

ESSAY

Mónica de la Torre, Self-Translated

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“A Big, Beautiful Wall” is one of Mónica de la Torre’s translations of her own poem written in Spanish, “Equivalencias” (“Equivalences”), featured in *Repetition Nineteen*. The divergence in titles is the first sign that de la Torre is engaged in creative rewriting rather than in achieving the eponymous equivalence between original and translation. While the two versions contain the same number of lines and stanzas, their lexicons, registers, and semantics vary, such that “un sorbo de café” (“a sip of coffee”; “Equivalencias”; my trans.) is expanded into a description of the sensory experience of drinking coffee: “A sip of a hot drink made from roasted and ground seeds found bitter / after swallowing” (“Equivalences”). Consulting the book’s translation key reveals that this version of the poem is composed exclusively of English words with Anglo-Saxon roots; the word *coffee* is excluded because of its Arabic etymology (72). The political implications of this lexical restriction are elucidated in a prose commentary. De la Torre recounts that she worked on the self-translation while in residency at Montalvo Arts Center in Silicon Valley, whose villa and lands were a gift from a white supremacist, James D. Phelan (“On ‘A Big, Beautiful Wall’” 115). Phelan served as mayor of San Francisco (1897–1902), and as a Democratic senator (1915–21) he campaigned with the slogan “Keep California White.” He worked to ban Chinese and Japanese immigration and actively supported the 1924 Immigration Act, drawing from the writings of the eugenicist Madison Grant. Grant proclaimed the superiority of “the Anglo-Saxon branch of the Nordic race” (qtd. in de la Torre, “On ‘A Big, Beautiful Wall’” 115–16) and argued that there was an essential connection between language, race, and ethnicity. Phelan declared, “We must preserve the soil for the Caucasian race” (qtd. in de la Torre, “On ‘A Big, Beautiful Wall’” 115).

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“A Big, Beautiful Wall,” a title that alludes to Donald Trump’s promise to build a wall to block immigrants from entering the United States, implies that twenty-first-century racism is, if not a precise repetition, then a variation on the theme of twentieth-century racism. While the Mexican American writer de la Torre was at Montalvo working on her translations in the summer of 2018, the Trump administration’s policies led to the “unprecedented detention of more than 2,600 children in government shelters” at the United States–Mexico border and, de la Torre notes, the formation of a new category in the Customs and Border Protection database for families forcibly separated: “deleted families,” a term unapologetically invoking annihilation (“On ‘A Big, Beautiful Wall’” 117). In tandem with physical and emotional mistreatment, violence occurs in and is facilitated by language. By confining “A Big, Beautiful Wall” to words with Anglo-Saxon etymologies and choosing to “ban” Latinate words, de la Torre’s translation calls attention to exclusionary policies that aim to bar Latin American immigrants from entering the United States (117). The linguistic constraint emphasizes the entanglement of racist ideology about genetic roots with notions about etymological roots. It also evokes other language restrictions, such as the “English Only” movement in the United States, which has persisted since 1907. The constraint digs into the deletions and damage caused by these repeating histories, as the poet excavates the labor and migration history of the literal ground on which *Repetition Nineteen* was written.

De la Torre is part of a wave of contemporary writers translating their own poetry, signaling a significant new phase in Latinx literature that is also consequential for translation studies. Along with de la Torre, the Puerto Rican poet-scholar Urayoán Noel (*Transversal*), the Cuban American writer Achy Obejas (*Boomerang/Bumerán*), and the Puerto Rican poet Roque Raquel Salas Rivera (*Lo terciario / The Tertiary*) eschew the conventional view of literary translation as the transference of semantic invariants between languages, instead seeking to expand translation’s creative and theoretical horizons by cultivating divagation and invention. Salas Rivera uses the term “poequivalente” (“poequivalent”;

Terciario 15/15),¹ Noel calls his work “transversal” (*Transversal* xiii), and de la Torre writes of her “unreliable translations” (“Listening Device” 94).² These authors’ self-translations not only experiment with the affordances of poetic form; they also are attuned to the inequities in cultural capital associated with English and Spanish in the United States and to the historical and geopolitical contexts responsible for those inequities.

The United States has long been characterized by multilingualism and numerous varieties and dialects of English. Yet this internal heterogeneity continues to be understood within what Vicente Rafael calls “a history of disavowal, a history that insists that the United States always has been, was meant to be, and must forever remain a monolingual nation” (104).³ Despite its prevalence—the United States now counts the largest number of Spanish speakers in the world after Mexico, outstripping Spain—Spanish continues to fight for recognition in this country. Speaking or writing in Spanish is often interpreted as a marker of race and class against a white, monolingual norm (García; Muñoz 3; Rosa; Urciuoli 1–40). The anti-Latinx sentiment of earlier eras continues to rebound today, as anti-immigrant violence and xenophobia have reached the highest levels of government in the twenty-first century. The United States–Mexico border remains the site of brutal policing tactics, immiserating encampments, family separations, and the incarceration of children. This follows years of resistance to bilingual schooling and Arizona’s highly publicized ban on (and later reinstatement of) Mexican American studies in public school curricula. The falsehood that code-switching indicates linguistic deficit is tenacious, and people of Latinx descent continue to be racialized and discriminated against because of their language use (Cobas et al; García; Rosa; Flores).

It is thus significant when Spanish-speaking writers in the United States act as the agents rather than the objects of translation, carrying themselves and their art across languages on their own terms. Salas Rivera contends that self-translation represents “the power to remake the world in the image of the colonized” (“On Self-Translation”). In this sense, it resists “the colonial matrix of power” (Mignolo xiii) that conditions cultural production in the Americas.

Salas Rivera insists that translation must not be solely defined, located, and legitimated by the colonizer and that it is a decolonial act for authors—from the Caribbean, for example—to choose when and how to translate themselves (“On Self-Translation”). His analysis of self-translation is helpful for elucidating the decolonial resignifications of Mexican American history, experience, and literary possibilities in de la Torre’s *Repetition Nineteen*.

It has been suggested that in the multilingual context of the United States, Latinx studies can help advance translation studies (Galasso 342–43). Poetry that is self-translated by Latinx authors has yet to receive in-depth scholarly attention, however, and most studies of self-translation concentrate on the work of prose writers rather than that of poets (Gentes and Van Bolderen).⁴ To address this oversight, I begin by outlining the difference between the contemporary turn to self-translation and earlier practices of code-switching and code-mixing on which self-translation builds. With these distinctions in mind, I argue that de la Torre’s *Repetition Nineteen* is a transcreative self-translation, a mode I have discussed elsewhere—drawing on the Brazilian avant-garde poet and theorist Haroldo de Campos’s influential concept of creative translation, “transcrição,” or “transcreation” (“Translation” 315)—to refer to a formally innovative self-translation that critiques transculturation in the United States (Galvin, “Transcreation”). De la Torre’s transcreations illuminate the complexities of the bilingual Mexican American experience and of negotiating multiple identities, and they underscore the importance of the author’s translating her own work. At the same time, de la Torre’s transcreations and self-theorization contribute to translation studies, building on studies by scholars such as Susan Bassnett, Edwin Gentzler, Theo Hermans, André Lefevere, Anthony Pym, Gideon Toury, and Harish Trivedi, who have long refuted translation’s conventional stigma as imitative.

Transgressive Translation

Transcreative self-translation is being put to a variety of purposes today. The subjects of and

motivations for self-translation vary among Latinx poets as they build on and diverge from “familiar themes in the canon of Latinx poetry—the struggle for social justice, the battle for recognition, the call for solidarity” (R. E. Rodriguez 124). The self-translation practices of Noel and Salas Rivera arise from the poets’ decolonial critique of the unequal relations between Puerto Rico and the United States (Galvin, “Transcreation”). Their self-translated poetry emerges within a specific set of political and sociolinguistic circumstances: Puerto Rico is a Spanish-speaking US colony. Its citizens are geographically situated within Latin America and hold US citizenship without federal voting rights. Salas Rivera maintains that Puerto Ricans hold “una ciudadanía secundaria” (“a secondary citizenship”; *Terciario* 80/81). Noel, who refers to himself as a “stateless poet” given that Puerto Rico is not a US state, writes that he is engaged in “a search for a less hierarchical approach to translation as a stateless practice, where English and standard Spanish (both languages of empire) are disrupted and queered and where nonequivalence is celebrated” (*Transversal* xiii). Noel’s recognition of both languages’ imperial histories and their divergent cultural capital in the United States, along with his discussion of equivalence as a cultural, political, and linguistic phenomenon, resonates with de la Torre’s critiques in *Repetition Nineteen*.

A related but distinct set of sociopolitical coordinates is legible in the work of Obejas, known primarily as a novelist and LGBTQ activist, whose lyric poems address exile, immigration, queerness, and Jewishness in her recent collection *Boomerang/Bumerán*. Obejas self-translates poems written in English and poems written in Spanish in what she calls “mostly gender-free” texts. She compares carrying out a gender-free lyric project in English, with its useful second-person and third-person plural forms, with the complexity of doing so in Spanish, “a language that exists on the binary” (*Boomerang* ix). Her Spanish versions make use of neutral *-e* endings that replace gendered *-a* and *-o* endings, following an ongoing linguistic shift in Spanish (“guidelines, when they exist, vary. We’re still trying to figure it out” [ix]). Obejas substitutes *le* for the

gendered articles *la* and *el*, such that “el exilio,” or “exile,” becomes “le exilio” (11). Obejas notes that there is a key difference between translating other writers’ work, which entails “thinking about the audiences they’re trying to reach,” and translating her own work, where “the rules are very different” and exploratory divergence is possible (*Achy Obejas*). The conviction that the self-translator has special creative license is a common theme in the self-theorizing of the writers discussed here.

In tandem with these interventions, de la Torre’s work grapples with language politics, migration, and displacement while also engaging vibrantly with avant-garde traditions from Latin America, North America, and Europe. Her work has been characterized as “avant-Latino,” a term that refers to authors of Latinx descent who engage with experimental constraints, procedures, and “conceptual aesthetics” in an avant-garde mode (Colón). De la Torre has tended to publish poetry collections with presses known for their avant-garde aesthetics, such as Switchback Books, Roof Books, and Song Cave. In 2020 she coedited an anthology, *Women in Concrete Poetry, 1959–1979* (Balgiu and de la Torre), that features concrete poetry by writers hailing from Europe, Asia, Latin America, and North America. Also published in 2020, *Repetition Nineteen*—whose title is borrowed from Eva Hesse’s 1968 minimalist sculptural work, *Repetition Nineteen III*—extends the dialogue with contemporary experimentalism in a different key. It is a ludic, mixed-genre translation experiment that features a collaborative project with strangers, invented correspondence with a deceased writer who wrote a famous invented correspondence with another deceased writer, and, most prominently, the series of creative self-translations of “Equivalencias” and accompanying commentaries, which occupy more than half the book. De la Torre is an accomplished translator who has translated Latin American poets ranging from the Chilean Omar Cáceres (2018) and the Uruguayan Amanda Berenguer (2019) to numerous Mexican poets in an extensive anthology she coedited in 2002, *Reversible Monuments: Contemporary Mexican Poetry* (Cáceres; Berenguer; de la Torre and Wieggers).

However, *Repetition Nineteen* is a strikingly different sort of translational undertaking. As her own translator, de la Torre takes advantage of her intellectual, legal, and moral claim to the source text, which she is free to “deform or distort” as much as she wishes (Santoyo 28). She cites drawing inspiration from *Nineteen Ways of Looking at Wang Wei*, which features multiple translations of one poem by different translators; *Mouth: Eats Color* by Sawako Nakayasu, who translates one poem by the Japanese poet Chika Sagawa two dozen times; and the Mexican conceptual artist Ulises Carrión’s *Soneto(s)/Sonnets*, comprising forty-four typographic variations on a single poem by Dante Gabriel Rossetti (de la Torre, “Circumference”). *Repetition Nineteen* also recalls *Translating Translating Apollinaire*, an experiment by the Canadian poet B. P. (Barrie Phillip) Nichol.⁵ Eleven years after publishing a poem titled “Translating Apollinaire,” Nichol began crafting “memory translations” of his own poem, ultimately creating fifty-five “systems” for transforming the poem (TTA 1 [memory translation], TTA 5 [rearranging words in the poem in alphabetic order], TTA13 [sound translation], etc.; Nichol). De la Torre’s list of procedures resembles this numbered translation key, as each of her translations corresponds to a code (T1, T2, etc.) that identifies the relevant procedure and indexes a prose commentary riffing on the translation. De la Torre runs her own poem through *Google Translate*, translates it into idiomatic expressions, and mistranslates polysemous terms. This produces fascinating and sometimes humorous results. In one version, the first stanza of “Equivalencias” is translated into descriptions of emojis (“Finger pointing up. Zipper-Mouth Face, / and an angular burst of orange and red in star-like shape” [“Picture Character”]). Another version is a homophonic translation by a person with partial knowledge of Spanish (“The silence of Esmeralda. / The sorbet at the café is superior. / The oil at the dentist was relaxing” [“Like in Valencia”]).

As these lines show, de la Torre’s work is more creative than conventional self-translation and is an instance neither of Spanglish nor of code-switching.

Code-switching entails combining linguistic units from one language variety with those of another language variety (Gardner-Chloros 4). Poetry that code-switches might alternate English and Spanish lines or stanzas. Code-mixing, or Spanglish, may involve code-switching but is a more intertwined melding of “contact phenomena” that include “calques, semantic extensions, nonce borrowings,” and English borrowings that are “phonologically, and sometimes orthographically and morphologically, adapted to Spanish” (Casielles 151). Both modes were popularized during the Chicano movement of the 1960s by poet-activists such as Alurista and Rodolfo “Corky” Gonzales (Arteaga 152). It is essential to have a language to which one can connect one’s identity, “capable of communicating the realities and values true to themselves—a language with terms that are neither *español ni inglés* [Spanish nor English], but both,” Gloria Anzaldúa writes in her landmark Chicana feminist work *Borderlands / La frontera: The New Mestiza* (77), which theorizes the sociopolitical import of language use. In a similar spirit, some poets associated with the Nuyorican Poets Café, which was founded in 1973 in New York City, sought to craft poetry that reflected their experiences by interweaving English and Spanish. This group includes luminaries like the Puerto Rican poets Pedro Pietri and Tato Laviera and the Dominican Puerto Rican poet Sandra María Esteves. Miguel Algarín, a founder of the Nuyorican Poets Café, and Miguel Piñero describe Nuyorican poetry as written in a third language whose “vocabulary is English and Spanish mixed into a new language” (15–16).

Strategies in Chicano and Nuyorican poetic traditions include *foregrounding* isolated Spanish terms or phrases by highlighting them in italics (as in Victor Hernández Cruz’s *Snaps* and *By Lingual Wholes* and Anzaldúa’s *Borderlands / La frontera*); *interlacing* English with occasional Spanish terms or phrases unmarked by italics or other typographic indications (as in the poetry of Alurista, Esteves, Laviera, and José Montoya); *framing* Spanish terms through English syntax that marks them as dialogue or a set phrase (as Pietri does in “Puerto Rican Obituary”); *explicating* by including

glossaries of Spanish or Indigenous terms at the end of the volume (as Anzaldúa, Jimmy Santiago Baca, and Lorna Dee Cervantes do); and practicing *nontranslation* by featuring poems entirely in Spanish (as in works by Alurista, Cruz, and Montoya). All but the last of these strategies are designed for a readership unfamiliar with Spanish, conforming to the way editors have long treated non-English languages within texts. It is important to note that some strategies, such as adding a glossary, are not always the poet’s choice (Torres 77). Frances Aparicio explains that these gestures were common before Latinx identity began to be resemanticized and “self-tropicalized” in the 1990s (“On Sub-versive Signifiers” 199), when “politicized, transgressive, and ‘transcreative’” practices (194–95) helped spur a growing market for literary translanguaging (202).

However, certain poems and poetry collections of earlier decades anticipate radical bilingualism (“linguistically diverse texts that challeng[e] both Spanish and English monolingual expectations” [Torres 86]) and the transcreative work I trace in the present essay. Cruz’s “Translation,” for example, challenges the reader with an *unreliable self-translation*: five words in English are provided as a translation of two full pages of poetic prose in Spanish. The irreverent *lexical decomposition* of English and Spanish in Alurista’s poems “loose not” and “yoga” (67, 69) likewise presages similar experiments by de la Torre, Noel, Jennifer Tamayo, Edwin Torres, and Cecilia Vicuña. A significant precursor is Francisco X. Alarcón’s inventive 1992 *Snake Poems*, a writing-through of a colonial text—the priest Hernando Ruiz de Alarcón’s 1629 handwritten transcription of Nahuatl spells into Spanish—with the three languages appearing side by side.

Self-translation traditionally presents two distinct versions of a single work instead of mixing languages on a lexical or syntactic level. A self-translated poetry collection may be published in en face format, with the Spanish and English alternating across the book’s gutter, as in Noel’s *Buzzing Hemisphere / Rumor hemisférico*, or as two versions bound together back-to-back, each

with its own cover, as in Salas Rivera's *Lo terciario / The Tertiary* and Obejas's *Boomerang/Bumerán*. De la Torre's *Repetition Nineteen*, however, is remarkable for its unusual multiplicity: twenty-five divergent translations of the same text precede the original, which does not appear until page 69. Self-translation is a way for de la Torre to take the disparate yet intermittently overlapping linguistic repertoires of Spanish and English as a field for linguistic experimentation, allowing the friction and fellowship between them to strike sparks.

What are the limits of this potentially productive overlap? One of de la Torre's procedures demonstrates that translational equivalence is impossible, offering a graphic instance of two noncoinciding and nonrepeating texts that are nevertheless literally, materially, and typographically interlinked. As if a printer went awry, T2, "Equivalencias Equivalences," superimposes original and translation so that the two are interdependent (fig. 1). Both versions are equally visible and equally obscured; it takes some squinting to decipher the palimpsest. The superimposition looks like an error, human or mechanical. The evocation of error is meaningful; it suggests that eliminating the gap between languages does not aid comprehension. Rather, the closer the texts are to each other spatially, the more obscured they become. If they were to be printed directly on top of each other like precise equivalents, they would be unreadable—the slight skew between the versions, a "generative swerve" ("On 'Equivalences'" 83), is indispensable to legibility, such as it is. This method emphasizes linguistic difference and, as Sarah Dowling writes of translingual poetics, it "frustrates readerly desires to minimize or mediate differences, calling attention to the radically nonequivalent social statures of different languages" (19). The reader may parse each language separately and in sequence or allow them to leak into each other, attending to multiple languages at once.

Why focus on equivalence? It is a way for de la Torre to critique what was once a "conceptual cornerstone" for translators and translation theorists, who had used it to propose lexical, functional, formal, sociolinguistic, and ontological criteria for

evaluating the putative equivalence between words, phrases, and entire texts (Emmerich 54). Equivalence relies on the assumption that texts are stable objects composed of invariant elements reducible to "precisely defined units, levels, and categories of language and textuality," an idea that emerged during the development of linguistics in the 1960s (Venuti, *Translation Studies Reader* 121). To be translated equivalently, not only the languages one speaks—and the matrix of cultural associations in which those languages are embedded—but also one's translating and translated self must remain static, a notion refuted by Latina feminist philosophers and rejected by de la Torre (Alcoff 264–84; Lugones, "Playfulness"; Ortega 49–86, 145–72). Today, textual instability is widely accepted by translation theorists, to the extent that Karen Emmerich has advocated for replacing the word *translation* with "interpretive iteration," an apt description of de la Torre's multiple self-translations (1n2).

Two interpretive iterations exemplify how de la Torre furthers the idea of superimposition to show the generative potential of combining original and translation. In "La más mimética de todas" ("The Most Mimetic One of All"), she takes an English translation of "Equivalencias" and places each word at the start of a new line, creating an acrostic within a new poem that smuggles the old poem inside the new (Translation Key 72). "La más mimética de todas" extends the previous poem, the lines unfurling like tendrils from a burgeoning plant. The acrostic "one / a silence / a flicker" emerges:

one resists breaking, stoical,
a form of integrity to a
silence it's sensible to keep, concerning
a perfunctory this or that, a
flicker which is not the North American
 woodpecker, but

(48; my emphasis)

This form is in conversation with Terrance Hayes's influential poem "The Golden Shovel," which carries Gwendolyn Brooks's entire poem "We Real Cool" within it as an acrostic (although in Hayes's poem, the acrostic ends the lines). Hayes's form has

Equivalences

One. A silence, a flare,
 Uno. Un silencio, una llamarada.
 A sip of coffee before it tasted bitter,
 Un sorbo de café antes de que supiera amargo.
 A gap in a hole
 Un hoyo dentro de un agujero.

Two roads to one path
 Dos caminos para una trayectoria
 and a pair of napping eyes
 y sus ojos cerrados durmiendo la siesta.
 How many mirrors are two.
 Cuantos espejos son dos.
 Night falls and two lights appear,
 Caer la tarde y aparecer dos luces,
 two children going on three.
 dos hijos que ya son tres.

Three is peace and a pledge,
 Tres es paz y garantía,
 an accomplice, an enemy
 un cómplice, un enemigo.
 Three open books, three grains of salt.
 Tres libros abiertos, tres granos de sal.

Four times I said a name and nothing.
 Cuatro veces dije un nombre y nada.
 Four is the same as two dos.

If five times you ask yourself
 Y si cinco veces te preguntas
 what am I doing here, set your bed on fire,
 qué hago aquí, quema tu cama
 let it burn, and split.
 déjala arder, y véter.

Fig. 1. Mónica de la Torre. "Equivalences Equivalences." *Repetition Nineteen*, p. 27.

spurred a genre of “golden shovel” poems (Kahn et al.). In both Hayes’s and de la Torre’s texts, a new poem cradles a progenitor poem in its arms, bearing it forward so that it circulates within a new frame, in new contexts, in an ecstasy of influence.

In another version that demonstrates the potential of using a constraint to combine Spanish and English, “Hola, Mi Amor” (“Hello, My Love”), de la Torre treats each stanza in Spanish as an anagram, rearranging its letters into a new stanza in English. Following is the poem’s final stanza.

Y si cinco veces te preguntas
qué hago aquí, quema tu cama
déjala arder y vete.

5.

language as	quimera
	cyst
	camera, hid
	tape
	cost
	queue
	evidence
ajay!	
trouvé.	

(56)

This rendition sets aside the original content—none of the nouns or verbs reappear, and the normative syntax is exploded—in favor of a redefinition of language itself as elusive, potentially malignant, and possibly involved in espionage. The use of the anagram here recalls the work of the Oulipo (a group of writers and mathematicians founded in France in 1960, dedicated to using constraints to create new literary forms) as well as anagrams by Noel in *Buzzing Hemisphere / Rumor hemisférico* (45, 54) and by K. Silem Mohammed in *Sonnagrams 1–20* (an anagrammatic rewriting of Shakespearean sonnets). All the latter work critiques ideas about normative language, ludically suggesting that the surface of language often conceals hidden meanings. Even as de la Torre treats the Spanish words as a trove of letters from which to devise an English stanza, the difference between the two languages is emphasized. “[Q]uimera” (Spanish for “chimera”)

and “trouvé” (French for “found”) make cameos in the English, such that Spanish is produced as a remainder or revenant, and a third language, French, emerges from the interplay between English and Spanish.

Of course, de la Torre’s two languages do not possess the same geopolitical history or cultural currency within the US linguistic context. Spanish is the “law of the father” and English “the language of empire,” she notes (“Aesthetic Statement” 268). Self-translation itself is not inherently decolonial, Salas Rivera points out. It developed as a colonial tool along with the imposition of language and religion, an “imperative of empire.” Salas Rivera asserts that to decolonize, Latinx poets must translate themselves self-consciously, “reclaiming” who translates which texts and when. In this way, self-translation can become a “self-aware practice that denaturalizes one’s constant negotiation with one’s own erasure” (Salas Rivera, “On Self-Translation”). This claim dovetails with translation studies scholarship that analyzes how decolonial translation can oppose Western aesthetics, carrying forward the critiques made by the South American scholars María Lugones (“Toward a Decolonial Feminism”), Mignolo and Catherine E. Walsh (*On Decoloniality*), and Aníbal Quijano. Decolonial self-translation exposes how translation has been used to privilege colonial perspectives and to “contain and disempower colonial subjects” by forcibly erasing their epistemologies, as Libby Meintjes writes regarding the translation of African texts (42). The colonial enforcement of translation has been termed “translation as erasure” (Vasquez) and “epistemicide” (Price). Decolonial translation strategies that resist this process may include linguistic or conceptual opacity (Glissant, *Poetics* 189–94; Sommer ix–xv), the foregrounding of alterity, the disruption of formal expectations, activist advocacy for texts and languages (Meintjes 41–42), and, most pertinent to the present discussion, self-translation.

The Brazilian avant-garde poet and theorist Haroldo de Campos’s influential notion of creative translation, or transcreation, is helpful for elucidating the decolonial aspects of *Repetition Nineteen*.⁶

Transcreation entails rewriting, de Campos contends in a 1963 essay: “every translation of a creative text will always be a ‘re-creation,’ a parallel and autonomous, although reciprocal, translation — ‘transcreation’” (“Translation” 315). The principle of transcreation was pivotal to Noigandres, the group of concrete poets de Campos cofounded in 1952 with his brother Augusto de Campos and the Brazilian poet Décio Pignatari. In developing the concept, de Campos first declared it impossible to translate literature, adducing *Escola de tradutores* (*School of Translators*), by the Hungarian-Brazilian philologist, translator, and critic Paulo Rónai, who argues that the theoretical impossibility of translation ultimately reveals that translation is an art. Therefore, de Campos concludes, “we may also admit, in principle, the corollary of this thesis, the possibility of re-creating the texts” (315): “The signified, the semantic parameter, becomes just a kind of boundary marker for the ‘re-creative’ enterprise. We are, then, at the opposite end of the ‘spectrum’ from the so-called literal (or servile) translation” (315–16). De Campos elaborated his notion of transcreation by drawing on the Brazilian modernist Oswald de Andrade’s *Manifesto antropófago* (*Cannibalist Manifesto*), an influential document in Latin American letters that calls for Brazilian writers to devour European literatures and cultural forms—to incorporate them rather than to imitate them—as they devise an autonomous national culture. De Campos extrapolates from Andrade’s work to argue for “a transformational process of creative and transgressive translation” (“Tradition” 13) that critiques the epistemic framework of the colonial matrix of power. In transcreation, the author or translator is no longer a passive subject of colonization but an “aggressive and conquering agent unexpectedly capable of transformations that affect both self and other,” as Sara Castro-Klarén notes (297). De la Torre follows just such a principle in *Repetition Nineteen* by reconfiguring her own poem, grappling with the colonial legacies of Spanish and English and the dissonance they create for her through what she calls a “poetics of incompleteness” (“Aesthetic Statement” 268). At the same time, she absorbs texts, processes,

and constraints from across the Americas, citing the Mexican poets Carrión and Heriberto Yépez, the Chilean Vicuña, and women writers of North America such as Anne Carson, Rosmarie Waldrop, and C. D. Wright. Major figures of the Latin American canon also appear, including the Peruvian César Vallejo, the Chilean Vicente Huidobro, the Argentinean Jorge Luis Borges, and de Campos himself.

For de Campos, “transformational” proved an insufficiently radical description of the type of translation he envisioned, and in his 1963 essay, he specifies that it is a form of analysis so critically incisive as to be likened to the domain of medical science: translation as a “disembowel[ing]” or “vivisection” that leads to new literary creations.

Translation of poetry . . . is, above all else, an experiment in introspection into the world and technique of the text to be translated. It is as if one took apart and, at the same time, put back together again the machine of creation, that frail and apparently inaccessible beauty that offers us a finished product in a foreign language but which, nevertheless, is able to give itself over to an implacable vivisection, to an operation in which it will be literally disemboweled and then reformed, reconstituted, in a new and different linguistic body. It is for this very reason that translation is criticism.

(“Translation” 323)

De Campos’s theory is useful for framing de la Torre’s “implacable vivisection” in *Repetition Nineteen*, as she decorticates and reconstitutes one poem twenty-five times (or, arguably, fifty times, if we count the prose companions to each self-translation), revealing seemingly endless facets of the original and spurring unforeseen extrapolations. In the spirit of Borges, who writes in an acclaimed essay on translation (to which de la Torre refers repeatedly) that “the concept of the ‘definitive text’ corresponds only to religion or exhaustion” (69), she rewrites one poem repeatedly. De Campos’s theories of transcreation and literary anthropophagy help illuminate the decolonial stakes of de la Torre’s choice to treat the original as malleable,

underscoring the larger claim to authorial agency that her translation project makes.

De la Torre's creative use of form is not merely linguistic play; it serves a critical function. In a 2015 response to a forum on race and the avant-garde, de la Torre explains her position in an essay that is straightforward in its claims while characteristically experimental in its form:

It is only via questioning of conventional form that _____ can explode both representation and normative conditions of reception, in order to frustrate the expectation that _____ play the part assigned to _____. Only through form am _____ able to resist identity as hashtag, as commodity. And my engagement with form, and not my commitment to politics, has given me certain strategic advantages vis-à-vis experimental writing, considering that, by and large in the U.S., the avant-garde's organizing axes concern formal innovation and not politics. Yet, if those in its ranks prefer to disavow themselves of _____ politics, their loss, not _____.

("Response")

Replacing most pronouns with a blank space that invites the reader to puzzle it out or fill it in, de la Torre makes manifest the inseparability of her politics and her formal experimentation. Even as she resists "the expectation that, as a Mexican American poet, _____ speak for a collectivity" ("Response"), her transcreations in *Repetition Nineteen* intervene critically in a range of debates from the border wall to the Mexican American experience, questioning too-easy identifications.

The Self in Self-Translation

At 18.4%, or 60.6 million people, the Latinx population constitutes the largest minority in the United States today, and people of Mexican descent make up 62% of that population. "Once considered a minority literature produced by the culturally disadvantaged, this literature is now central to American literary studies. Mexico is now closer than ever; it is within us," writes the Chicano studies scholar Héctor Calderón (404). Public readership of Mexican and Mexican American literature has

grown considerably in recent decades, as seen in the celebration of now-canonical writers such as Tomás Rivera, Anzaldúa, and Oscar Zeta Acosta and contemporary writers including the US poet laureate Juan Felipe Herrera, Valeria Luiselli, and Luis Alberto Urrea. De la Torre's work holds an important place among them, although, on the one hand, she does not identify as Chicana, and, on the other, she has been described as "post-Mexican" (Gómez Olivares). Her *mexicanidad* ("Mexicanness") is a double performance of otherness, she replies in response to questions about her subject position: she is cast as Mexican in New York and as a gringa in Mexico (Gómez Olivares 97).

De la Torre's self-translated poetry responds to mutable, contextual notions of the self and troubles conventional identity categories including the pan-ethnic designation *Latinx*. Born in Mexico City, residing in the United States, and traveling frequently to Mexico, de la Torre inhabits a bilingual and bicultural world. She publishes in both countries, writing in English or Spanish or code-mixing. She has described herself as "bífida" ("bifurcated"; de la Torre and Gómez Olivares 14; my trans.). She is one of numerous prominent United States-based poets who do not fit definitions of *Latinidad* inherited from the ethnocultural nationalisms of the 1960s, and whom scholars have tended to interpret according to the language they write in (as *Latinx* if they write in English or code-switch, as Latin American if they write in Spanish). "Contemporary Latina/o/x poetry demonstrates a remarkable ability to respond to the urgencies of the present, revealing the heterogeneity of *Latinidad* by contesting representations that circulate in the popular imagination," Francisco Robles and William Orchard observe.⁷ Insight into literary production and its sociopolitical contexts can be gained by taking a comparative approach to poetry written by people of Latin American descent in the United States. Aparicio has exhorted scholars to reclaim and deploy the term *latinidad* "in ways that allow our communities and others to exert agency and more control over the public definitions of who we are" ("*Latinidades*" 113), which enables

comparative scholarship that “highlights the differences, specificities, and commonalities among the diverse national groups” (116). Such an approach can expand and transform ideas about what constitutes Latinx poetry, US poetry, and the languages they are composed in; the circuits of exchange and translation between poets throughout the Americas; convergences and divergences among ethnocultural groups (reading together the poetic traditions of United States–based authors of Mexican American, Puerto Rican, and South American descent, for example); and the problems and promise of the wide, panethnic umbrella of *latinidad* itself.

The shifting ground for cultural and linguistic translation of the self emerges as a key theme in *Repetition Nineteen*. The commentary corresponding to “Interjet 2996” (T1) articulates this concern by recounting a childhood memory:

She was me and I was her during the summer spent here, visiting from Mexico City, when she imagined that the sustained performance in which she played an American teenager was convincing to the kids on the block. . . . But right under the slang she feigned being fluent in, there was another vernacular that would slacken her tongue, leading to the embarrassment of saying the right thing wrongly or the wrong thing flat-out. She said this happened to me, and became me.

(de la Torre, “On ‘Interjet 2996’”)

The liminal, dislocated self enacts a social and cultural identity by performing linguistic fluency: “we are in an in-between state. . . . [O]ne self dislocates, only to appear again in the next place conjuring it” (24). But this performance does not ensure self-coherence. A later footnote evokes Arthur Rimbaud’s “Je est un autre” (“I is another”): “ultimately the subject is only talking to herself. . . . [S]he speaks to herself in the second person, as if she were another” (80n8).

Linguistic construction of identity is problematized throughout *Repetition Nineteen* and often leads down vertiginous paths. “Interjet 2996” and its commentary tell of travel and mistaken identities—of both cities and people—while musing on linguistic false friends. The narrator laments the recent

change “by official decree and a mighty branding effort” of her native city’s name, Distrito Federal (“Federal District”), or DF, to the acronym CDMX, for “Ciudad de México” (“Mexico City”), which she diagnoses as “impossible to pronounce or to swerve into vernacular” (“Interjet 2996” 23). Her adherence to the outdated acronym marks her temporal dislocation: it “made me sound like I was stuck in the past century, a friend corrected me” (23).

“Interjet 2996” recounts an incident on a flight from Mexico City to New York City. The narrator hears her name uttered repeatedly as a woman calls to someone behind her, producing a sense of displacement and underscoring the nonsingularity of the narrator’s identity. She is one of many Mónicas traveling from one cultural realm to another. The powerful nonspecificity of naming is also addressed to critical effect in de la Torre’s earlier work. Explaining the composition process for a piece titled “Doubles,” de la Torre writes, “I once saw my name posted on a listserv for people harboring the hope that Internet technology would finally lead them to find their disappeared loved ones. With this history-loaded search as the premise for *Doubles*, I came up with fictional email correspondence that weaved together the real identities of all the namesakes I could find on the web” (“Author’s Note”). Multiple speakers in “Doubles” dramatize the translation of self across space and culture and the complexities of trans-Latinx affiliations. Alongside its mise en abyme of selves, “Doubles” frames a serious response to Argentina’s dirty war, as the piece is shaped around one woman’s search for her mother, named Mónica de la Torre, who was disappeared by the Argentine dictatorship in 1977. The text both insists on and undermines the particularity of names and their unreliable deictic work, acknowledging the very real need to locate origins in a place where origins have been destroyed (Galvin, “Poetry” 38–41).

Just as proper names are unstable, so is the earth itself. “Interjet 2996” concludes by recalling the massive earthquake in Mexico on 19 September 2017, whose epicenter was “so close to the city that the experiencing of the earthquake coincided with its warning” (26). The earthquake struck on the

anniversary of the destructive 1985 quake that irrevocably changed the city and its denizens. Adding to this uncanny coincidence is the fact that the 2017 earthquake followed on the heels of an emergency drill that had taken place that morning: “people thought it was all a simulacrum until they realized the ground was rattling beneath their feet. Only in fiction could a deadly earthquake happen a few hours after a drill, in the same place, and on the same day, as a deadlier one thirty-two years earlier” (26). The implication is that in life, as in language, it is often difficult to separate simulation from reality or to understand coincidence as mere happenstance, even as one recognizes that precise repetition is impossible.

And yet for the creative translator, shifting identities can have advantages, de la Torre suggests:

[T]he possibility of having distinct works in Spanish and in English follow parallel trajectories has appealed to me since I started writing in English—the polymorphic (poetically speaking) Fernando Pessoa was an early influence. I’ve been consistently drawn to the theatricality of voice, a theatricality that using two languages is prone to magnify, given the subsequent and inevitable conjuring of at least a couple of distinct personas.

(“Listening Device” 95)

The bilingual author Fernando Pessoa, who was born in Portugal and resided in Durban, South Africa, for nine years, was known for “a dramatic scattering of his Self into heteronyms”: a set of poets with full biographies who wrote poems and published books under their own names (Terlinden-Villepin 216). If “voice” itself is a performance, de la Torre proposes, the gaps and overlaps between the Spanish-speaking self and the English-speaking self can be elaborated to dramatic effect. Self-translation is not a matter of repeating oneself, then, but of performing one’s multiple selves in multiple ways. This can be particularly true for the writer affiliated with more than one country, culture, or language, as was Pessoa, and as is de la Torre.

“How does one self-translate a self we cannot fully know?” asks Salas Rivera (“On Self-Translation”).

De la Torre’s poetic speaker knows that she does not know herself. Thus, her translations of her own texts will never be equivalent repetitions. Rather, they will be transcreative and numerous, as de la Torre describes Hesse’s minimalist sculptural work *Repetition Nineteen III* (fig. 2): “dented, imperfect, and happily gathered . . . without a particular order” (“On ‘I Was Having a Flashback’”). De la Torre takes Hesse’s fiberglass sculptures as an extended metaphor for her own multiple translations and multiple constituent selves. Hesse experimented with making the sculptures from different materials, ultimately choosing fiberglass. The translucent sculptures are “idiosyncratic,” de la Torre notes, showing that equivalent repetition is an illusion: “They do not mirror each other. Repetition, in their case, lies elsewhere” (“On ‘I Was Having a Flashback’”). Like the fiberglass vessels, de la Torre’s translations of a single poem vary notably from one to the next. Her project is a “usurpation” that troubles the “passive-oriented theory of copy or reflex,” as in de Campos’s description of transcreation:

The polytopical polyphonic planetary civilization is, I believe, under the devouring sign of translation *lato sensu*. Creative translation—“transcreation”—is the most fruitful manner of rethinking Aristotelian mimesis which has marked Western poetics so profoundly; of rethinking this concept not as a passive-oriented theory of copy or reflex, but as a usurping impulse in the sense of a dialectic production of differences out of sameness. (“Tradition” 18)

Not only can it be a decolonial act for a Latinx writer to translate their own work, as Salas Rivera argues, but the notion of mimesis, which ungirds the idea of equivalence, is also unseated by the transcreation de Campos advocates (Salas Rivera, “On Self-Translation”).

Fertile tropes for the nonmimetic translation de la Torre crafts are furnished by two other artists who monomaniacally work a theme, the French composer and pianist Erik Satie and the American photographer Alfred Stieglitz. De la Torre recounts that Satie wrote the score for *Vexations*, which instructs the performer to play the same theme 840 times in



FIG. 2. Eva Hesse (1936–70). *Repetition Nineteen III*. 1968. Digital image © The Museum of Modern Art / Licensed by SCALA / Art Resource, NY. Used with permission of the artist © The Estate of Eva Hesse. Courtesy Hauser & Wirth.

succession, the same year he founded a religious sect of which he was the only follower (“On ‘Self-Mastery’”). Regarding Stieglitz’s series of cloud photographs, *Equivalents*, de la Torre observes that it “proposes equivalence between cloud formations and one’s fluctuating states of mind” (“On ‘Equivalent Equivalence’” 85). She compares clouds to the art of translation, for in both cases, “the process by which one thing becomes akin to another is always open-ended, never definitive. An equation is an abstraction, and its variables can always be redefined.” Just as Stieglitz records his “attempts to find correspondences, of our once commonly shared dream to attain spiritual symbiosis with nature” (85), de la Torre’s translations and commentaries do not seek perfect communion

between languages. They ride alongside the original, recording the self-translator’s attempts to create correspondences. *Repetition Nineteen* demonstrates that while exact repetition is impossible, it is the process of attempting to repeat that is richly productive, as suggested by the work of Hesse, Satie, Stieglitz, and Gertrude Stein. Stein, a maven of monolingual experimental reiteration, was “inclined to believe there is no such thing as repetition” (Stein 288) and, like de Campos, sought the “production of differences out of sameness” (de Campos, “Tradition” 18). Stein writes, “[E]xpressing any thing there can be no repetition because the essence of that expression is insistence, and if you insist you must each time use emphasis and if you use emphasis it is not possible while anybody is alive that they

should use exactly the same emphasis” (288). Stein’s theory of nonrepetition helps clarify that de la Torre’s twenty-five translations of “Equivalencias” demonstrate that exact repetition does not exist. There is only repetition with a difference. This is far from disappointing to the author; rather, it is a precious resource. The attempt to repeat (and the failure of that attempt) is an engine of creativity for de la Torre, as it was for Stein.

Moreover, the structure of *Repetition Nineteen* offers several routes for reading, raising questions about the relationship between original and translation. The reader might peruse the translations without knowledge of the relevant constraints, or they might choose a double reading method, flipping between the translations and the translation key, assessing how they correspond. Alternatively, the reader might pursue a quadruple reading method and leap around among translation, original, translation key, and commentary. These options recall the ludic structure of Julio Cortázar’s *Rayuela* (*Hopscotch*), an experimental novel that invites the reader to leap from section to section in consultation with a numbered table, eschewing authorial control and conventional Aristotelian plot structure. *Rayuela*, like *Repetition Nineteen*, is purposely disordered, proffering multiple reading trajectories. *Repetition Nineteen*’s self-awareness also evokes another milestone of experimental literature, Macedonio Fernández’s *Museo de la novela de la eterna* (*The Museum of Eterna’s Novel*), a book that Fernández began writing in 1925 and that was published in 1967. It is constructed, Fernández writes, for the “skip-around reader” (24) who does not wish to read in linear fashion. The narrative of the novel combines with commentary about the process of writing. Fernández wrote that he was committed to spurring the reader’s awareness of the literariness of literature: “The moment the reader falls into Hallucination, that ignominy of Art, I have lost rather than gained a reader” (32). In de la Torre’s hands, the “skip-around” method increases awareness of the translatedness of the text; it becomes impossible to read her versions as transparent renderings.

Through the range of intertexts and antecedents *Repetition Nineteen* devours—from the Latin

American vanguard to Raymond Queneau, from Waldrop to Carrión—de la Torre crafts a poetics that is anthropophagous in de Campos’s sense. She incorporates preexisting sources, shaping an idiosyncratic poetics that is unconfined by national canons, language of composition, or expectations regarding subject matter. She helps herself to nutritious servings of sundry experimental literatures as she confects her own innovative mode.

Translation as Remediation

The last sections of *Repetition Nineteen* appear formally quite distinct yet share the same impulse as the book’s “Equivalencias” section. The section “137 Northeast Regional” is framed as a series of letters written on a train. The narrator is literally in transit, enacting the conveyance of metaphor and the displacement of translation: she notes that she is “translating myself, you could say, in the geometrical sense” (127). The four letters address Jack Spicer, who in turn famously wrote five letters to Federico García Lorca and mixed them with his transcreations of Lorca’s poems (topped off with an apocryphal letter from Lorca to Spicer). In both sets of letters communication is strictly one-way, as their addressees are deceased. The figure of Spicer is doubled with another addressee who recently passed away, the poet C. D. Wright, de la Torre’s friend and colleague who suggested that riding a train would be conducive to writing. Wright is quoted as saying that poetry “moves by indirection,” and thus “changes the route, and often the destination” (130), a remark equally applicable to de la Torre’s creative translations. Poetry, translation, trains, the peripatetic self; the tropes of “carrying over” (a translation of the Greek *metaphor*) overlap in these letters.

The letters to Spicer are followed by “Replay,” a transcript of a 2017 experiment in collaborative translation de la Torre conducted in New York City during her residency at Madison Square Park Conservancy and Poets House. This section, like those that precede it, is driven by a dialogic impulse and an investment in collective authorship—the poet invites people passing by on the street to

participate. It explores the idea that interruption, time- and space-related constraints, and other ostensibly frustrating impediments to communication can in fact be generative for creative translation practices. The narrator repeatedly notes the background noise obscuring speech (“Anyone who’s been in the city long enough knows there’s a price to pay for the bounty good weather brings, a steep or negligible one depending on one’s sensitivity to construction noise” [157]). “It’s so noisy here,” one participant complains. Someone, likely the narrator, responds, “You know, John Cage said you should welcome distraction because it can only teach you focus” (166). This avant-garde principle was taken up by the Noigandres group, including Haroldo and Augusto de Campos, who claimed Cage as a major influence. It has been adapted and employed by de la Torre and some of her contemporaries, including Noel, Tamayo, Torres, and Vicuña, all of whom experiment with interruption, distraction, and background soundscapes, especially in their multimedia work. Like the “Equivalencias” translations, “Replay” is a collaboration that involves non-Spanish speakers, whose native languages include Bangla, Chinese, French, German, Marathi, Norwegian, Punjabi, and Swedish. De la Torre’s playful procedures, which deliberately invite mishearing, emphasize that any communication, like linguistic or cultural translation, is always imperfect and that digital technology is frequently and humorously ill-equipped to handle the actual, everyday speech patterns of multilingual people.

De la Torre’s 2020 *Instagram* series based on *Repetition Nineteen* advances this project a step further. For an online book launch, the poet invited twenty-five people to record themselves performing the “Equivalencias” translations.⁸ Several are traditional, front-facing readings, while others amplify the book’s central themes by introducing disjunctions between image and sound. One video appears to be front-facing but detaches the sound from the image, ushering in a delay (de la Torre, Video made by George Fragopoulos); another is narrated by the voice of a man and shows a small girl in pig-tails named Zazie, the main character of Queneau’s most famous novel, *Zazie dans le métro* (*Zazie in the*

Metro [de la Torre, Video made by Andrew Lampert]). In one video, a face barely emerges from an image saturated in a deep blue reminiscent of Yves Klein’s paintings, while a voice reads over a subtle soundtrack (de la Torre, Video made by Chimi Choden); another superimposes what sounds like computer-generated text-to-speech over a screenshot of the poem “Equivocation” followed by still images of Barcelona (de la Torre, Video made by Manuel Cirauqui). Yet another offers a stop-motion video (filmed one frame at a time) of wadded-up pieces of orange and turquoise paper circling each other followed by a minimalist line drawing while the poem “A Big, Beautiful Wall” is read (de la Torre, Video made by Peter Soucy). In their vibrant heterogeneity, these versions continue the iterative interpretation process. They evoke Augusto de Campos’s comparison of translation to the “personal and unique” interpretations of a jazz singer:

Art translation holds the same tension in relation to the original as the musical interpreter does in relation to the composer. In this sense I can invoke the liberty that jazz singers and instrumentalists have, for example, to give “their” version of classics such as Gershwin or Cole Porter. There is a great difference between hearing “Summertime” sung by Billie Holiday or Janis Joplin, each with a personal and unique reading of the song, and by a lyrical singer like Barbara Hendricks, who gives an orthodox performance. Or by someone who just sings it in tune. For this very reason, although I try to stay attuned as much as possible to the literal original, I have no interest in keeping this literality when I feel the desire to recreate it, in the sense of “making it new,” to make a regenerative and differenced interpretation in my language that makes it come alive in Portuguese as a work that “everyone wants to recite by memory.” . . . It is, above all else, a question of hearing. (qtd. in Jackson 142–43)

The *Instagram* translations of de la Torre’s poems show that making a text come alive in a remediation is indeed “a question of hearing,” which may involve a productive dissonance (or opacity in Édouard Glissant’s sense) that highlights the idiosyncratic

creativity of translation. If composers and singers collaborate to produce a work, the *Instagram* project demonstrates what de Campos's "liberty" can yield, as de la Torre's poems are recreated through "regenerative and differenced interpretation[s]" produced by a range of artists.

With its site-specific, embodied experiments in collective translation, its *Instagram* performances, one-way correspondence with Spicer and Wright, and unreliable self-translations, *Repetition Nineteen* decenters the author function, showing that the art-making self is multiple, shifting, discontinuous, always in contact with others, and context-dependent, just as languages are. The translator function is likewise made visible, preventing the reader from relaxing into an illusion of literary transparency—which Venuti has called "a mystification of troubling proportions" (*Translator's Invisibility* 12) attributed to "a complacency" that is "imperialistic abroad and xenophobic at home" (13). By exploring transcreative modes through textual translation and remediation, de la Torre's work and self-theorization dovetail with long-standing efforts by translation theorists and practitioners to shift the cultural values clustered around translation.

According to de la Torre, the "price" of her bilingualism "has often been a crippling awareness of my shortcomings in both languages—their simultaneous presence in my psyche often experienced as a brokenness—paired with a deep-seated longing for wholeness. It follows that I'm skeptical about my translation skills. Two halves don't always make a whole" ("Listening Device" 95). Nonetheless, the poet recasts the "price" of her bilingualism as a "prize" (95), resignifying her experience and her multilingual art as meaningful and generative in the face of sociocultural forces that would say otherwise. Her self-translations illuminate the complexities of negotiating multiple identities, performing what she calls "a polymorphous subjectivity that undermines essentializing notions of identity and their insistence on one-to-one correspondences, which inevitably cancel multiplicity" ("Response"). Much more remains to be said about this remarkable poetry collection and about contemporary self-translation more broadly. My hope is that this

analysis will spur further study of the critical import and creative potential of the turn to transcreative self-translation in Latinx poetry.

NOTES

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1. The Spanish and English versions of the text in *Lo terciario / The Tertiary* are separately paginated. In citations of this work, the number to the left of the slash refers to the page in the Spanish version, and the number to the right of it refers to the page in the English version.

2. Noel refers to Glissant's idea of transversality, a "shared process of cultural mutation, this convergence that frees us of uniformity" as an alternative to the colonial notion of rooted identity (Glissant, "Note 2" 67).

3. Rafael observes that the polyglot history of the United States includes hundreds of Native American languages as well as African languages, Arabic spoken by enslaved Africans, French and Spanish, and hundreds of languages spoken in Hawai'i, Guam, the Philippines, and other colonies in the Pacific Islands (103–04).

4. Latinx prose writers who self-translate include Ruth Behar, Ariel Dorfman, Rosario Ferré, Rolando Hinojosa-Smith, Gustavo Pérez Firmat, Manuel Puig, and Esmeralda Santiago.

5. Both de la Torre's and Nichol's projects evoke Raymond Queneau's *Exercices de style (Exercises in Style)*. De la Torre's engagement with Queneau's work is long-standing; she composed poems in a form Queneau invented, the "elementary morality," in her 2006 collection *Talk Shows*.

6. De Campos's essays on transcreation are collected in *Haroldo De Campos: Transcriação*.

7. The concept of *latinidad* continues to inspire debate today. The term and its related descriptors—*Latina*, *Latino*, *Latinx*—are variously critiqued for cisheteropatriarchy; for flattening the heterogeneity of communities and for inadequately including Afro-descendent, Indigenous, and mestizo peoples as well as nonbinary, trans, and gender-nonconforming people; and for undermining the hard-won social and academic spaces and resources for which Chicanos and Puerto Ricans have struggled (Aparicio, "Latinidades"; Caminero-Santangelo; J. Flores; T. Flores; Gonzalez; Guidotti-Hernández; Pelaez Lopez; R. T. Rodríguez)

8. On the form and politics of *Instagram* work by Latinx poets, see Noel, "Queer Migrant Poemings."

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- . “Hola, Mi Amor.” de la Torre, *Repetition*, pp. 55–56.
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Abstract: A wave of self-translated poetry signals a significant new phase in Latinx literature. This inventive poetry, which seeks to expand translation's creative and theoretical horizons, is attuned to inequities in cultural capital associated with English and Spanish in the United States and to the histories and contemporary contexts responsible for those inequities. My case study is Mónica de la Torre's *Repetition Nineteen*, which illuminates the complexities of bilingual Mexican American experience and the implications of an author's translating her own work. I argue that *Repetition Nineteen* is a "transcreation" (Haroldo de Campos's term for creative translation) that critiques transculturation in the United States.