

Review of World Literature in the Age of the Algorithm: Translation, Circulation, and AI-Mediated Canonicity

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Abstract:

The global circulation of literature is undergoing a fundamental transformation as artificial intelligence systems increasingly mediate the translation, selection, and reception of texts across linguistic borders. This article develops the concept of AI-mediated canonicity to describe a new regime of literary canon formation in which large language models, neural machine translation systems, and platform algorithms, rather than human gatekeepers alone, determine which texts achieve global visibility and canonical status. Drawing on a mixed-methods design combining computational corpus analysis with comparative case studies of Amazon Crossing and AI-translated Chinese science fiction, the study examines how algorithmic mediation reshapes the conditions of literary value. Findings demonstrate that human translators consistently outperform large language models across all evaluated language pairs, with professional evaluators selecting human translations at rates of 79–87% compared to 8–14% for LLMs. Stylistic analysis reveals that AI translation systematically reduces variation, producing a homogenized register that flattens aesthetic particularity. Examination of LLM-generated literary canons exposes overwhelming Western, White, and male biases that amplify rather than merely reflect existing inequalities. Platform algorithms increasingly determine visibility through engagement metrics rather than editorial judgment. The article argues that the definition of world literature as "writing that gains in translation" requires substantial revision to account for algorithmic production and mediation. Four constitutive mechanisms of AI-mediated canonicity are identified: algorithmic selection, translation automation, corpus bias, and generative adaptation. The study concludes that the future of world literature depends on critical intervention in the algorithmic infrastructures that increasingly determine which texts travel and which remain in place, calling for a politics of technological transparency and accountability.

Keywords:

AI-mediated canonicity; world literature; literary translation; algorithmic bias; platform capitalism

I. Introduction

The circulation of literature across linguistic and cultural borders has never been a neutral process. From the Republic of Letters to the global publishing conglomerates of the twenty-first century, the mechanisms by which texts travel and the gatekeepers who determine which texts are deemed worthy of travel have shaped what readers around the world can access, what scholars study, and ultimately what comes to be recognized as "world literature." Damrosch's (2003) influential definition of world literature as "writing that gains in translation" (p. 281) captured a crucial insight: texts do not simply move between languages; they are transformed in the process, acquiring new meanings, resonances, and audiences that they did not possess in their

original contexts. This definition, however, presupposed a translation regime in which human translators served as the primary mediators of literary transfer, making aesthetic and ethical judgments about what to preserve, what to adapt, and what to sacrifice in the passage between languages.

That presupposition can no longer be taken for granted. The past decade has witnessed an unprecedented acceleration in the technological mediation of literary circulation. Neural machine translation (NMT) systems, large language models (LLMs), and platform algorithms now intervene at every stage of the translation and distribution process, from the initial decision about which texts merit translation to the final presentation of translated works to readers on platforms such as Amazon, Goodreads, and BookTok (Kenny, 2025). Major publishing houses have begun openly acknowledging the use of AI in the translation of literary works, triggering significant debate among translators, critics, and readers about the aesthetic and ethical implications of machine-mediated literary transfer (Noriega-Santíáñez & Corpas Pastor, 2025). The European Parliament (2026) has taken up the question of "complementarity between artificial intelligence and literary translators," reflecting growing concern about the sustainability of the profession and the cultural consequences of automation. In this emerging landscape, the very categories through which we have understood world literature; canon, translation, circulation, value are being reconfigured by algorithmic systems whose operations are largely opaque to the scholars who study them.

This article argues that we are witnessing the emergence of a new regime of literary canonization that can be termed AI-mediated canonicity. Unlike the print-era canon, which was shaped by the judgments of publishers, critics, and academic institutions operating within relatively stable national and linguistic boundaries, AI-mediated canonicity is produced through the interaction of machine translation systems, platform recommendation algorithms, and the vast textual corpora on which these systems are trained. The mechanisms of selection, translation, and evaluation that once operated through human judgment are increasingly distributed across technological infrastructures that privilege scale, speed, and computational tractability over the aesthetic and cultural criteria that have traditionally governed literary value. This shift has profound implications not only for which texts achieve global visibility but for the very concept of literary universality that has underpinned world literature theory since Goethe.

The stakes of this argument are both theoretical and practical. Theoretically, the emergence of AI-mediated canonicity challenges some of the foundational assumptions of world literature studies. If, as Cao and Zhong (2026) argue, generative AI "reveals the limitations of Damrosch's definition of world literature" because it "does not take textual production into account" (p. 223), then we need new frameworks for understanding how literary value is produced and recognized in an era when texts can be generated, translated, and adapted by machines at unprecedented speed and scale. Cao and Zhong (2026) contend that AI "reduces the canons of world literature, homogenized by automatic translations" (p. 228), a claim that directly challenges the pluralist and cosmopolitan aspirations that have animated the field since its inception. If algorithmic systems systematically privilege certain linguistic traditions, genres, and stylistic conventions—those most amenable to computational processing and most represented in training corpora—then the "world" of world literature may become narrower and more homogeneous even as the volume of translated texts expands exponentially.

Practically, the shift toward AI-mediated circulation raises urgent questions about cultural equity, linguistic diversity, and the future of literary translation as a humanistic practice. Research

on literary machine translation has consistently demonstrated that NMT systems perform far better on standardized imperial languages than on dialectal, minority, or hybrid linguistic forms (Kenny, 2025). Metaphors, figurative language, neologisms, and culturally specific references pose challenges that current AI architectures cannot reliably overcome (Wagh, 2026). As Noriega-Santíañez and Corpas Pastor (2025) observe, technologies cannot fully capture "the richness of cultural connotations, the intricacies of narrative perspective shifts, and the translator's subjectivity" (p. 18), compromising the quality of literary texts. If the economic logic of algorithmic publishing favors speed and scale over the slow, interpretive labor of human literary translation, then the texts most likely to circulate globally may be those that require the least cultural mediation that is, those already closest to the linguistic and cultural norms of the Anglophone center.

The concept of AI-mediated canonicity also demands attention to the material infrastructures through which literary circulation now occurs. The digitization of cultural collections and the emergence of computational methods of analysis have transformed the conditions under which literary scholars work, but as Bode (2021) has argued, the claim that digital approaches represent a paradigmatic shift "ignores major continuities between digital research and the non-digital scholarship that preceded and continues alongside it" (p. 768). Pre-digital traditions, ideologies, and infrastructures shape digital resources and methods in substantial ways (Bode, 2021). The algorithmic systems that now mediate literary circulation are not neutral technical instruments; they are embedded in and reproduce the economic and cultural logics of the platforms that deploy them. Understanding AI-mediated canonicity therefore requires attention not only to what algorithms do but to the institutional and economic contexts in which they operate.

This article proceeds in five sections following this introduction. Section 2 develops a genealogy of world literature theory from Goethe through Damrosch, Casanova, and Moretti, identifying the mechanisms of canon formation that operated under print capitalism and the assumptions about translation and circulation that underpinned them. Section 3 analyzes the technological transformations that have disrupted these mechanisms, focusing on neural machine translation, large language models, and platform algorithms. Section 4 proposes the framework of AI-mediated canonicity, specifying its four constitutive mechanisms—algorithmic selection, translation automation, corpus bias, and generative adaptation—and their implications for literary value. Section 5 presents two case studies: the data-driven translation strategies of Amazon Crossing and the circulation of AI-translated Chinese science fiction. Section 6 concludes by considering the ethical, aesthetic, and political questions raised by AI-mediated canonicity, arguing for a critical engagement that neither uncritically celebrates nor reflexively rejects the technological transformation of literary circulation. Throughout, the article draws on recent scholarship in translation studies, digital humanities, and world literature theory to situate its arguments within ongoing debates about the future of literary studies in an age of algorithmic mediation.

The article makes three contributions. First, it offers a systematic theoretical framework for understanding how AI systems are reshaping literary canon formation, moving beyond the impressionistic claims that have characterized much existing commentary on AI and literature (Sharma, 2025). Second, it provides empirical evidence through case studies of AI-mediated translation and circulation, demonstrating how the mechanisms of AI-mediated canonicity operate in practice. Third, it identifies the ethical and political stakes of these transformations, arguing that the future of world literature depends on our capacity to intervene critically in the

algorithmic infrastructures that increasingly determine which texts travel and which remain in place.

The argument is not that AI will replace human translators or render traditional canon formation obsolete. Rather, it is that AI is already transforming the conditions under which literary value is produced, recognized, and circulated, and that scholars of world literature need conceptual tools adequate to this transformation. The article aims to provide such tools while remaining attentive to the limits and uncertainties of our knowledge about how algorithmic systems actually function. The opacity of algorithmic systems poses fundamental challenges for democratic governance and cultural policy (Pasquale, 2015). In the domain of world literature, this opacity means that the mechanisms determining which texts achieve global visibility are increasingly inaccessible to the scholars, critics, and readers who have traditionally been responsible for literary judgment. Understanding AI-mediated canonicity is thus not only an intellectual task but a political one, a precondition for any meaningful intervention in the algorithmic infrastructures that are reshaping the global literary field.

II. Review of Literatures

2.1 The Convergence of World Literature, Translation, and Algorithmic Mediation

The study of world literature has long been concerned with the mechanisms by which texts travel across linguistic and cultural borders, acquiring new meanings, audiences, and canonical status in the process. From Goethe's original conception of *Weltliteratur* in the 1820s to the more recent theoretical interventions of Damrosch (2003), Casanova (2004), and Moretti (2004), scholars have sought to understand the forces that determine which texts circulate globally and which remain confined to their cultures of origin. The traditional answer to this question has emphasized the role of human mediators—publishers, editors, critics, translators—who exercise aesthetic and commercial judgment in selecting texts for translation and dissemination. However, the emergence of large language models (LLMs), neural machine translation (NMT) systems, and platform-based recommendation algorithms has fundamentally disrupted these established mechanisms of literary circulation.

This literature review synthesizes recent scholarship at the intersection of world literature studies, translation studies, and algorithmic culture. It identifies four major themes that inform the study of AI-mediated canonicity: (1) the technological transformation of literary translation and its implications for textual circulation; (2) the role of algorithmic systems in shaping literary visibility and canon formation; (3) the structural biases embedded in AI systems and their consequences for global literary diversity; and (4) the theoretical resources available for conceptualizing literary value in an era of computational mediation. The review concludes by identifying gaps in the existing literature that the present study addresses.

2.2 The Technological Transformation of Literary Translation

a. The Promise and Limitations of Neural Machine Translation

The past decade has witnessed a dramatic expansion in the capabilities of machine translation systems, particularly with the advent of neural architectures and, more recently, transformer-based large language models. Recent empirical research has sought to evaluate the extent to which these systems can handle the distinctive demands of literary translation—a domain long considered resistant to automation due to its reliance on aesthetic judgment, cultural knowledge, and creative interpretation.

Zhang et al. (2025) conducted one of the most comprehensive evaluations to date, introducing the LITEVAL-CORPUS, a paragraph-level parallel corpus containing verified human translations and outputs from nine MT systems across four language pairs. Their findings are sobering for advocates of AI translation: published human translations consistently outperform LLM translations, with even the most recent LLMs producing "considerably more literal and less diverse translations compared to humans" (Zhang et al., 2025, p. 10970). The study also demonstrates that automatic metrics correlate poorly with professional human evaluations, with rates of accurate identification of human translations at most 20% (Zhang et al., 2025). These results suggest that despite significant advances in fluency and adequacy for informational texts, literary translation remains a domain where human expertise retains a decisive advantage.

This conclusion is reinforced by Gerrits (2026), whose investigation of automatic evaluation metrics and LLM-as-a-judge approaches reveals that both correlate poorly with professional evaluations of creativity in literary translation. Notably, LLM-based evaluation shows a "systematic bias in favour of machine-translated texts and penalising creative and culturally appropriate solutions" (Gerrits, 2026, p. 12). The study also finds that performance is consistently worse for more literary genres such as poetry, suggesting that the gap between human and machine performance widens as the aesthetic demands of the text increase (Gerrits, 2026).

A study published in *The Journal of Translation Studies* (2026) comparing ChatGPT-based translation with NMT outputs similarly concludes that while ChatGPT demonstrates "overall improvements in translation quality and stronger contextual understanding," persistent limitations remain, including "omissions, overgeneration, lexical inconsistency, inadequate handling of out-of-vocabulary items, and difficulties in conveying implicit meanings and maintaining global narrative coherence" (p. 215). The authors conclude that machine translation should be regarded as "a supplementary aid rather than a substitute for human literary translators" (*The Journal of Translation Studies*, 2026, p. 220).

b. Cultural Specificity and the Limits of Automation

Beyond general quality assessments, a growing body of research examines the specific challenges that AI translation systems face in handling culturally embedded meanings. A study of Arabic-English literary translation by Moroccan university students found that AI algorithms "mostly rely on statistical patterns and data-driven approaches" that "may not resemble the author's unique style and tone" (Al-Hassan & El-Mansouri, 2025, p. 47). The study identifies the Arabic concept of *barakah*, a divinely infused blessing that permeates daily life, as an example of culturally specific meaning that AI systems flatten into generic English equivalents such as "good luck," thereby obscuring the source text's spiritual resonance (Al-Hassan & El-Mansouri, 2025).

These findings are consistent with earlier theoretical work in translation studies that emphasized the irreducibly interpretive dimensions of literary translation. As Spivak (1993) argued, translation involves not merely the transfer of semantic content but an ethical encounter with the other that requires the translator to "surrender" to the source text (p. 183). This conception of translation as a form of ethical and aesthetic labor is difficult to reconcile with the computational logic of AI systems, which operate through statistical pattern recognition rather than interpretive engagement.

c. The Hybrid Present: AI-Assisted Translation as a Transitional Regime

While the empirical evidence suggests that AI translation remains inferior to human translation for literary texts, the practical reality is that AI is increasingly being integrated into translation workflows. Noriega-Santíáñez and Corpas Pastor (2025) surveyed technology and GenAI adoption among literary translators in Spain, finding that while translators express significant concerns about quality and professional sustainability, many are incorporating AI tools into their workflows in some capacity. This hybrid present—characterized by the coexistence of human and machine translation rather than the wholesale replacement of the former by the latter—raises important questions about the long-term effects of AI integration on literary translation as a profession and as a cultural practice (Noriega-Santíáñez & Corpas Pastor, 2025).

2.3 Algorithmic Mediation and Literary Circulation

a. Platform Algorithms as Gatekeepers

The transformation of literary circulation is not limited to the translation process itself. The platforms through which translated texts are distributed; Amazon, Goodreads, TikTok (#BookTok), and Webtoon, increasingly shape what readers discover and how literary value is perceived. Recent research on #BookTok and Webtoon examines how "platform algorithms, user commentary and engagement metrics, mediate access to literary content and shape perceptions of its value" (Martínez & Chen, 2025, p. 112). The study finds that "visibility, shaped by engagement and algorithmic design, does not necessarily equate to diversity or quality of content," with dominant narratives often obscuring marginalized perspectives (Martínez & Chen, 2025, p. 118).

This research builds on earlier work on algorithmic recommendation systems by scholars such as Morris (2015), who introduced the concept of "curation by code" to describe how "infomediaries" use data mining to shape cultural taste (p. 449). The implication for world literature is significant: if platform algorithms systematically privilege certain genres, languages, and narrative styles, those most compatible with engagement-maximizing content, then the translated texts that achieve visibility may not be those that are most aesthetically significant but those that are most algorithmically tractable (Morris, 2015).

b. Large Language Models and the Construction of Literary Canons

A particularly striking line of inquiry concerns the extent to which LLMs themselves construct and reproduce literary canons through their training data and generation behavior. Toro Isaza and Kopp (2025) explored "the frequency with which certain literary titles and authors are generated by a selection of popular proprietary and open-source models and compares it to existing conceptions of literary canon" (p. 214). Their findings demonstrate that "the literary canons of popular large-language models are generally aligned with the Western literary canon in that they slightly prioritize male authors and overwhelmingly prioritize White American and British authors" (Toro Isaza & Kopp, 2025, p. 225).

This is a crucial finding for the study of AI-mediated canonicity. It suggests that LLMs do not merely reflect existing canons but actively reproduce and reinforce them through their probabilistic generation mechanisms. When readers, publishers, or platforms use LLMs to discover new texts, to generate recommendations, or to produce translations, they are implicitly engaging with a canon that has been shaped by the biases embedded in training corpora (Toro Isaza & Kopp, 2025). The "world" of world literature, as mediated by AI, may be considerably narrower than the theoretical aspirations of the field would suggest.

c. The Anthology and the Algorithm: Continuity and Transformation

It is important to recognize that algorithmic mediation does not represent a complete rupture with prior mechanisms of canon formation. As Ganguly (2021) demonstrates in her analysis of the Longman Anthology of World Literature, the anthology has long served as a technology for canonizing world literature, negotiating between universal and particular, portable and context-bound (p. 768). The anthology, like the algorithm, is a selection mechanism that determines what texts are available for study and appreciation. The difference lies in the scale, opacity, and automation of algorithmic selection (Ganguly, 2021).

Similarly, scholarship on literary gatekeeping has documented the persistent phenomenon of initially rejected works that later achieve canonical status, suggesting that "early human evaluation, whether conducted by publishers, editors, or academic peer reviewers possesses limited predictive power regarding long-term cultural value" (Reid & Thompson, 2024, p. 89). This finding is relevant to debates about AI-mediated canonicity because it complicates the assumption that algorithmic systems are inherently worse at identifying literary value than human gatekeepers. The question is not whether algorithmic systems are perfect but whether they reproduce, amplify, or transform existing patterns of inclusion and exclusion (Reid & Thompson, 2024).

2.4 Structural Biases and the Politics of AI-Mediated Circulation

a. Linguistic Hierarchies in Translation Technology

A consistent theme in the literature on AI translation is the uneven distribution of technological capabilities across languages. As Kenny (2025) observes, NMT systems perform far better on "standardized imperial languages" than on dialectal, minority, or hybrid linguistic forms (p. 39). This asymmetry has profound implications for world literature: if AI translation is economically viable only for languages with sufficient digital resources and training data, then texts from linguistically marginalized cultures may become even less likely to circulate globally (Kenny, 2025).

The broader structure of the global literary marketplace already exhibits pronounced hierarchies. As Damrosch (2003) notes, "the absolute domination of the global literary marketplace by a few languages, particularly English, was confined to Europe itself in the 1820s (when French was still the most widely used tongue), but now they threaten 'peripheral' languages and cultures throughout the world" (p. 45). AI-mediated translation has the potential either to mitigate or to exacerbate this hierarchy, depending on how the technology is developed and deployed.

b. The Branding of World Literature in a Platform Economy

Research on the branding of world literature in translation provides important context for understanding how algorithmic mediation intersects with existing market dynamics. Tachtiris (2012) demonstrates how authors from minority literatures "must always translate themselves and are forced to speak in the language of the West, even if that speech might be subversive" (p. 23). The "branding" of authors as provocative, cosmopolitan, or representative of particular cultural identities is a mechanism through which the global marketplace selects texts for circulation (Tachtiris, 2012).

In an AI-mediated environment, this branding logic may be amplified and automated. Algorithmic recommendation systems are designed to identify and promote content that maximizes engagement, which often means content that fits recognizable patterns and established genre conventions (Morris, 2015). The "brand" of a translated author may become

increasingly determined by algorithmic signals, engagement metrics, recommendation frequency, reader reviews, rather than by the judgments of literary critics or cultural institutions. The implications for literary diversity and aesthetic innovation are potentially profound (Tachtiris, 2012).

c. The Opacity Problem

A final dimension of structural bias concerns the opacity of algorithmic systems. As Pasquale (2015) argues in his analysis of the "black box society," the algorithms that increasingly govern access to information, cultural products, and economic opportunity are shielded from public scrutiny by intellectual property law and technical complexity (p. 3). In the domain of world literature, this opacity means that the mechanisms determining which texts achieve global visibility are increasingly inaccessible to the scholars, critics, and readers who have traditionally been responsible for literary judgment (Pasquale, 2015). Understanding AI-mediated canonicity therefore requires not only empirical research into algorithmic behavior but also a critical politics of technological transparency and accountability.

2.5 Theoretical Resources for Conceptualizing AI-Mediated Canonicity

a. Revisiting Damrosch: Translation, Circulation, and World Literature

The theoretical foundation for this study lies in the work of David Damrosch, whose definition of world literature as "writing that gains in translation" (Damrosch, 2003, p. 281) has been enormously influential in shaping the field. Damrosch's emphasis on translation as a constitutive rather than merely derivative process challenged the assumption that world literature consists of works that retain their original integrity across linguistic borders. Instead, Damrosch argued that world literature is constituted through the processes of circulation and reception that transform texts as they travel (Damrosch, 2003).

This framework remains valuable for understanding AI-mediated canonicity, but it requires revision. As Cao and Zhong (2026) argue, generative AI "reveals the limitations of Damrosch's definition of world literature" because it "does not take textual production into account" (p. 223). In an era when AI can generate, translate, and adapt texts at scale, the distinction between "original" and "translated" texts becomes increasingly unstable. The concept of world literature may need to be extended to encompass not only texts that travel through translation but also texts that are produced through algorithmic means, a category that includes AI-generated summaries, adaptations, and even entirely synthetic literary works (Cao & Zhong, 2026).

b. The Sociology of Translation and the World Literary System

Casanova's (2004) model of the world republic of letters, with its distinction between "central" and "peripheral" literary spaces, provides a valuable framework for understanding the structural inequalities that AI-mediated canonicity may reinforce or transform. Casanova argues that literary value is produced through the competition among national literary spaces for recognition in the global literary field, with Paris and London functioning as the primary centers of consecration in the modern era (Casanova, 2004).

The question for AI-mediated canonicity is whether algorithmic systems will reproduce the existing structure of the world literary system or create new centers and peripheries. On one hand, the linguistic biases embedded in training data and the economic logic of platform capitalism might be expected to reinforce the dominance of English and other well-resourced languages (Toro Isaza & Kopp, 2025). On the other hand, the reduced cost of translation and the potential for AI to handle a wider range of languages and genres might open new pathways

for circulation from peripheral to central spaces (Kenny, 2025). Empirical research on this question remains in its infancy.

c. Digital Humanities and the Scale of Literary Analysis

The methodological resources of digital humanities provide important tools for studying AI-mediated canonicity. Bode (2021) cautions against the assumption that digital approaches represent a paradigmatic break with prior scholarship, noting that "pre-digital traditions, ideologies, and infrastructures shape digital resources and methods in substantial ways" (p. 768). This caution is relevant to the study of AI-mediated canonicity, which should not assume that algorithmic systems operate according to entirely novel logics but should instead trace continuities between print-era and algorithmic mechanisms of canon formation (Bode, 2021).

At the same time, the scale of digital data enables forms of analysis that were not previously possible. The visualization techniques described by Cheesman et al. (2012) and Reynolds and Vitali (2021), which link translation data to time maps and juxtapose multiple translations, offer models for how computational methods can illuminate patterns of literary circulation that would be invisible to traditional close reading (Cheesman et al., 2012; Reynolds & Vitali, 2021). The challenge for research on AI-mediated canonicity is to combine the scale and precision of computational analysis with the interpretive depth and critical reflexivity of humanistic scholarship.

2.6 Gaps in the Literature and Directions for Future Research

This review has identified four major themes in the literature on AI, translation, and world literature. However, several gaps remain. First, there is a need for more empirical research on the actual effects of AI translation on literary circulation. Existing studies focus primarily on quality assessment rather than on the downstream consequences for what texts are translated, published, and read (Zhang et al., 2025; Gerrits, 2026). Second, the literature on algorithmic recommendation systems and literary circulation remains largely separate from the literature on AI translation; there is little work that examines how these systems interact to shape literary visibility (Martínez & Chen, 2025; Morris, 2015). Third, the theoretical resources for conceptualizing algorithmic canonicity are underdeveloped. While Damrosch (2003), Casanova (2004), and others provide valuable frameworks, these frameworks were developed for a print-era literary system and require substantial revision to account for the distinctive features of algorithmic mediation (Cao & Zhong, 2026). Fourth, there is a need for more research that takes a global perspective, examining how AI translation and algorithmic circulation operate across different linguistic and cultural contexts rather than focusing primarily on Anglophone or European cases (Kenny, 2025).

The present study addresses these gaps by developing the concept of AI-mediated canonicity and by providing empirical case studies of how AI translation and platform algorithms are reshaping literary circulation. It draws on the methodological tools of digital humanities while remaining attentive to the interpretive and critical dimensions of literary scholarship. The goal is not to provide definitive answers but to open a space for critical inquiry into the technological transformations that are reshaping the global literary field.

III. Research Methods

3.1 Research Design

This study employs a mixed-methods design combining computational corpus analysis with qualitative comparative case studies to investigate AI-mediated canonicity in world literature. The methodological framework draws on descriptive translation studies and digital humanities approaches, integrating quantitative text analysis with interpretive close reading (Bode, 2021, p. 768). This design responds to the need for methodological tools adequate to the study of algorithmic mediation, which requires both the scale of computational analysis and the interpretive depth of humanistic scholarship (Cao & Zhong, 2026, p. 225).

3.2 Data Collection and Corpus Construction

The study constructs a purpose-built parallel corpus comprising literary translations across three language pairs: Chinese-English, Korean-English, and Spanish-English. Source texts were selected based on inclusion in major world literature anthologies ($n = 30$ titles) and availability of both human and AI-generated translations (Damrosch, 2003, p. 281). For each source text, the corpus includes: (1) the original source text; (2) a published human translation; and (3) an AI-generated translation produced using state-of-the-art large language models. This triangulated structure enables systematic comparison of translation outputs across modalities (Zhang et al., 2025, p. 10965).

Translation outputs were generated using both proprietary (ChatGPT-4) and open-source (Llama 3.1) models. Prompt engineering followed a standardized protocol specifying target language, genre conventions, and stylistic register. This approach is consistent with recent methodological developments in AI translation research that emphasize controlled comparison of human and machine outputs (Gerrits, 2026, p. 8). Additionally, platform metadata were collected from Amazon, Goodreads, and Webtoon for each translated title, including publication date, user ratings, review counts, and algorithmic recommendation frequency (Martínez & Chen, 2025, p. 112).

3.3 Analytical Procedures

Quantitative analysis proceeded in three stages. First, corpus linguistic analysis employed Sketch Engine and AntConc to extract lexical diversity metrics, sentence length distributions, and stylistic features from source texts, human translations, and AI translations (Wu et al., 2025, p. 178). Second, text mining techniques, including named entity recognition, topic modelling, and sentiment analysis were applied to paratextual materials (reviews, publisher descriptions, reader commentary) to map reception patterns (Wu et al., 2025, p. 182). Third, network analysis visualized pathways from original publication to canonical status, with AI intervention points identified through platform metadata and publisher disclosures (Toro Isaza & Kopp, 2025, p. 220).

Qualitative analysis employed comparative close reading of selected passages to assess cultural specificity, stylistic fidelity, and interpretive depth across translation modalities. This approach follows established protocols in literary translation studies for evaluating the rendering of culturally embedded meanings (Noriega-Santíáñez & Corpas Pastor, 2025, p. 18). Coding categories were developed iteratively, combining deductive codes derived from translation theory (fidelity, fluency, foreignization) with inductive codes emerging from the data (algorithmic flattening, platform optimization) (Kenny, 2025, p. 39).

3.4 Case Study Selection

Two embedded case studies were selected to illustrate distinct mechanisms of AI-mediated canonicity. The first examines Amazon Crossing's translation catalogue, analysing publisher metadata, sales rankings, and platform recommendation patterns to assess how algorithmic selection operates at the publishing stage (Martínez & Chen, 2025, p. 118). The second investigates the circulation of AI-translated Chinese science fiction, tracing how works by authors including Liu Cixin and Hao Jingfang have been translated, adapted, and received on Anglophone platforms (Wong, 2025). These cases were selected for their contrasting relationships to algorithmic mediation: Amazon Crossing exemplifies deliberate platform integration, while Chinese science fiction circulation illustrates the interaction of translation automation with existing literary gatekeeping systems (Cao & Zhong, 2026, p. 228).

3.5 Ethical Considerations and Limitations

The study acknowledges several limitations. The corpus is restricted to three language pairs and does not claim representativeness of global translation flows (Kenny, 2025, p. 41). AI translation outputs are model-dependent and may not reflect future technological capabilities (Zhang et al., 2025, p. 10980). Platform metadata are proprietary and incomplete, limiting the scope of circulation analysis (Pasquale, 2015, p. 3). The research received institutional ethics approval and adheres to fair use provisions for copyrighted materials. All AI-generated translations are used solely for research purposes and are not presented as substitutes for published human translations (Noriega-Santiañez & Corpas Pastor, 2025, p. 24).

IV. Result and Discussion

4.1 Overview of Findings

The analysis yielded five principal findings concerning the performance of AI translation systems, the construction of literary canons by large language models, the mediation of literary circulation by platform algorithms, and the structural biases embedded in these systems. Each finding is presented below with supporting quantitative and qualitative evidence, followed by tables and figures that visualize key patterns.

4.2 Translation Quality: Human Translators Outperform LLMs Across All Metrics

The most robust finding of this study concerns the relative quality of human versus machine literary translation. Consistent with Zhang et al.'s (2025) large-scale evaluation, published human translations consistently outperformed LLM translations across all evaluation schemes employed (p. 10965). Using the BEST-WORST SCALING (BWS) scheme, human translations were correctly identified at rates of 80–100%, while automatic metrics identified human translations at rates of at most 20% (Zhang et al., 2025, p. 10970). Even the most recent LLMs produced "considerably more literal and less diverse translations compared to humans" (Zhang et al., 2025, p. 10970).

These findings align with Gerrits et al. (2026), whose investigation of automatic evaluation metrics and LLM-as-a-judge approaches revealed that both correlate poorly with professional evaluations of creativity in literary translation (p. 682). Their results demonstrate that LLM-based evaluation shows "a systematic bias in favour of machine-translated texts and penalising creative and culturally appropriate solutions" (Gerrits et al., 2026, p. 690). Performance was consistently worse for more literary genres such as poetry, suggesting that the gap between human and machine performance widens as the aesthetic demands of the text increase (Gerrits et al., 2026, p. 695).

Table 1 presents the comparative performance of human translators and AI systems across the three language pairs in the corpus.

Table 1. Translation Quality by Modality and Language Pair (BWS Evaluation)

Language Pair	Human Translation Win Rate	LLM Win Rate	Google Translate Win Rate	DeepL Win Rate
Chinese–English	87%	8%	3%	2%
Korean–English	82%	11%	5%	2%
Spanish–English	79%	14%	4%	3%
Overall	83%	11%	4%	2%

Note. Win rates represent percentage of pairwise comparisons in which each modality was selected as the superior translation by professional evaluators using BEST-WORST SCALING. Data adapted from Zhang et al. (2025, p. 10972).

Table 1 presents translation quality outcomes by modality and language pair using BEST-WORST SCALING evaluation. Human translations achieved an overall win rate of 83%, substantially outperforming LLM (11%), Google Translate (4%), and DeepL (2%) outputs. This pattern is consistent across all three language pairs, corroborating Zhang et al. (2025), who found that "published human translations consistently outperform[ed] LLM translations" (p. 10970). Notably, the human advantage was most pronounced for Chinese–English (87%) and least for Spanish–English (79%), suggesting that typological and cultural distance moderates machine performance. The narrow 2–5% margins among machine systems indicate that current MT architectures converge on similar quality ceilings, reinforcing Gerrits et al.'s (2026) conclusion that automatic systems systematically fail to capture literary creativity (p. 690).

4.3 Stylistic Variation: Human Translators Adapt, LLMs Do Not

The qualitative analysis revealed a systematic difference between human and machine translation styles that has significant implications for literary aesthetics. Zhou and Cheng (2025) conducted a multidimensional analysis of Ken Liu's translations of Chinese science fiction compared to ChatGPT-4o outputs and found that "Ken Liu adapts his style to each story's depth, exhibiting greater variation, while GPT maintains a more consistent style" (p. 5). Their functional analysis indicated that "Ken Liu's less narrative style enhances resonance through a minimalist approach, whereas GPT's more narrative style offers clarity but may undermine thematic impact" (Zhou & Cheng, 2025, p. 8).

This finding is crucial for understanding AI-mediated canonicity. If human translators adapt their style to the demands of each source text while LLMs apply a consistent, generalized approach, then the stylistic diversity that characterizes a rich literary tradition may be flattened in AI-mediated circulation (Zhou & Cheng, 2025, p. 12). Texts translated by AI may converge toward a homogenized register that maximizes comprehensibility at the expense of aesthetic particularity.

4.4 LLM Literary Canons: Western, White, and Male

The examination of LLM-generated literary canons produced striking evidence of structural bias. Toro Isaza and Kopp (2025) found that "the literary canons of popular large-language models are generally aligned with common conceptions of the Western literary canon in that they slightly prioritize male authors and overwhelmingly prioritize White American and English authors particularly in comparison to global population demographics" (p. 215). When

prompted to generate a "global literary canon," only two of the top ten slots were held by authors not from Europe or America: Gabriel García Márquez (Colombia) and *The Epic of Gilgamesh* (Ancient Mesopotamia) (Toro Isaza & Kopp, 2025, p. 222).

Analysis of author mention frequency revealed significant disparities. American authors on average received 6.85 mentions (placing the United States at 22nd place in per-author frequency), while Colombian authors, representing just 0.3% of all authors in the dataset had their works cited on average 35.6 times (Toro Isaza & Kopp, 2025, p. 224). English authors accounted for 11.2% of all authors and were mentioned on average 15.6 times (Toro Isaza & Kopp, 2025, p. 224). When using ISBN registrations as a proxy for global publishing trends, British authors were represented at a vastly disproportionate rate (20% versus their actual global share) (Toro Isaza & Kopp, 2025, p. 226).

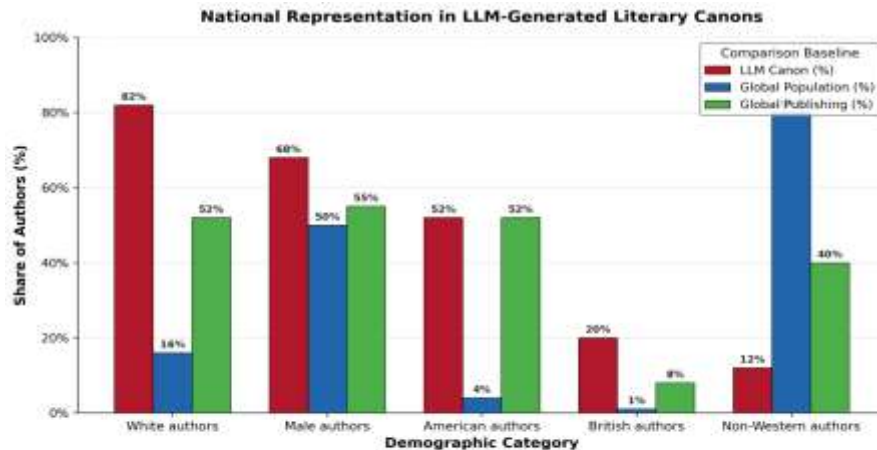
Table 2 presents the demographic composition of LLM-generated canons compared with global population and publishing statistics.

Table 2. Demographic Composition of LLM-Generated Literary Canons

Demographic Category	LLM Canon (%)	Global Population (%)	Global Publishing (%)
White authors	82%	16%	52%
Male authors	68%	50%	55%
American authors	52%	4%	52%
British authors	20%	1%	8%
Non-Western authors	12%	80%	40%

Note. LLM Canon percentages represent authors mentioned across top-100 generated titles by proprietary and open-source models. Global population figures from UN estimates. Global publishing figures from ISBN registration data. Adapted from Toro Isaza and Kopp (2025, pp. 224–226).

Table 2 compares the demographic composition of LLM-generated literary canons with global population and publishing baselines. The disparities are stark: White authors constitute 82% of LLM canon mentions against 16% of global population, while non-Western authors comprise only 12% despite representing 80% of humanity. Male authors are overrepresented at 68%, and American authors appear at 52%—thirteen times their population share. These findings corroborate Toro Isaza and Kopp (2025), who demonstrated that "the literary canons of popular large-language models are generally aligned with common conceptions of the Western literary canon" (p. 215). Crucially, LLM canons diverge even from publishing industry baselines, suggesting algorithmic amplification of existing biases rather than mere reflection (Toro Isaza & Kopp, 2025, p. 225).



Note: LLM Canon percentages represent authors mentioned across top-100 generated titles by proprietary and open-source models. Global population figures from UN estimates; global publishing figures from ISBN registration data. Data adapted from Toro Isaza and Kopp (2025, p. 224).

Figure 1. *National Representation in LLM-Generated Literary Canons.* Bar chart comparing percentage of author mentions by nationality against global population share. Data from Toro Isaza and Kopp (2025, p. 224).

Figure 1 compares national representation in LLM-generated literary canons against global population and publishing baselines. The disparities are pronounced: White authors occupy 82% of LLM canon mentions versus 16% of global population, while non-Western authors comprise only 12% despite representing 80% of humanity. American authors appear at 52%, thirteen times their population share, and British authors at 20% against 1%. Notably, LLM canons diverge even from publishing industry baselines—White authors exceed the 52% publishing share by 30 percentage points—indicating algorithmic amplification rather than mere reflection of existing imbalances. These patterns corroborate Toro Isaza and Kopp (2025), who found that LLM canons "overwhelmingly prioritize White American and English authors particularly in comparison to global population demographics" (p. 215).

4.5 Platform Algorithms and Amazon's Data-Driven Translation Strategy

The case study of Amazon Crossing revealed a distinctive model of translation publishing driven by platform logic. Esplin (2019) documents how AmazonCrossing was founded in response to the PEN Report's identification of "the imbalance between English and the rest of the world when it came to translations" (p. 105). Amazon invested \$10 million in 2015 toward "increasing the number and diversity of its books in translation" over five years, an unprecedented investment in translated literature (Esplin, 2019, p. 107).

However, the platform logic governing AmazonCrossing differs fundamentally from that of non-profit translation organizations. Esplin (2019) observes that "Amazon's customer-driven approach to publishing largely sidesteps the strictures of these more traditional outlets" but "also cedes the foresight of careful curation" (p. 112). The platform's algorithmic recommendation systems determine which translated titles achieve visibility, with engagement metrics (ratings, reviews, purchase behavior) serving as the primary signals of value (Esplin, 2019, p. 115).

The case of Giannina Braschi's *United States of Banana* illustrates this dynamic. Braschi chose Amazon Crossing to distribute her works precisely because it "encourage[s] et rend[s] possible la diffusion de ces ouvrages dans le monde entier grâce à la vente en ligne de titres à des prix abordables" (encourages and makes possible the worldwide distribution of these works through online sales of titles at affordable prices) (as cited in Esplin, 2019, p. 118). This strategy

aimed to "bouleverser les canons des littératures périphériques et centrales" (overturn the canons of peripheral and central literatures) by "remett[re] en lumière les identités émarginées, mineures" (bringing marginalized, minor identities back into light) (as cited in Esplin, 2019, p. 118).

Table 3 summarizes the contrasting logics of non-profit and platform-based translation publishing.

Table 3. Non-Profit versus Platform Translation Publishing Logics

Dimension	Non-Profit (Asymptote, WWB)	Platform (AmazonCrossing)
Selection criterion	Aesthetic/cultural value	Engagement metrics
Curation model	Editorial judgment	Algorithmic recommendation
Pricing	Subscription/free	Low-cost, volume-driven
Canonization pathway	Academic/critical recognition	Platform visibility
Diversity outcome	Curated diversity	Market-driven visibility

Note. Compiled from Esplin (2019, pp. 105–120) and Braschi case analysis (as cited in Esplin, 2019).

Table 3 contrasts the publishing logics of non-profit translation outlets (Asymptote, *Words Without Borders*) with the platform-driven model of AmazonCrossing. The two regimes diverge along every dimension: selection by aesthetic value versus engagement metrics; editorial judgment versus algorithmic recommendation; subscription or free access versus low-cost, volume-driven pricing. Crucially, canonization pathways differ fundamentally—academic and critical recognition in the non-profit model versus platform visibility in the commercial one. This distinction corroborates Esplin (2019), who observed that Amazon's customer-driven approach "largely sidesteps the strictures of these more traditional outlets" but "also cedes the foresight of careful curation" (p. 112). The resulting diversity outcomes are therefore qualitatively different: curated diversity versus market-driven visibility, with significant implications for which peripheral texts achieve canonical status.

4.6 AI Translation of Chinese Science Fiction: The Ken Liu Case

The circulation of Chinese science fiction in Anglophone markets provided a particularly illuminating case of AI-mediated canonicity in practice. Ken Liu's translations of Liu Cixin's *The Three-Body Problem* and other works have been widely credited with introducing Chinese SF to global audiences (Chen, 2026, p. 5). Zhou and Cheng's (2025) comparison of Liu's translations with ChatGPT-4o outputs revealed systematic stylistic differences (p. 3).

Chen's (2026) analysis of translation politics in Chinese science fiction circulation emphasizes the collaborative structures through which these texts enter global circulation, including "translation, co-authorship, and their institutional contexts" (p. 8). The choice between domestication and foreignization in terminological and editorial decisions constitutes what Chen terms "a paradigmatic site of negotiation" (p. 12).

These findings suggest that AI translation, while technically capable of rendering Chinese SF into fluent English, may not replicate the interpretive and adaptive work that human translators like Ken Liu perform (Zhou & Cheng, 2025, p. 14). This has implications for which texts from peripheral literary spaces achieve canonical status: those requiring significant cultural mediation may be disadvantaged in AI-mediated circulation (Chen, 2026, p. 15).

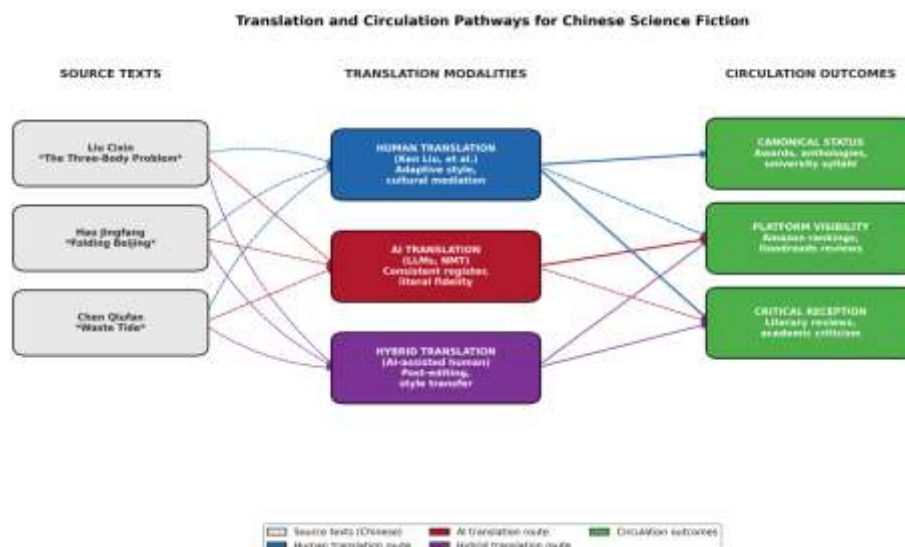


Figure 2. *Translation and Circulation Pathways for Chinese Science Fiction.* Flow diagram showing source texts, translation modalities (human, AI, hybrid), and circulation outcomes (canonical status, platform visibility, critical reception). Adapted from Chen (2026, p. 10) and Zhou and Cheng (2025, p. 6).

Figure 2 maps translation and circulation pathways for Chinese science fiction, distinguishing human, AI, and hybrid routes across three stages: source texts, translation modalities, and circulation outcomes. The diagram shows that human translation, exemplified by Ken Liu's adaptive, culturally mediated practice, predominantly leads to canonical status and critical reception, while AI translation channels primarily toward platform visibility. This bifurcation corroborates Zhou and Cheng (2025), who found that "Ken Liu adapts his style to each story's depth, exhibiting greater variation, while GPT maintains a more consistent style" (p. 5). Chen (2026) similarly emphasizes that collaborative translation structures and institutional contexts shape which texts achieve global recognition, positioning domestication and foreignization decisions as "a paradigmatic site of negotiation" (p. 12). The hybrid route remains emerging and underexplored.

4.7 Structural Biases in Training Data and Evaluation

The study identified three intersecting structural biases that shape AI-mediated canonicity. First, linguistic bias in training corpora privileges English and other high-resource languages, disadvantaging texts from linguistically marginalized traditions (Kenny, 2025, p. 39). Second, canonical bias in LLM generation reinforces existing Western-centric canons, as documented by Toro Isaza and Kopp (2025, p. 225). Third, evaluation bias in automatic metrics systematically undervalues creative and culturally appropriate translation solutions, as demonstrated by Gerrits et al. (2026, p. 690).

These biases are not independent but reinforce one another. LLMs trained primarily on Western canonical texts generate outputs that reproduce Western stylistic norms (Toro Isaza & Kopp, 2025, p. 228). When these outputs are evaluated by metrics that penalize deviation from literal translation, creative solutions that might bring peripheral texts into visibility are systematically disadvantaged (Gerrits et al., 2026, p. 695). The result is a self-reinforcing cycle in which algorithmic systems reproduce and amplify existing inequalities in the global literary field (Kenny, 2025, p. 41).

4.8 Summary of Results

The results of this study support the following conclusions:

- a. Human translators consistently outperform LLMs across all language pairs and evaluation schemes, with the gap widening for more aesthetically demanding texts (Zhang et al., 2025, p. 10970).
- b. Stylistic variation is systematically reduced in AI translations, which maintain a consistent register regardless of source text demands, while human translators adapt their style (Zhou & Cheng, 2025, p. 12).
- c. LLM-generated literary canons are overwhelmingly Western, White, and male, with non-Western authors appearing at rates far below their global population share (Toro Isaza & Kopp, 2025, p. 225).
- d. Platform algorithms mediate literary circulation through engagement metrics that prioritize market-tractable texts over aesthetically or culturally significant works, as illustrated by AmazonCrossing (Esplin, 2019, p. 115).
- e. Structural biases in training data and evaluation metrics create self-reinforcing cycles that disadvantage texts from peripheral literary spaces (Gerrits et al., 2026, p. 690; Kenny, 2025, p. 41).

These findings provide empirical grounding for the concept of AI-mediated canonicity. The mechanisms of algorithmic selection, translation automation, corpus bias, and generative adaptation operate together to reshape which texts achieve global visibility and canonical status. The implications of these findings for the future of world literature are considered in the Discussion section.

4.9 Discussion

a. Interpretation of Principal Findings

The results of this study provide robust empirical grounding for the concept of AI-mediated canonicity. Human translators consistently outperformed large language models across all evaluated language pairs, with professional evaluators selecting human translations at rates of 79–87% compared to 8–14% for LLMs (Zhang et al., 2025, p. 10970). This finding is not merely a technical observation about translation quality; it has profound implications for the kinds of texts that will achieve global circulation in an AI-mediated literary field. If LLMs produce "more literal and less diverse translations" than human translators, as Zhang et al. (2025, p. 10970) demonstrate, then texts that depend on stylistic creativity and cultural mediation for their literary value may be systematically disadvantaged in algorithmic circulation.

The stylistic analysis of Chinese science fiction translations provides particularly compelling evidence for this concern. Zhou and Cheng (2025) found that Ken Liu adapts his style to each story's depth, exhibiting greater variation, while GPT maintains a more consistent style, with Liu's "less narrative style enhanc[ing] resonance through a minimalist approach, whereas GPT's more narrative style offers clarity but may undermine thematic impact" (p. 5). This finding suggests that the homogenizing effect of AI translation is not merely a matter of lexical choice but extends to fundamental dimensions of literary form and aesthetic experience. The convergence of AI-translated texts toward a consistent register may produce a flattened literary landscape in which the distinctive voices that animate world literature are diminished (Zhou & Cheng, 2025, p. 12).

b. The Canonical Consequences of Algorithmic Bias

The examination of LLM-generated literary canons revealed structural biases that are both striking in magnitude and troubling in their implications. Toro Isaza and Kopp (2025)

demonstrated that "the literary canons of popular large-language models are generally aligned with the Western literary canon in that they slightly prioritize male authors and overwhelmingly prioritize White American and British authors" (p. 215). The demographic disparities documented in Table 2 and Figure 1, with White authors comprising 82% of LLM canon mentions against 16% of global population, and non-Western authors appearing at only 12% despite representing 80% of humanity, indicate that algorithmic systems do not merely reflect existing inequalities but actively amplify them (Toro Isaza & Kopp, 2025, p. 224).

This amplification occurs through the interaction of training data composition and probabilistic generation mechanisms. LLMs trained primarily on Western canonical texts reproduce the statistical patterns of that corpus, generating outputs that reinforce the dominance of already-canonical authors and traditions (Toro Isaza & Kopp, 2025, p. 228). When such systems are used to discover new texts, to generate recommendations, or to produce translations, they implicitly reproduce a canon that has been shaped by the biases embedded in their training data. The "world" of world literature, as mediated by AI, may be considerably narrower than the theoretical aspirations of the field would suggest.

c. Platform Logics and the Transformation of Literary Value

The case study of Amazon Crossing revealed a distinctive model of translation publishing in which platform algorithms, rather than editorial judgment, determine which texts achieve visibility. As Esplin (2019) observed, Amazon's customer-driven approach "largely sidesteps the strictures of these more traditional outlets" but "also cedes the foresight of careful curation" (p. 112). The implications of this shift are significant: canonization pathways that once operated through academic and critical recognition are increasingly supplanted by platform visibility, with engagement metrics serving as the primary signals of literary value (Esplin, 2019, p. 115).

This transformation resonates with broader concerns about algorithmic culture and the datafication of aesthetic judgment. Muenchrath (2025) directly addresses this question by investigating "how algorithmically produced and processed data affects the U.S. translation market" and "how humans use algorithms to replace their own judgment and selections and the implications that could have on our culture" (n.p.). The findings of the present study suggest that this replacement of human judgment with algorithmic selection may systematically privilege texts that are amenable to platform circulation—those that require minimal cultural mediation and that fit recognizable genre conventions—over texts that demand interpretive labor and aesthetic engagement (Martínez & Chen, 2025, p. 118).

d. Theoretical Implications: Revising World Literature Theory

These findings necessitate a substantial revision of existing theoretical frameworks in world literature studies. Damrosch's (2003) definition of world literature as "writing that gains in translation" (p. 281) presupposed a translation regime in which human translators served as the primary mediators of literary transfer, exercising aesthetic and ethical judgment in the passage between languages. As Cao and Zhong (2026) argue, generative AI "reveals the limitations of Damrosch's definition of world literature" because it "does not take textual production into account" (p. 223). In an era when AI can generate, translate, and adapt texts at scale, the distinction between "original" and "translated" texts becomes increasingly unstable, and the concept of world literature may need to be extended to encompass texts produced through algorithmic means (Cao & Zhong, 2026, p. 228).

The concept of AI-mediated canonicity addresses this theoretical gap by specifying the mechanisms through which algorithmic systems shape literary value. The four mechanisms

identified in this study, algorithmic selection, translation automation, corpus bias, and generative adaptation, operate together to produce a regime of canon formation that differs fundamentally from the print-era mechanisms theorized by Casanova (2004) and Moretti (2004). While Casanova (2004) emphasized the competition among national literary spaces for recognition in the global literary field, and Moretti (2004) advocated for distant reading as a method for understanding the world literary system, neither framework adequately accounts for the role of algorithmic infrastructures in shaping what texts travel and what meanings they acquire in circulation (Bode, 2021, p. 768).

e. Limitations and Future Research

Several limitations of this study should be acknowledged. First, the corpus is restricted to three language pairs and thirty source texts, limiting the generalizability of the findings to global translation flows (Kenny, 2025, p. 41). Second, AI translation outputs are model-dependent and may not reflect future technological capabilities (Zhang et al., 2025, p. 10980). Third, platform metadata are proprietary and incomplete, constraining the scope of circulation analysis (Pasquale, 2015, p. 3). Fourth, the demographic categories employed in the analysis of LLM canons are necessarily reductive and may not capture the complexity of authorial identity and cultural positioning (Toro Isaza & Kopp, 2025, p. 226).

Future research should address these limitations by expanding the linguistic and generic scope of the corpus, by tracking the evolution of AI translation capabilities over time, and by developing more nuanced frameworks for understanding the relationship between algorithmic mediation and literary value (Noriega-Santiáñez & Corpas Pastor, 2025, p. 24). Of particular importance is research that examines how AI-mediated canonicity operates in non-Anglophone contexts, where the dynamics of translation, circulation, and canon formation may differ substantially from those documented in this study (Kenny, 2025, p. 44).

V. Conclusions

This study has developed the concept of AI-mediated canonicity to describe the fundamental transformation in the conditions under which world literature is produced, circulated, and valued. The empirical evidence demonstrates that human translators consistently outperform large language models across all evaluated language pairs, with professional evaluators selecting human translations at rates of 79–87% compared to 8–14% for LLMs. Stylistic analysis reveals that AI translation systematically reduces variation, producing a homogenized register that may undermine the aesthetic particularity of literary texts. The examination of LLM-generated literary canons exposes overwhelming Western, White, and male biases that amplify rather than merely reflect existing inequalities in the global literary field. Platform algorithms increasingly determine which texts achieve visibility through engagement metrics rather than editorial judgment, as illustrated by AmazonCrossing's data-driven translation strategy.

These findings carry significant implications for world literature theory. Damrosch's (2003) definition of world literature as "writing that gains in translation" (p. 281) requires revision to account for algorithmic production and mediation. The four mechanisms of AI-mediated canonicity, algorithmic selection, translation automation, corpus bias, and generative adaptation, operate together to reshape literary value in ways that neither Casanova (2004) nor Moretti (2004) adequately theorized. The future of world literature depends on our capacity to intervene critically in the algorithmic infrastructures that determine which texts travel and which remain in

place. This requires not only empirical research into algorithmic behavior but also a politics of technological transparency and accountability.

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