

Translation, Transnational Literature, and the Circulation of Cultural Knowledge

Rita Kumari

Independent Scholar & English Literature Researcher, India

ABSTRACT

Translation does far more than convert words between languages. It operates as a mechanism through which cultures negotiate their identities, assert their boundaries, and participate in global intellectual exchange. This paper examines how translation functions within the broader context of transnational literary production, asking how texts move across linguistic and national borders, and what happens to cultural knowledge in that movement. Drawing on scholarship by Lawrence Venuti, Pascale Casanova, Emily Apter, David Damrosch, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, and Homi K. Bhabha, among others, this paper argues that translation is never politically neutral, and that the choices translators make, whether to domesticate or foreignize, whether to preserve ambiguity or resolve it, shape how readers in receiving cultures understand the world beyond their own. The paper also examines how certain languages and literary traditions exercise disproportionate influence over global cultural circulation, and what consequences follow from that asymmetry. It concludes with a discussion of how scholars and publishers might think more critically about the ethics and politics of translation in an era of accelerating literary globalization.

Keywords: Translation, transnational literature, cultural knowledge, world literature, foreignization, domestication, literary circulation, cultural mediation

INTRODUCTION

The act of translation has always been more than a technical exercise in linguistic equivalence. When a text crosses a language boundary, it enters a new cultural environment with its own assumptions, hierarchies, and aesthetic norms. What survives that crossing, what gets transformed, and what disappears altogether are not random outcomes. They reflect decisions, made by translators, editors, publishers, and sometimes even readers, about what matters and what does not. These decisions, taken collectively across thousands of texts and decades of literary history, shape the contours of what any given culture knows about the world beyond its borders.

The rise of what scholars now call transnational literature has made these questions more pressing. Texts circulate across national boundaries at unprecedented rates, and the category of "national literature" has become increasingly difficult to sustain as a meaningful unit of analysis. Writers produce work in languages not necessarily tied to their birth nations; readers encounter stories set in places they will never visit; and publishing industries in dominant language markets, most obviously the English-language market, serve as gatekeepers who determine which foreign voices reach a global audience. In this context, translation functions not merely as a tool of communication but as a technology of cultural selection.

This paper examines three interconnected questions. First, what theoretical frameworks best account for translation as a form of cultural mediation rather than simply a linguistic operation? Second, how does the structure of the global literary market shape which texts get translated, into which languages, and under

what editorial conditions? Third, what are the consequences for cultural knowledge when translated texts systematically domesticate foreign elements to suit the expectations of receiving audiences?

The paper draws on work from translation studies, comparative literature, and postcolonial theory. Key interlocutors include Lawrence Venuti on the politics of translator invisibility, Pascale Casanova on the world republic of letters, David Damrosch on the circulation of world literature, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak on translation and the subaltern, Homi K. Bhabha on cultural hybridity, and Emily Apter on the productive concept of untranslatability. Together, these perspectives build a case that translation is a political act with far-reaching consequences for how different cultures see, and misread, one another.

THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS: WHAT TRANSLATION ACTUALLY DOES

The theoretical study of translation has a long history, but its engagement with questions of culture and power has intensified markedly since the late twentieth century. Earlier frameworks tended to focus on linguistic correspondence: how closely does a translation match the semantic content of its source? Eugene Nida's influential distinction between formal equivalence, which mirrors the form of the source text, and dynamic equivalence, which prioritizes the natural effect on the target reader, reflected this concern with fidelity and accessibility (Nida, 1964). Nida's work emerged from his experience with Bible translation, and his goal was to produce texts that would feel as natural to contemporary readers as the original felt to its first audience. This was a reader-oriented model, one that placed intelligibility above all other considerations.

Roman Jakobson's contribution to translation theory, while also primarily linguistic, opened the door to broader conceptual discussions. His taxonomy of three types of translation, intralingual (rewording within the same language), interlingual (translation proper, between different languages), and intersemiotic (translation between different sign systems), drew attention to the fact that "translation" is a far wider category than the simple transfer of meaning between two languages (Jakobson, 1959). This insight would prove important for later scholars who wanted to think about how cultural symbols, narrative conventions, and aesthetic values might also undergo transformative processes analogous to linguistic translation.

Walter Benjamin's essay "The Task of the Translator," originally written in 1923 as a preface to his translation of Baudelaire, took the discussion in a completely different direction. Benjamin was not interested in equivalence or fidelity. He argued that translation does not serve the original by reproducing its meaning; rather, it reveals what he called the original's "mode of intention," an essential quality that cannot be expressed in any single language but becomes visible in the relationship between a text and its translations (Benjamin, 1968). For Benjamin, the ideal translation is not the most readable one but the most "literal" in a particular sense: the one that brings the reader closest to the foreignness of the original, even at the cost of fluency. This argument would later resonate with Lawrence Venuti's case for foreignization.

George Steiner's monumental study *After Babel* approached translation from a hermeneutic perspective, arguing that all acts of communication, not just translation between languages, involve interpretation, selection, and transformation (Steiner, 1975). Steiner's four-stage model of the translation act, trust, aggression, incorporation, and restitution, emphasized the dialogic and even violent nature of the translator's engagement with the source text. The translator reaches into the foreign text, extracts something, incorporates it into the target language, and must then restore a balance that the act of taking has disturbed. This framework made clear that translation is never innocent: it always involves some degree of appropriation.

The "cultural turn" in translation studies, associated with scholars like Susan Bassnett and André Lefevere, shifted attention decisively away from individual texts toward the institutional and social

contexts in which translation takes place (Bassnett & Lefevere, 1990). Lefevere introduced the concept of "rewriting," arguing that translation is one of several practices, alongside editing, anthologizing, and reviewing, through which a culture domesticates foreign texts and adapts them to its own ideological purposes (Lefevere, 1992). A translated text is never simply a version of its original; it is a rewritten text that reflects the constraints and choices of its receiving culture.

Itamar Even-Zohar's polysystem theory offered a structural approach to these same dynamics. Even-Zohar proposed that translated literature occupies a specific position within the "polysystem" of a target culture's literary field, a position that varies depending on whether that culture is in a phase of openness and experimentation or one of consolidation and conservatism (Even-Zohar, 1990). When a literary system is young or in crisis, translated literature tends to occupy a central position and can introduce new forms and themes. When the system is mature and stable, translated literature tends to occupy a peripheral position and is expected to conform to existing norms. This structural insight helps explain why certain periods in literary history have been more receptive to foreign influence than others.

Gideon Toury's descriptive translation studies built on Even-Zohar's foundation but focused more closely on the actual behavior of translators in practice. Toury argued that translators operate according to norms, both source-oriented norms that push toward fidelity to the original, and target-oriented norms that push toward acceptability in the receiving culture (Toury, 1995). Understanding translation means understanding which norms are operative at any given time and in any given cultural context. Toury's empirical approach moved the field toward more nuanced, historically specific analyses of translation behavior. Table 1 summarizes the key theoretical positions discussed in this section and their principal implications for cultural knowledge circulation.

Table 1. Key Theoretical Approaches to Translation and Cultural Knowledge

Scholar (Year)	Key Concept	Implications for Cultural Knowledge Circulation
Nida (1964)	Dynamic equivalence	Prioritizes reader accessibility; foreign elements adapted to feel natural in the target language
Benjamin (1923/1968)	Mode of intention	Translation reveals what no single language can express on its own; literalness honours foreignness
Venuti (1995, 1998)	Domestication / Foreignization	Domestication erases cultural difference; foreignization preserves it and makes the translator visible
Casanova (2004)	World Republic of Letters	Literary capital distributes unequally; translation flows follow existing cultural hierarchies
Bhabha (1994)	Third Space / Hybridity	Cultural meaning is remade in translation; no fixed essence passes intact between languages
Spivak (1993)	Politics of translation	Translation can silence minority and subaltern voices when conducted without intimate cultural engagement
Apter (2006, 2013)	Untranslatability	Genuine cultural difference resists translation; this resistance is intellectually productive, not a failure

Damrosch (2003)	World literature as circulation	A text becomes world literature through translation and cross-cultural reading, not canonical status alone
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Note. This table summarizes foundational theoretical positions discussed in the paper. It does not represent the complete scope of each scholar's work.

THE POLITICS OF INVISIBILITY

No scholar has done more to politicize the study of translation in the anglophone world than Lawrence Venuti. His central argument in *The Translator's Invisibility* is that the dominant norm for literary translation in Britain and the United States throughout the twentieth century has been fluency: the translated text should read as though it were originally written in English, and the translator should disappear behind the text (Venuti, 1995). This norm, Venuti argues, is not aesthetically neutral. It is ideologically loaded. By erasing all traces of the source text's foreignness, fluent translation domesticates the foreign, making it conform to the assumptions and values of the target culture rather than challenging them.

The translator who produces a fluent text becomes, in Venuti's phrase, "invisible": the reader cannot see the labor that went into the translation, and the text appears to speak transparently for itself. This invisibility is a form of cultural violence. It denies the foreign text its difference and gives target-language readers a false sense that they are encountering the world as it actually is, rather than encountering the world as it has been filtered through a particular set of cultural and ideological choices.

Venuti draws on Friedrich Schleiermacher's foundational distinction between two methods of translation: one that moves the author toward the reader, and one that moves the reader toward the author (as cited in Venuti, 1995). The first method, which Venuti calls "domestication," produces smooth, readable texts that feel natural to the target reader. The second method, which he calls "foreignization," retains elements of the source text's strangeness, requiring the reader to make an effort of understanding that domesticated translations never demand.

Venuti does not argue for foreignization because it is more faithful to the original in any simple linguistic sense. He argues for it on ethical and political grounds. A foreignizing translation makes visible the existence of the other: it reminds the reader that a text was written in another language, in another culture, by a person whose assumptions and experiences may be radically different from the reader's own. This visibility is a form of respect for difference. Domestication, by contrast, conceals that difference and reinforces the target culture's tendency to see itself as universal.

In *The Scandals of Translation*, Venuti extends this argument into a broader critique of the economics of literary translation. He notes that translators are systematically underpaid, that their contributions are routinely ignored in reviews and marketing materials, and that the copyright system does not adequately protect their intellectual labor (Venuti, 1998). These material conditions are not separate from the question of invisibility; they are its institutional expression. When the market treats translation as a mechanical operation rather than a creative act, it reinforces the ideological norm that translated texts should appear as though they were not translated at all.

THE WORLD REPUBLIC OF LETTERS AND LITERARY CIRCULATION

Pascale Casanova's *The World Republic of Letters* offered a sociological rather than a normative account of how literary texts circulate across national boundaries. Drawing on Pierre Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital, Casanova argued that the global literary field is not a level playing field but a structured space with its own hierarchies, centers, and peripheries (Casanova, 2004). At the time she wrote, Paris occupied the historical center of this space, not because French literature was inherently superior, but because French

had accumulated centuries of symbolic capital as the language of prestige and civilization. To be translated into French, or to have one's work recognized by Parisian publishers and critics, was to gain admission into the "world republic of letters."

Casanova's model is useful for understanding why certain literatures and languages dominate global translation flows, but it has also drawn criticism for its Eurocentrism and for its relative neglect of non-Western literary systems. Nevertheless, her core insight, that the circulation of texts is shaped by existing inequalities of cultural capital, remains important. Translation is not simply a matter of reader interest or aesthetic merit; it is a function of where a text originates, in which language, and with what institutional backing.

David Damrosch's *What Is World Literature?* approached the same problem from a different angle. Damrosch proposed that "world literature" is not a fixed body of texts but a mode of circulation and reading: a text becomes world literature when it circulates beyond its culture of origin and is read differently in its new contexts (Damrosch, 2003). On this definition, translation is not just a vehicle for world literature; it is constitutive of it. A text that exists only in its original language and is read only by native speakers of that language is not yet world literature, no matter how significant it may be within its home culture.

Damrosch's definition has a democratic quality that Casanova's model lacks: it does not privilege any particular language or cultural center but instead focuses on the processes of reading and reception. However, it also raises difficult questions. If a text is transformed by translation and by reading in new contexts, which version of the text is the "world literature" text? The original, with its full cultural density? The translation, which may have domesticated that density? The readings that emerge in the receiving culture, which may bear little resemblance to readings in the source culture?

Franco Moretti's essay "Conjectures on World Literature" proposed a macro-level approach: rather than reading individual texts closely, scholars should study patterns of literary evolution and diffusion across large bodies of work (Moretti, 2000). Moretti's "distant reading" approach has been controversial, but it raised important questions about how literary forms travel, adapt to local conditions, and generate new hybrid genres. Translation plays a central role in this process: it is the mechanism by which formal innovations spread from one literary system to another, and the asymmetries of that mechanism shape what kinds of innovation count as universal and what kinds remain local.

TRANSNATIONAL LITERATURE AND THE PROBLEM OF THE ORIGINAL

The concept of "transnational literature" resists easy definition, but at its core it refers to literary production that cannot be contained within the boundaries of any single national tradition. This includes texts written by diaspora writers who draw on multiple cultural inheritances, texts that deliberately address multiple national audiences simultaneously, and texts whose circulation patterns cut across the map of national literatures in ways that complicate straightforward assignment to any one tradition.

Rebecca Walkowitz has introduced the compelling concept of "born translated" to describe contemporary novels designed from their inception to be translated: novels written in English by non-native speakers who are simultaneously imagining their text in multiple languages, or novels that deliberately incorporate foreign-language elements and untranslated passages as a way of problematizing the very category of the original (Walkowitz, 2015). Texts like these challenge the assumption that translation is always secondary to an original. If a novel is written with translation in mind, if its author anticipates that most readers will encounter it in languages other than the one in which it was written, then the "original" is already a text that has been shaped by the anticipated conditions of its future translations.

This challenge to the primacy of the original has deep implications. The traditional model of translation assumes a hierarchy: there is a source text, which is the authoritative version, and there are translations, which are derivative approximations. Walkowitz's concept suggests that this hierarchy can break down, and that in some cases translation is not a secondary operation performed on a pre-existing text but a constitutive condition of the text's existence.

Doris Sommer's work on bilingual aesthetics explored a related phenomenon: the strategic use of untranslated or partially translated language as a way of asserting cultural identity and resisting assimilation (Sommer, 2004). Writers who refuse to translate every word of their native language into the dominant language of their publishing market are not simply creating difficulty for readers; they are making a claim about the limits of cultural transparency and the right of minority languages and cultures to retain their specificity. In this reading, untranslatability is not a technical problem but a political assertion.

The question of what constitutes the "original" is further complicated by authors who write in multiple languages or who revise their texts substantially for different national markets. Samuel Beckett wrote in both French and English and often produced his own translations, creating what are effectively two originals rather than one source and one derivative. Writers who move between linguistic communities through choice rather than compulsion, using that movement to interrogate the very idea of a mother tongue, push further against the assumption that there is always a stable original that translation serves.

TRANSLATION, HYBRIDITY, AND CULTURAL KNOWLEDGE IN TRANSIT

Homi K. Bhabha's concept of the "Third Space," developed in *The Location of Culture*, offers a productive framework for thinking about what happens to cultural knowledge when texts cross borders (Bhabha, 1994). Bhabha argued that cultural identity is not a fixed essence but a process of enunciation that takes place in a space of ambivalence and negotiation. When a text is translated, it enters a Third Space between the source culture and the target culture, a space that belongs fully to neither and that generates new meanings not present in either original or translation taken alone.

This concept resists two common but inadequate models of cultural translation. The first model, associated with domestication, assumes that the foreign text can be fully absorbed into the target culture: that its meanings can be made transparent, its strangeness dissolved. The second model assumes that the source text possesses a fixed cultural core that translation either preserves or betrays. Bhabha's Third Space suggests that both models are inadequate, because cultural meaning is not a substance to be transported from one container to another but a process that is re-enacted, and therefore transformed, in every new context of reception.

This has significant consequences for thinking about cultural knowledge. When a reader in one country reads a translated novel from another country, they do not receive a direct transmission of that other culture's knowledge and values. They receive a representation that has been shaped by the translator's decisions, by the editor's interventions, by the cover design and the marketing copy, by the literary norms of the receiving culture, and by the reader's own pre-existing assumptions. The cultural knowledge that arrives at the end of this process may bear a complex and ambiguous relationship to the cultural knowledge that was present in the source text.

Antoine Berman's work on the "trial of the foreign" pointed to a related problem from within translation theory. Berman argued that the dominant tendency in literary translation, which he called "ethnocentrism," is to reduce the foreign text to the values and norms of the target culture, systematically destroying what is most alien and most characteristic about it (Berman, 1992). Berman identified a set of "deforming tendencies" that translators commonly enact: rationalization (making explicit what is implicit), clarification

(resolving ambiguity), expansion (adding explanatory material), ennobling (elevating the style), loss of vernacular expression, and destruction of rhythms, among others. Each of these tendencies removes something from the source text, and taken together they constitute a systematic domestication that leaves target-language readers with a version of the foreign that is far more comfortable and familiar than the original.

These deforming tendencies are not always conscious choices. They often result from the translator's genuine effort to produce a readable text in the target language. The norms of good writing in one language may simply be incompatible with the norms of good writing in another, and translators trying to do their best work will naturally tend toward solutions that make their translations feel accomplished by the standards of the target culture. This is what makes Berman's analysis so unsettling: the problem is not bad translation but the very notion of "good" translation as target cultures have typically defined it.

POWER AND THE POLITICS OF SUBALTERN TRANSLATION

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's essay "The Politics of Translation" brought a postcolonial perspective to bear on the questions Venuti was raising from within Anglo-American translation studies. Spivak's argument focused particularly on the translation of Third World women's writing into English, and she was sharply critical of what she saw as a feminist translation practice that prioritized accessibility and solidarity over genuine engagement with the strangeness of the source text (Spivak, 1993).

Spivak's central point was that a translator who does not have an intimate relationship with the source language, and with the cultural world that the source language carries within it, cannot truly translate. They can only produce a domesticated version that speaks to the expectations of the Western feminist reader while silencing the specific historical and cultural conditions that made the source text what it is. This silencing is a form of epistemic violence: it denies the translated writer her full complexity and reduces her to a figure who confirms what the target reader already believes.

Spivak's argument implies that the ethics of translation cannot be separated from the ethics of cross-cultural reading more broadly. To read a translated text responsibly, one must be aware of the power relations that shaped the translation, must resist the temptation to treat the translated text as a transparent window onto another culture, and must remain attentive to what the translation has had to omit, simplify, or transform in order to be legible in the target culture.

These insights connect to broader concerns about the geopolitics of translation. Research on global translation patterns has consistently confirmed that English is the dominant source language in global translation but a relatively infrequent target language, particularly for texts from non-European traditions (Venuti, 1998). This asymmetry means that anglophone readers are significantly less exposed to literary and intellectual production from the rest of the world than readers in many other language communities. The cultural knowledge that circulates in the English-speaking world is, as a result, shaped by a particular and limited set of selections from the world's literary production, with consequences for how anglophone readers understand and relate to cultures different from their own.

This geopolitical asymmetry also shapes what kinds of texts get selected for translation. Publishers in English-language markets tend to favor texts that already exhibit some familiarity, whether of genre, theme, or narrative style, partly because such texts are easier to market and partly because they require less explanatory apparatus. The result is a selection effect that reinforces cultural proximity rather than genuinely broadening cultural knowledge: readers encounter the foreign, but a version of the foreign that has been pre-screened for accessibility.

UNTRANSLATABILITY AND ITS PRODUCTIVE FORCE

Emily Apter's *The Translation Zone* proposed a rethinking of the relationship between translation and comparative literature, arguing that comparison is itself a form of translation and that the most productive zone for comparative work is not the zone of successful equivalence but the zone of untranslatability (Apter, 2006). Apter's subsequent book *Against World Literature* extended this argument into a critique of the "world literature" movement as it had developed following the work of Moretti and Damrosch (Apter, 2013).

Apter's concern with the world literature movement was that its emphasis on circulation and accessibility could too easily become a rationale for domestication: texts from outside the Western canon would be welcomed into the world literature curriculum, but only insofar as they could be made legible in terms that Western readers found comfortable. The harder edges of cultural difference, the aspects of foreign texts that genuinely resist easy comprehension and that require real intellectual effort to engage with, would be smoothed away in the process.

Against this tendency, Apter argued for the productive value of untranslatability. Words, concepts, and cultural structures that cannot be straightforwardly translated are not failures of translation; they are markers of genuine cultural difference, and grappling with them honestly is intellectually more valuable than pretending they do not exist. Works like the *Vocabulaire européen des philosophies*, edited by Barbara Cassin, which catalogues philosophically important terms that resist translation across European languages, offer a model of how scholars might work productively with untranslatability rather than trying to eliminate it (as cited in Apter, 2013).

This concept has several important implications for the study of cultural knowledge circulation. If some cultural knowledge genuinely cannot be translated without significant loss or distortion, then the promise of global cultural exchange through translation is always partial. This is not an argument against translation; it is an argument for a more honest accounting of what translation can and cannot do. Translated texts are not substitutes for their originals; they are readings of their originals, shaped by particular choices and subject to particular limitations.

The philosophical and literary concept of untranslatability also has an ethical dimension. To acknowledge that a text or a cultural concept cannot be fully translated is to acknowledge the existence of a genuine other, a culture or a tradition that has its own ways of organizing experience and meaning that cannot simply be absorbed into one's own framework. This acknowledgment stands in direct opposition to the false universalism that domesticating translation promotes. It asks readers to sit with discomfort, to tolerate uncertainty, and to accept that genuine cross-cultural understanding requires more effort than a fluent translation can supply.

DISCUSSION

The scholarship reviewed in this paper converges on a set of conclusions that complicate the common-sense view of translation as a neutral conduit for the movement of cultural knowledge. Translation is selective: it is shaped by the decisions of individual translators, by the norms operative in receiving cultures, by the economic interests of publishers, and by the structural inequalities of the global literary market. Translation is transformative: texts change as they cross borders, not arbitrarily but in ways that reflect the pressures of domestication and the expectations of target audiences. And translation is political: the choices made in translation have consequences for how cultures understand one another, for which voices are heard in global literary and intellectual conversations, and for the distribution of symbolic power across different linguistic communities.

What might a more responsible approach to translation look like, given these realities? Venuti's answer emphasizes the translator's ethical responsibility to resist domestication and to make the foreignness of the source text visible to the target reader (Venuti, 1995, 1998). Berman's answer emphasizes the need for translators to develop a deep relationship with the source language and culture, and to resist the systematic deforming tendencies that ethnocentric translation enacts (Berman, 1992). Spivak's answer emphasizes the need for translators to take seriously the political and historical conditions in which source texts were produced, and to refuse the temptation of a false transparency that denies those conditions (Spivak, 1993).

These answers are not mutually exclusive. Taken together, they point toward a practice of translation that is attentive to the translator's own position and interests, genuinely engaged with the strangeness of the source text, honest about the limits of what translation can achieve, and prepared to use paratextual means, prefaces, notes, afterwords, to communicate to readers what the translated text cannot communicate on its own.

From the perspective of the publishing industry, these arguments have practical implications. Publishers who commission translations have responsibilities that go beyond finding qualified translators. They need to think about which texts they choose to translate, from which languages, and why. A publishing market that translates primarily from English and that, when it does translate from other languages, selects texts already oriented toward Western readerships, is not actually opening windows onto the world's literary diversity; it is constructing a particular and limited image of that diversity.

The question of paratextual mediation deserves particular attention. Translated texts often arrive in target cultures accompanied by introductions, forewords, and contextual notes that shape how readers encounter them. These paratexts can be used to foreground the text's cultural context and the conditions of its translation, thereby giving readers the tools to read more critically. But they can also be used to domesticate the text in advance, assuring readers that the foreign elements they encounter will be familiar and comprehensible. The editorial choices made at this level are as consequential as the translation choices made at the level of individual words and sentences.

There is also a pedagogical dimension worth noting. How literature is taught in translation, and what frameworks educators provide for reading translated texts, shapes the cultural knowledge that students take away from literary study. Teaching translated texts as though they were originals, with no attention to the conditions of their translation, misses an opportunity to educate readers in exactly the critical awareness that responsible cross-cultural reading requires. Translation studies has developed rich resources for this kind of teaching, but these resources remain underused in general literary education.

CONCLUSION

Translation is indispensable to the circulation of cultural knowledge across linguistic and national boundaries. But it is not a transparent medium. Every translation is an interpretation, shaped by the translator's choices and limited by the structural conditions in which translation takes place. The texts that circulate as world literature are not simply the best or most representative texts from the world's literary traditions; they are the texts that have been selected, translated, marketed, and read in ways that make them accessible and appealing to particular audiences.

This does not mean that the global literary exchange enabled by translation is without value. Translated literature has expanded readers' horizons, introduced new formal possibilities, and brought previously unheard voices into wider cultural conversations. But it does mean that readers, critics, scholars, and publishers should approach translated literature with an awareness of the processes that have shaped what they are reading.

The three questions raised at the outset of this paper yield complex answers. Theoretically, translation is best understood as a form of cultural mediation that involves both linguistic and ideological choices, and that produces new meanings in the space between source and target cultures. Structurally, the global literary market systematically favors certain languages and literary traditions over others, and this shapes which cultural knowledge gets translated, and how. Consequentially, the systematic domestication of foreign texts in translation gives target-language readers a more comfortable but less truthful picture of the world's cultural diversity than they might otherwise encounter.

The field of translation studies has developed powerful tools for analyzing these dynamics, but its insights have not always reached the broader audiences of literary scholars, publishers, and general readers who most need them. Bridging that gap, through more critically informed translation practice, more reflective publishing decisions, and more attentive pedagogy, is among the more pressing tasks facing those who care about the quality and honesty of global literary exchange.

Future work in this area would benefit from sustained attention to the specific decisions made by individual translators and publishers, examined through detailed case studies that connect micro-level textual choices to macro-level patterns of cultural circulation. Greater engagement with translation traditions and practices outside the Western literary mainstream, which have their own histories, norms, and theoretical frameworks, would also deepen the field's understanding of how cultural knowledge moves, and fails to move, across the boundaries of language.

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