



As a boy, Augustus Saint-Gaudens was one of thousands to pay his respects to Abraham Lincoln when the fallen president's funeral train stopped in New York City. In this bust made years later, Saint-Gaudens captures the president's thoughtful nature.

French's sculptures change "as one moves from one side to the other, each angle carefully composed for the benefit of the eye," Cooper writes. Take *Memory*, on view at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City. The sculpture is of a young, melancholy woman gazing into an indirectly angled hand mirror; "the seated figure is twisted gracefully in contrapposto . . . presenting perfectly composed compositions viewed from any angle." French's "Romantic passion and robust talent" made his work particularly powerful, Cooper writes.

Saint-Gaudens trained at the *École des Beaux-Arts* in Paris, where he was influenced by Modernism, which was then coming into vogue. In contrast to French's classical style, which aimed to portray an idealized image of a subject, Saint-Gaudens' approach is "realistic and naturalistic, intended to

reveal the character of the sitter." Indeed, Saint-Gaudens' work, such as the bust of Abraham Lincoln with his bow tie charmingly askew, aim more for psychological realism than geometric harmony. "Mere physical beauty would detract from the spiritual essence he was seeking," Cooper writes of a memorial Saint-Gaudens crafted to historian Henry Adams's wife, Marian Hooper Adams, who committed suicide. Instead, Saint-Gaudens' work "has a soul."

Neoclassicism fell out of favor ahead of World War I, as artists grew enamored of the possibilities of abstraction. Many remarkable American Renaissance monuments were even destroyed. The reputations of French and Saint-Gaudens were spared such a drastic fate, but as men who "created great works that spoke to the nation," Cooper believes, they are still woefully underappreciated.

## ARTS &amp; LETTERS

## The Invisible Hand

**THE SOURCE:** "Translators Struggle to Prove Their Academic Bona Fides" by Jennifer Howard, in *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, Jan. 17, 2010.

PITY THE LITERARY TRANSLATOR, whose mission it is to be invisible, to "fade into the background, like a discreet waiter who keeps the glasses filled while remaining practically unnoticed." Translating fiction and poetry is a thankless task, one that earns little respect in the academy and little pay outside of it, writes Jennifer Howard, a senior reporter at *The Chronicle of Higher Education*.

In academia, translation is often

seen as a digression from serious scholarly work. As Mark Anderson, a Franz Kafka specialist at Columbia University, describes the prevailing sentiment, "Translation can take people away from criticism and theoretical thinking of an original sort." Before Anderson was tenured, the chair of his department advised him not to work as a translator because doing so would be viewed unfavorably by the tenure committee. Anderson opted to work under a pseudonym. "I think my chair gave me excellent advice," he says. Stars such as Robert Fagles notwithstanding, marketing specialists have downplayed the role of translators, often excluding their names from the covers of books they have brought into English, in the belief that translated work is a tough sell.

But the tides may be changing, Howard writes. More universities are offering certificates or degrees in translation. Some schools, such as the University of Texas, Dallas, now house on-campus translation centers. And small imprints emphasizing translated literature are springing up at university-affiliated publishing houses. At a few academic institutions, faculty personnel codes have been recrafted to consider the work of translation in hiring and promotion decisions.

Howard reports that a group of translators are trying to move the weight of the Modern Language Association—the nation's most prominent organization of literary scholars—behind the fight for greater recognition in the academy. But respect doesn't put food on the table, and job pickings remain slim in the humanities, for translators and scholars alike.