice of words often follows a complex system of semantic and expressive correspondences, shaped by the author's unique way of perceiving and reflecting both the objective and subjective aspects of reality. In this sense, translation becomes an act of interpretation, where the author's subjective reality, shaped by their experiences and cultural background, guides the semantic choices made in their writing. Translators, no matter how skilled they are, cannot fully replicate the individual essence embedded in each word or symbol, making some aspects of the original work inevitably untranslatable.

There is always a distinction between language as an established reality and language as an act of creation, the latter of which gives rise to what we recognize as style. When analyzing the process of translation and its results, one must acknowledge the inherent difference between the standard national language and the individual, creative use of language by the author (Friedrich, 1992, p. 15). This disparity is crucial, as the translator not only deals with the complexities of the language's structure but also interprets the author's unique stylistic choices, which are often deeply personal and reflective of their worldview, of their identity. According to some theorists, translations are complete and independent versions of the original work they are based on; the original becoming, though still primary, just one version among others[4] (Oustinoff, 2018, p. 62). This perspective invites us to reconsider translation as an act of creation in itself. The translator becomes a co-author, recreating a work in a new cultural and linguistic context while trying to stay true to the author's original emotional and intellectual intentions and objectives.

The tension between literal fidelity to the original text and the artistic and emotional integrity of the work in the target language is one of the central challenges in literary translation. Since a mechanical, word-for-word translation is insufficient for conveying the depth of literary works, the translator must often navigate beyond the constraints of literalism. This process in-

[4] In French: « Les traductions sont des versions à part entière de l'œuvre dont elles dérivent, l'original n'étant plus qu'une version, certes primordiale, parmi d'autres (…) ».

volves a form of compromise between strict formal faithfulness to the original and the use of creative strategies to express its underlying essence. According to André Gide, the translator's goal is not the mere replication of words, but the recreation of the aesthetic and emotional effect that the original evokes. Such an outcome, he argues, can only be achieved through nuanced interpretation, flexible adaptation and a series of continuous "trickeries" or "detours" (Gide, *apud* Oustinoff, 2018, p. 82), which are deliberate deviations from literalness that serve a higher fidelity to meaning and artistic impact.

All the same, a translation can never fully reproduce the original, not only because it is, by definition, a secondary rendering, but also because the translator may not always possess the same level of sensitivity, insight, creative awareness or expressive power as the author. This inherent limitation in translation does not necessarily reflect a lack of skill on the part of the translator, but rather the uniqueness of the authorial voice, which is shaped by personal experience, emotional depth and stylistic individuality.

2. The positive Aspects of Self-Translation

In this context, self-translation emerges as an ideal response to many of the challenges previously outlined. Unlike conventional translation, where the roles of author and translator are divided between two individuals, self-translation unifies these roles within a single creative consciousness. As a result, the usual distinctions between "original" and "translation" and between "author" and "translator" effectively dissolve. The writer-translator, being the original creator of the text, has direct access to the full range of implicit cultural references, symbolic meanings, background knowledge and stylistic intentions embedded in the work. Emotional nuance, aesthetic purpose and linguistic creativity are thus not subject to external interpretation or approximation, they are preserved and re-expressed from within. This unique position allows for a deeper fidelity not just to the content, but to the author's own artistic vision and expressive identity.

According to Lawrence Venuti's conception of the *translator's invisibility*, an ideal translation is required to efface its second-order status with the effect of transparency, producing the illusion of authorial presence (Venuti, 2008, p. 6). As the author freely and authentically expresses his thoughts and feelings in writing, his work is viewed as an original and transparent selfrepresentation, self-translation allows to bypass the mediation of transindividual determinants (linguistic, cultural, social) that might otherwise complicate or constrain their original voice.

Literary self-translation largely overcomes the typical challenges posed by the duality between author and translator, since both roles are fulfilled by the same individual. However, it does not eliminate the fundamental necessity of rewriting the text using the linguistic structures and cultural frame-

works of an entirely different language. While literary self-translation mitigates many issues stemming from the potential misinterpretation or creative divergence between an original author and a separate translator, it still demands a profound re-creation of the text. Any authorial translation is more or less a rewriting (Râbacov, 2016, p. 174). The author must work within the limitations and opportunities presented by a different language, frequently adapting the style, tone and meaning of the original in order to align with the norms and expectations of a new cultural and linguistic environment. In this sense, self-translation becomes less a matter of direct equivalence and more an act of cross-cultural rewriting.

As thus self-translation is a quite rare phenomenon in literature. This process only functions authentically when the author possesses true bilingual proficiency, not just the ability to communicate, but the ability to create literature in both languages with stylistic and emotional depth. Authors like Vladimir Nabokov and Samuel Beckett are quintessential examples of self-translators, writers who translate their own literary works between languages. Their self-translations were, however, not merely faithful reproductions of content, but almost independent literary works, often differing significantly in tone, structure or emphasis from their original versions (Oustinoff, 2018, p. 83).

Rainer Grutman, in his contribution to the Self-translation section of the 2008 Routledge Encyclopedia of Translation Studies, characterizes self-translation as both the act and the outcome of an author translating their own work (*Routledge Encyclopedia of Translation Studies*, p. 18). He situates this practice within pragmatic or material reasons, most notably exile or financial necessity. In other words, self-translation often arises not solely from aesthetic or intellectual desires, but from external pressures that compel the writer to shift linguistic gears.

The impact of exile and financial necessity is especially evident in the case of Romanian/ Moldovan writers, many of whom were forced to leave their homeland due to political, ideological or economic pressures. Once abroad, these authors faced a critical choice: remain loyal to their native language or embrace a more widely spoken language to ensure visibility and survival in the global literary market.

Bilingual writers and poets may speak multiple languages fluently and switch between them in everyday contexts, however, shifting from one language to another in the process of artistic creation is far more complex. For authors who emigrated from Romania, the transition to writing in a different language was often shaped by the need to integrate into a new society and reach a different readership. This was the case with Emil Cioran, Eugène Ionesco and Tristan Tzara, writers who began their literary careers in Romania and published their early works in Romanian, but who, after relocating to

France, wrote primarily in French. Their international recognition and influence was primarily built on the works they produced in French.

Today, a vast Romanian-speaking diaspora is spread across the globe and among its members are a number of notable literary figures. Some authors have chosen to continue writing in Romanian, maintaining a strong connection to their linguistic and cultural roots, such as Tatiana Țîbuleac, Lorina Bălteanu, Nina Cassian and others. However, certain writers have transitioned to writing primarily in the language of their adopted countries, integrating into new cultural and literary contexts. Writers like Ionuț Caragea (in French), Herta Müller (in German), Lilia Bicec or Corina Sofia Bebereche (in Italian) exemplify this choice (Deleu, 2016, p. 24). These varied linguistic options reflect personal identity, audience engagement and the broader dynamics of cultural adaptation in exile or migration.

While many Romanian writers wished to preserve the cultural and emotional depth of writing in their mother tongue (ex. Norman Manea, Grigore Cugler, Paul Goma and others), they understood that doing so would likely confine their work to a limited readership. As a result, they turned to translation as a bridge to new audiences. However, fully translating their own works was often linguistically and stylistically challenging. Although these authors possessed a good command of the new language, few felt confident enough to serve as their own translators.

3. The trials of self-translation among Romanian and Moldovan authors

Instead, they typically chose to collaborate with professional translators, guiding the process through suggestions, clarifications, and revisions. A revealing example is Norman Manea, a Romanian writer born in 1936 who has been living in exile in the United States since 1988. According to an interview for the literary journal *The American Reader*, he encountered significant dissatisfaction with the initial English translation of his first collection of stories, published by Grove Press. Disappointed by how the translation rendered his prose, Manea worked with his editor to reconstruct the English version, essentially rewriting large parts of it to better capture the nuance of the original Romanian.

This intense process of reworking made Manea acutely aware of the linguistic and cultural gaps inherent in translation. Reflecting on the experience, he remarked that even when translating your own text, in any language, you're not the same. One is never exactly the same because the languages are not the same, and there are words and even meanings which are so specific that they cannot be transferred, transported exactly from one language to another (N. Manea's interview to Elianna Kan, for *The American Reader* journal).

His observation speaks to a fundamental truth in translation studies: that language is not merely a neutral vehicle for meaning but a deeply embedded

cultural and emotional system. For exiled authors like Manea, who write from a position of displacement, this awareness is even more acute. The act of translating or being translated becomes not just a technical task but a negotiation of identity, memory and authorship.

Manea's experience highlights a broader pattern in self-translation: this type of translation activity, while allowing for the preservation of authorial intent and the opportunity to reach new audiences, undeniably points to the irreducibility of language. Such translation efforts underscore the delicate balance between fidelity to the source text and the demands of the target language and culture.

Eugène Ionesco (1909-1994), the acclaimed French absurdist playwright born in Romania and raised there during much of his youth, navigated between two linguistic and cultural identities throughout his early literary career. Initially writing in Romanian, Ionesco began translating his own work into French after moving to France. In 1948, he completed the self-translation of his Romanian play „Englezește fără profesor" (English without a Teacher), which was staged in Paris in 1950 under the title «La Cantatrice chauve» ("The Bald Soprano"). This linguistic and cultural shift resulted in not just a linguistic transposition of words and content, but rather a creative adaptation. A comparison between the two versions, Romanian and French, reveals how Ionesco transcends the linguistic barrier by directly incorporating entire passages from the original Romanian text into the French version. Where the constraints of the Romanian language do not allow for a straightforward transfer, he adapts the material to meet the stylistic and syntactic norms of French. Idiomatic expressions and proverbs are transformed accordingly, yet the core message and tone remain intact (Hetel, 2011). This process demonstrates not only Ionesco's bilingual dexterity but also his ability to preserve the spirit of the original while reshaping it to suit a different linguistic and cultural context.

Moreover, if we take into account that the original Romanian version of the play consists of only four scenes, while the French translation contains eleven, it reinforces the idea that we are dealing not merely with a translation, but with a substantial rewriting and development of the work. The effort self-translation required from Ionesco, marked a pivotal turning point in his activity: from that moment on, he chose to write exclusively in French searching to reach the large francophone readership directly.

Gherasim Luca (1913–1994), a Romanian surrealist poet and theorist, left Romania for France in 1952. A polyglot fluent in Romanian, Yiddish, French and German, Luca wrote and published in both Romanian and French from the early stages of his career. After settling in France, he also engaged in self-translation, revisiting and reworking some of his earlier Romanian texts. Among these is „Inventatorul iubirii" ("L'Inventeur de l'amour"), an interesting example of self-translation as a form of creative transformation.

The Romanian edition, published in 1945 in Bucharest by Editura Negația Negației, presented the text in prose form, while the French edition, which Luca himself translated and which was posthumously published in 1994 in Paris, appears in a radically different format: fragmented into broken lines of poetry, stripped of punctuation, and notably omitting an entire section („Parcurg imposibiliul") (Fijalkowski, 2014, p. 64). This shift from prose to poetry alters not only the visual and rhythmic experience of the text but also its conceptual framing, suggesting a movement away from theoretical expression and toward a more lyrical, performative mode.

Such a transformation supports the interpretation of the French edition as a "reclaiming" and reintegration of a forgotten Bucharest text into the poetic body of work that Luca developed in Paris from the 1950s onward (*Ibidem*). However, it also illustrates the unique freedom that self-translators may exercise, as Luca does not adhere to the conventional translator's duty of fidelity or transparency. Instead, he approaches translation as an act of recreation, allowing himself to reshape and reimagine major structural and stylistic elements of the original. In doing so, he challenges the very boundaries between translation, authorship and poetic reinvention.

Yet, as the author of the original, Luca's freedom in altering form, structure or content through self-translation largely shields him from criticism, positioning his choices as deliberate acts of artistic agency rather than breaches of translational fidelity.

The playwriter Matei Vișniec (born 1956 in Suceava) left Romania for France in 1987, and from that moment, his literary output became deeply intertwined with the challenges of translation and self-translation. For Vișniec, self-translation marked a stage in his gradual acquisition of bilingualism, ultimately leading him to write directly in French. Initially, he began translating his Romanian plays into French with the assistance of professional translators. This initial phase fueled his curiosity, driving him to reflect on the intricacies of translation: what elements could be preserved and what might be lost in the process. He recognized that translation had the potential to enhance a text's meaning, but also, at times, to deprive it of subtle nuances.

In his later, more mature phase of bilingualism, Vișniec's self-translations become notable for their extensive rewritings, particularly in terms of lexical and rhetorical modifications between the French and Romanian versions (Giorgi, 2022, p. 47). This shift reflects a cultural awareness that helps address translation shortcomings, particularly those stemming from the ethnocultural differences between the source and target languages. Vișniec himself explains that his self-translation often prioritizes the poetic dimension of the text, an approach that becomes more deliberate as he reflects on the nuances of both the Romanian and French cultural contexts.

According to the researcher Emilia David, self-translation for Vișniec evolves into a conscious act of rewriting, one that is shaped by the different cultural horizons of the reader, whether Romanian or French. This process requires the identification of the work as bilingual, considering the distinct expectations and sensibilities of both audiences. David mentions that as a self-translator, Vișniec consciously adopts a new style in French, an alternative and complementary one that serves as a counterpart to his dramaturgical style in Romanian (*apud* Giorgi, 2022, p. 47). In this phase of writing, Vișniec becomes a mediator between French and Romanian languages and cultures, intentionally altering parts of the text to prevent any potential loss of meaning or clarity for readers from either cultural background.

Ion Druță (1928–2023), the celebrated Bessarabian writer, was renowned for his exceptional bilingualism, producing his literary works in both Romanian and Russian. Throughout his prolific career, Druță authored numerous novels, short stories, plays and children's books. He was deeply connected to both the Romanian and Russian-speaking worlds, a characteristic that not only defined his creative approach but also shaped the reception of his works across diverse audiences.

One of his distinctive features as a writer was his ability to self-translate. He personally undertook the translation of several of his short stories originally written in Romanian into Russian. Among the notable works he self-translated are „Ultima lună de toamnă" ("The Last Month of Autumn" / «Последний месяц осени»), „Mozart la sfârșit de vară" ("Mozart at the End of Summer" / «Моцарт в конце лета»), and „Arionești" («Арионешты») etc., translations completed primarily during the 1960s and 1970s.

In the case of Druță, self-translation also went beyond a simple transfer of words, it was a creative act through which the author preserved the tone, rhythm and emotional resonance of his Romanian originals while skillfully adapting them to the cultural and linguistic expectations of a Russian-speaking readership. In doing so, he not only retained the integrity of his narratives but also expanded their reach and relevance within the broader Soviet literary sphere. His bilingualism thus became an essential part of his literary identity, enabling him to serve as a cultural bridge between Romanian and Russian literary traditions.

Druță demonstrated a keen sensitivity to cultural and linguistic nuance. When faced with culturally marked terms, words deeply rooted in Moldovan rural life or ethnographic specificity, he either sought neutral Russian equivalents that retained the original meaning or supplemented the text with footnotes and explanations. This careful strategy reflected his commitment to preserving the distinct local color and recognizable authenticity of his narratives, even when adapting them to a broader Soviet audience unfamiliar with certain regional realities.

Moreover, Druță made a deliberate effort to retain fragments of folk songs or symbolic poetic passages embedded in his prose. Rather than omitting or simplifying them, he preserved their original structure by transcribing them into Cyrillic script and then providing a Russian translation, allowing readers to engage both visually and semantically with the cultural resonance of the text. These translation choices reflect Druță's broader artistic vision to remain faithful to the Moldovan soul of his work while making it accessible across linguistic boundaries.

All these translation strategies reflect deliberate and thoughtful choices made by Druță as the original author, not just as a translator. His deep involvement in the process ensures that the Russian versions of his texts carry the same emotional and cultural weight as the Romanian originals. This authorial control over translation instills a strong sense of authenticity and trust in the reader, who can feel confident that the Russian text is not a diluted interpretation, but rather a faithful and artistically coherent rendering of the original. Druță's dual role as both creator and translator gives his work a unique integrity, one where linguistic adaptation does not compromise, but rather enhances, the original literary voice.

Conclusion

All the points and examples discussed above lead us to conclude that, while self-translation may offer a potential solution to many issues related to an author's identity and how their work is perceived, it does not eliminate the challenges posed by switching between languages. Being bilingual in everyday life does not automatically equip someone to be a literary translator, even of their own work. Moving from one language to another involves far more than simply replacing individual words, it requires the author's voice to be not merely reproduced, but creatively reimagined.

This is especially true for writers who experience linguistic liminality or come from internationally peripheral cultures, for whom self-translation can become an existential necessity, whether due to exile or the desire to reach a broader audience and gain financial sustainability. Nevertheless, self-translation heightens the tension between fidelity and adaptation. It demands a high degree of stylistic ingenuity, pragmatic awareness and often, the use of deliberate distortions or detours. It is precisely for these reasons that self-translation remains a relatively rare phenomenon in the literary world.

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