New Perspectives in Translation and Interpreting Studies

ROUTLEDGE

Translation and Race

Corine Tachtiris

TRANSLATION AND RACE

Translation and Race brings together translation studies with critical race studies for a long-overdue reckoning with race and racism in translation theory and practice. This book explores the "unbearable whiteness of translation" in the West that excludes scholars and translators of color from the field and also upholds racial inequities more broadly.

Outlining relevant concepts from critical race studies, *Translation and Race* demonstrates how norms of translation theory and practice in the West actually derive from ideas rooted in white supremacy and other forms of racism. Chapters explore translation's role in historical processes of racialization, racial capitalism and intellectual property, identity politics and Black translation praxis, the globalization of critical race studies, and ethical strategies for translating racist discourse. Beyond attempts to diversify the field of translation studies and the literary translation profession, this book ultimately calls for a radical transformation of translation theory and practice.

This book is crucial reading for advanced students and scholars in translation studies, critical race and ethnic studies, and related areas, as well as for practicing translators.

Corine Tachtiris is Assistant Professor of Translation Studies at the University of Massachusetts Amherst. She is the translator of Frieda Ekotto's *Don't Whisper Too Much and Portrait of a Young Artiste from Bona Mbella* (2019).

New Perspectives in Translation and Interpreting Studies

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PREFACE

A Note on Terminology and Capitalization

Much of my scholarship has focused on the question of translating terms that designate race or racial identity, an issue that arose in the very first translation project I ever undertook as part of a collective of undergraduates working with a faculty member to translate a novel from the Francophone Caribbean 25 years ago. As a group of white students, we spent a lot of time discussing the ethics and politics of what it meant for us to be translating a work by a Black author from a culture we were just learning about, issues that continue to guide my translation research and practice today. Indeed, I first took up these research questions because I felt that my own understanding of how to responsibly approach the question of race in translation was inadequate. My translation scholarship and practice is primarily grounded in and guided by the work of Black radical intellectuals and activists from the United States and across the globe, particularly Black radical feminists, and I locate my work not in saviorism but in their calls for solidarity.

The disjunctures that my fellow students and I found between how people in Guadeloupe and people in the United States think and talk about race and racial categorization led me to the juncture of translation studies and critical race studies, where race emerges as a construct rather than a natural given that need only be described in each language. The different ways that race is named in different languages and cultures evidence entire histories of social, cultural, imperial, legal, economic, and other forces that combine to construct racial categories—processes that are still and constantly at work, contested, shifting. These linguistic disjunctures around race that surface in translation have interested me as a means toward exploring how to, as Toni Morrison writes, "enunciate race while depriving it of its lethal cling" (5). As I write about race in this book, I am hesitant to make stylistic choices about

racial terminology that might imply a fixedness of race and racial identities. Even within cultures, ideas diverge about how best to articulate race and its real effects in the world while not suggesting that race is something innate and absolute.

There is a relatively long history of capitalizing Black in US English as a politicized maneuver, as in the Black Power and Black Pride movements. Capitalizing Black serves to signal pride in Black community and culture, which are denigrated by mainstream white culture; to acknowledge a shared history and sense of identity; and as a collectivist act of resistance against the racism of a dominant white culture rooted in white supremacy. Capitalizing Black, but not white, is a frequent practice in racial justice activism and critical race studies scholarship, both of which I draw from in this book. In the wake of the Black Lives Matter protests in the spring and summer of 2020, several large news organizations—such as the Associated Press, *USA Today*, *The New York Times*, *The Los Angeles Times*, and NBC News, among others—opted to implement this same practice of capitalizing Black but not white. The Associated Press explained their decision as "conveying an essential and shared sense of history, identity and community among people who identify as Black, including those in the African diaspora and within Africa" (Daniszewski np), and *The New York Times* specified that they would not capitalize white because it "doesn't represent a shared culture and history in the way Black does, and also has long been capitalized by hate groups" (Coleman np).

Others argue, however, that while only white nationalist supremacists might have a proud shared sense of white culture and identity, not capitalizing White obscures the ways that Whiteness functions in an organized fashion in US society to unequally distribute power and privilege. As Eve L. Ewing writes, "Whiteness is not only an absence"; not capitalizing White may lend it a kind of invisibility, "and as is the case with all power structures, its invisibility does crucial work to maintain its power" (np). Accordingly, Ann Thúy Nguyễn and Maya Pendleton at the Center for the Study of Social Policy indicate that they "intentionally capitalize 'White' in part to invite people … to think deeply about the ways Whiteness survives," since "the detachment of 'White' as a proper noun allows White people to sit out of conversations about race and removes accountability from White people's and White institutions' involvement in racism" (np). I am particularly interested in this book in drawing this kind of attention to what I call the norms in translation theory and practice that are passed off as universal but actually emerge from racialized and racist frameworks that center Whiteness.

Yet there is a risk when capitalizing Black and White that these categories begin to seem self-evident. As Jesse McCarthy notes,

> The complexity and breadth of the global African diaspora constitutes a major hurdle, and many debates over this usage [Black] have centered

> on a multitude of serious conceptual inconsistencies that arise when one attempts to claim a unified transhistoric ethnoculture under the rubric of 'Black,'

so he opts to use the lowercase when referring to blackness to convey "its dispersive and de-essentializing qualities, its resistance to the assumptive logics of possessive individualism and state power" (xii). Similarly, La Marr Jurelle Bruce writes:

> I do not typically capitalize *black* because I do not regard it as a *proper* noun. Grammatically, the proper noun corresponds to a formal name or title assigned to an individual, closed, fixed entity. I use a lowercase *b* because I want to emphasize an *improper* blackness … a blackness that is ever-unfurling rather than rigidly fixed; a blackness that is neither capitalized nor propertized via the protocols of Western grammar; a blackness that centers those who are typically regarded as lesser and *lower cases*, as it were; a blackness that amplifies those who are treated as "minor figures," in Western modernity. (6, italics original)

Bruce's use of the lowercase to signify the lack of fixity in blackness thus resonates with what I see as translation's potential to unfix language through linguistic and cultural disjunctures. While Kwame Anthony Appiah states that "[r]easoned arguments about linguistic usages must always reckon with the fact that language is a set of conventions, to be determined by the consensus of language users" (np), we see that consensus is never absolute and that there are a variety of competing capitalization conventions that all intend a challenge to white supremacy but through different means and meanings.

There's a joke among translators that if you ask them how to translate something they'll always respond, "It depends." That is, it depends on the context, how the word or phrase is functioning at a particular moment, in a particular text. I discuss this contextual contingency in the final chapter of this book in terms of ethically translating racist language and discourse—that there is not a one-size-fits-all answer. And so, in considering whether or not to capitalize b/Black and w/White in this book, I have made a perhaps unusual decision. The answer is: it depends. I use different capitalization conventions according to the work that a specific chapter is doing. The Introduction elaborates what I call the "unbearable whiteness" of translation studies and the literary translation profession, and so I capitalize Black and White when referring to people to call attention to the unacknowledged ways that whiteness functions as a category that has shaped translation norms. In both the Introduction and Chapter 2, which deals largely with the exclusion of translators of color from the literary translation profession in the United States and the United Kingdom through the processes of racial capitalism, I also capitalize both Black and White because I am generally talking about

demographic categories, though I do not capitalize collocations such as white fragility, white privilege, and certainly not white supremacy. In Chapter 5 on translating racism and racist discourse, I capitalize Black and White as demographic categories but otherwise capitalize according to what I see the case studies calling for. Chapter 3 draws from identity politics, and so I follow the general conventions of intellectuals and activists in the identity politics tradition in capitalizing Black but not white, also because I am making a politicized gesture in asserting a Black translation praxis against the norms of whiteness masquerading as universal. As Chapter 1 takes a long-historical perspective on racialized translation norms, I capitalize neither black nor white as it would be anachronistic to refer to these categories with our modern understandings of them. Chapter 4 is in conversation with critical race studies as a discipline, which tends to capitalize Black but not white, but because in the chapter I call for less US-centrism in the discipline, including in ideas about racial identity and racial formation, I capitalize neither black nor white to indicate the lack of fixity in these terms that occurs through translation. When quoting other texts, I always follow the capitalization style of the text being cited.

On a briefer note, when referring in a general sense to people who are not racialized as white, I use phrases such as translators of color/scholars of color/people of color/etc. The terms BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and (other) People of Color) and BAME (Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic) have gained traction more recently in the United States and the United Kingdom, respectively. These terms are designed to highlight the specificities of the experiences of groups (Black, Indigenous, Asian) under the larger umbrella of people of color. Aside from whether these terms will have lasting widespread usage, there are other reasons not to use them in certain cases. As Andrea Plaid and Christopher MacDonald-Dennis note, BIPOC can be used as an umbrella term when it would actually make sense to talk about a specific group; it therefore obfuscates the discussion and may also imply hierarchies of oppression that could pit oppressed groups against each other. The advantage, on the other hand, of the term people of color, according to Plaid and MacDonald-Dennis, is that it could "[bring] together people from disparate communities under a common term [that] would further cement the coalitions that formed when these marginalized groups came together to wage war against white supremacy" (np). As opposed to some of the rigidity of BIPOC and BAME, I appreciate the capaciousness and flexibility of translators/scholars/people of color.

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INTRODUCTION

The Unbearable Whiteness of Translation

> You're a white translator. I come into your home office and break your computer. I run a bath and drown all your books, especially the ones translated by you. I go into your closet and cut up all your wigs. After burning you at the stake in your backyard, Salem Witch-Trials style, I give your job to a Black translator.

So begins "The Great White Canceling," Korean translator Anton Hur's satirical take on the moral panic created in March 2021 by the controversy around the translations of Amanda Gorman's poem "The Hill We Climb." Gorman, a young Black poet in the spoken word tradition, had performed the poem at Joe Biden's United States presidential inauguration in January of that year to acclaim, and the poem was published as a stand-alone volume in the United States and in translation into several languages abroad. When the translator of the Dutch edition was first announced as Marieke Lucas Rijneveld—a White poet and novelist who had recently become the youngest winner of the International Booker Prize—the choice was met with critique, primarily by Black women poets and journalists in the Netherlands, who argued that a Black woman spoken word poet should have been chosen instead. Rijneveld later stepped down from the project.[1]

The situation made headlines in international newspapers like *The Guardian*, *Le Monde*, *The New York Times*, and *Der Spiegel*. In addition to news stories, much digital ink was spilled in opinion pieces, on Twitter, and in online translation forums. Hur's "The Great White Canceling" sends up the often hyperbolic reactions to the situation. The translator of the Spanish edition, Nuria Barrios, for example, declared in *El País* that the controversy was "symptomatic of a new censorship, lethal for translation, for art, for life" (np).

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Lethal—"that one time in 2021 when a white translator gave up their job to a Black one," as Hur puts it (np). Literary translation rarely occupies a place in broad public discourse, but in this case, the specific issue at hand—the intersection of race and translation—had not been a widespread topic of discussion even among literary translators or translation studies scholars. And it was the fact that the conversation around race and translation only started on a broad level with the Gorman translations that made so many readers, translators, and translation studies scholars so poorly equipped to discuss it.

I began work on this book before the Gorman controversy, but it encapsulates many of the issues addressed here: the marginalization and exclusion of translators and translation scholars of color; white privilege in translation; the misappropriation of the term identity politics; racial capitalism; the translation of racialized literary and linguistic forms; an idealized vision of translation that downplays its potential to perpetuate racism; and what an anti-racist practice of literary translation and translation scholarship might look like. But before looking more closely at the Gorman case in Chapter 3, I want to focus on what led to it—both the situation itself and many of the responses to it—namely, the dearth of conversations around race and racism in translation, the dearth of translation studies scholars of color, and the dearth of literary translators of color and work of authors of color in translation. In short: the unbearable whiteness of translation in the West.

It is difficult to illustrate exactly the extent of whiteness of translation in the West because data collection around literary translation is generally limited, and demographic data with a large, random sample size does not exist at this time. In the United States, two recent surveys of literary translators—by the Authors Guild and the American Literary Translators Association—have sought to rectify this problem, but total responses to the surveys were relatively low. Nonetheless, they can provide useful information since the overall total number of literary translators in the United States is itself remarkably low. The Authors Guild survey (2017), spearheaded by translators Jessica Cohen and Alex Zucker, received 205 responses from a pool of approximately 1,200 translators. Of those literary translators responding, 83% identified as White, 6.5% as Hispanic or Latinx, 1.5% Black/African American, 1.5% Asian American, 1% Native American, with the remaining 6.5% selecting "other" or "prefer not to say." The Equity Advocates of the American Literary Translators Association launched a survey (2020) more directly aimed at gathering information about the diversity of translators into English as well as their experiences within the translation community. Respondents did not need to be an ALTA member or live primarily in the United States. With a slightly higher number of respondents (362), the ALTA survey results exhibited more racial diversity: 72% White, 9% Asian American/Asian, 9% Hispanic/Latinx, 4% Middle Eastern/North African, 3% African American/

Black, and only one person identifying as Native American/Alaskan Native.[2] To compare these numbers to the general US population, those identifying in the 2020 census as one race alone included: 62% White, 12% Black, 6% Asian, 1% American Indian or Alaska Native, and 8% some other race; 18% identified as Hispanic or Latino; 10% identified as multiracial (Jones et al. 2021). Thus, White literary translators are clearly overrepresented in relation to the general population, and Black translators are the most underrepresented, with only 1.5–3% of literary translators identifying as Black in comparison to 12% of the US population.

Demographics alone cannot tell the full story of racial inequity in the literary translation sector; they do not show the number of book contracts received per translator, compensation rates, invitations for talks or readings, or leadership roles in professional organizations, for example. Data for this type of information collated with race is even less readily available. The Open Letter/*Publishers Weekly* database of published translations, for example—the most readily available translation database for translations into English—allows for results to be filtered by author and/or translator gender but not by race and ethnicity.[3] Making determinations about a translator's race without knowing how translators personally identify themselves is fraught, especially as different cultures have different formations and formulations of racial identity, and the same person may even identify differently in different cultural contexts.[4]

Even with some margin for error, however, the disparities between White translators and translators of color are quite stark in some cases, even when it involves literature written by authors of color.[5] For instance, out of all the published translations from Japanese of fiction books listed in the Open Letter/*Publishers Weekly* database for the five years from 2017 through 2021, only *three* of approximately 100 were translated by Japanese or Japanese heritage translators (Takami Nieda, Asa Yoneda, and Jan Matsuko Cash), with five other books from other translators of color (Kalau Almony, Raj Mahtani, and three by Ho-Ling Wong).[6] Translations from Chinese fare somewhat better with about one-third of prose publications in the same five-year period translated or co-translated by ethnically Chinese translators. However, the fact that a third of that third are from Singaporean translator Jeremy Tiang demonstrates that the number of ethnically Chinese translators published in English translation remains relatively small.[7]

Literature by authors of color is also published in English translation at a much lower rate than correlates with global population demographics or global publishing output. The UK-based organization Literature Across Frontiers produced a report (2015) prepared by Alexandra Büchler and Giulia Trentacosti analyzing data from the British Library for translations published in English from 2000 to 2012; they found that the top ten most translated languages were: French, German, Spanish, Russian, Italian,

Swedish, Norwegian, Dutch, Arabic, and Japanese, respectively. Chinese came only 13th, even though China publishes more books annually than any other nation, and Japan also ranks in the top five in book publishing. Certainly, some of the works translated from languages that originated in Europe were written by authors of color, particularly in cases where the nation of the language's origin colonized other places. But as discussed more in Chapter 2, a few high-profile or award-winning translations of work by authors of color only give the illusion of greater diversity.

John Keene's essay "Translating Poetry, Translating Blackness" (2016)—one of the few well-known pieces treating race and translation—calls out in particular the small number of works available in English translation of Black authors, even when, in cases like Brazilian and Cuban literature, many Black authors are present but passed over in favor of ones considered White in their home contexts (np), though as discussed below, whiteness is relative and fluid. As another point of reference from the Open Letter/*Publishers Weekly* database, when excluding North Africa, 94 books in total across all genres (fiction, poetry, non-fiction, and children's literature) are listed from African countries by Black authors from 2008 when the database began to 2022—only about six or seven books a year by Black African authors, then, from across the entire continent.[8] Of these 94, only eight were translated and three co-translated by Black translators. It is also worth noting that of the 37 published translations from South Africa, only one of the books seems to have been written by a Black author, though 80% of South Africa's population identifies as Black. Keene's argument is easily confirmed: there are relatively very few translations into English of work by Black authors, and even fewer Black translators translating them. If, as Keene mentions, literary translations are already a "fringe literature" in the US/UK market—that notorious 3% statistic—literary translations of works by Black authors translated by Black translators are the fringe of the fringe of the fringe.

Though translations occupy a marginal position in the Anglophone literary market, the Anglophone market as a whole maintains a dominant position in world literature (Thomsen 2008). And though the number of people who speak English as a first language is not particularly high, it is the most commonly spoken language worldwide, which gives literature written or translated into English global visibility—or lisibility. English translations also frequently serve as "pivot" translations for works to be indirectly translated into other languages. The global hegemony of the English language and the Anglophone publishing market thus means that the whiteness of the literary translation sector in the United States and the United Kingdom has an outsized effect in relation to the number of texts actually published in translation. The same can be said of the global hegemony of Western translation studies, whose whiteness has ramifications for translation theory and practice beyond the Western context. The distinction of the West, a term I

define shortly, is important here. Throughout this book, I am mainly discussing Western translation studies and literary translation in the West, with translation into or between languages that originated in Europe. Obviously, in places like China or India, the majority of translation studies scholars and translators are not White. This book does not intend to dismiss or belittle the work of translators and translation scholars working outside of major European languages and Western research institutions. Rather, I argue that Western translation studies largely marginalizes translations, translators, translation practices, and translation theory from outside the West, and that this marginalization must be understood, too, as partly originating from and maintaining white supremacy.

Brian James Baer outlines the way the West has placed itself at the center of translation studies concurrently with "the rise of Empire, marked by the ascendancy of Euro-American-based international institutions and neoliberal economics, along with the increasing hegemony of the English language" (223–224). He critiques the "mythistory" Western translation studies tells about the origin of "modern" translation studies in the West post-Second World War, a mythistory that "reinforces the notion of the West as the source of universal knowledge" (225) and serves as a "developmental narrative" (222) that locates other traditions of translation scholarship "behind" Western translation discourse. As an example of the way this mythistory is constructed, Baer points to translation studies anthologies in English, many of which are used in translation studies pedagogy internationally. For example, it was not until the fourth edition published in 2021 of Lawrence Venuti's *Translation Studies Reader*—a popular teaching text—that a sense of the intellectual tradition of translation in China was provided by including for the first time four texts translated from Chinese.[9] While the texts, dating from antiquity to the 1930s, sketch out some historical positions on translation in China, the fact that no later texts are included could imply that "modern" translation studies remains the province of the West, that no important work in translation studies is being done outside of Western universities and European languages.

"The West" is, of course, not really a geographical designation, and what—where, who—it refers to is relatively abstract and fluid. Nonetheless, "West/ern" is not a signifier completely detached from geographical moorings. Western civilization arose in western Europe, and Western values continue to predominate in White-majority spaces: Europe and places that came to be White-majority through genocide and settler colonialism, like the United States, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand. While "Western" is not coterminous with "White," there remains a racial dimension to the former term. "White" and "whiteness" are also fluid terms with respect to whom and what are considered "White,"[10] but "White culture" tends to correspond with "Western values." Indeed, the modern West and whiteness were

co-constructed in dialectical opposition to other racial groups. Edward Said has famously outlined the process by which Orientalist scholars produced the Occident in contradistinction to the exotified, infantilized, racialized Orient:

> Every statement made by Orientalists or White Men (who were usually interchangeable) conveyed a sense of the irreducible distance separating white from colored, or Occidental from Oriental; moreover, behind each statement there resonated the tradition of experience, learning, and education that kept the Oriental-colored to his position of *object studied by the Occidental-white*, instead of vice versa. (228, italics original)

Scholars have noted a similar phenomenon with regard to blackness. Achille Mbembe, for example, describes how, during the period of European imperial expansion, "the Western world considered itself the center of the earth and the birthplace of reason, universal life, and the truth of humanity" in opposition to the "Remainder—the ultimate sign of the dissimilar, of difference and the pure power of the negative," epitomized in the *Nègre*, "the ideal example of this other-being, powerfully possessed by emptiness" (11). Unlike Orientalism, however, the concept of the "Negro," as Cedric J. Robinson argues, served the particular function of justifying the transatlantic slave trade: "The creation of the Negro … was an effort commensurate with the importance Black labor power possessed for the world economy sculpted and dominated by the ruling and mercantile classes of Western Europe" (4). Chapter 1 of this book explores more deeply the connections between translation and modern racialization.

Examining the intersections of the West and whiteness provides a key point of interrogation of the pretended "universalism" of Western values—such as reason, individual rights, liberal humanism, and democracy—since accessing the benefits of these Western ideals often depends on whiteness (Mills 1997, 2017). The French *Déclaration des droits de l'homme et du citoyen* (1789), for example, did not include African and North American Indigenous people in its definitions of "man" or "citizen," excluding the enslaved and colonized from the declared rights. Critical race theory, with its origins in legal studies, highlights continuing racial inequities in the area of rights and law, both in the application of the law (such as in unequal prison sentences for similar crimes) and racial discrimination in supposedly colorblind legislation itself (such as in voting laws). The long history of colonization, enslavement, and settler colonialism perpetrated by White Europeans and their descendants also has persistent repercussions for the material living conditions of people of color, in terms of wealth and access to resources such as healthcare and education. Translation studies as a field has engaged with these issues to some extent through postcolonial studies and, more recently, decolonial

studies, but frequently in ways that do not specifically name race or theorize racialization, and translation studies has tended to focus on racial difference between colonizing metropole and (post)colony without theorizing how race functions in translation *within* the West. Critical race studies, broadly conceived, provides a firmly established framework for exposing the ways that supposedly race-neutral values, norms, and forms of knowledge are actually tethered to racialized and racist power structures that are maintained materially, discursively, and epistemologically. Drawing from critical race studies would give translation studies a means for exploring in depth how certain norms of and ideas about translation are not only Western but associated with whiteness.

As will be discussed more below, whiteness is often invisibilized, passing as some sort of universal norm as opposed to a racialized position: "'White' … affects the everyday fabric of our lives but resists, sometimes violently, any extensive characterization that would allow for the mapping of its contours. It wields power yet endures as a largely unarticulated position" (Nakayama and Krizek 291). The original critiques from Black Dutch women of the Gorman translation roused such controversy for daring to name whiteness and its privileged place within translation, and many responses held the line of whiteness by returning to the frame of translation as an idealized "universal" practice that supposedly transcends difference. The Gorman case, however, raises the role of whiteness in a variety of translation norms in the West: Who is most "qualified" to translate a particular text? Who is "qualified" to translate professionally? What types of texts are "worth" translating? How does one translate? For whom does one translate? How are translations positioned in the market? In looking at race and translation, this book moves beyond problems of simple demographics or representation—the scarcity of translation scholars and literary translators of color in the West—and considers what effect this racial disparity has on translation. How does whiteness structure the norms of Western translation theory and practice? And how do translation theory and practice buttress that aspect of Western culture that goes by another name—white supremacy?

The next section outlines some of the key tenets of critical race studies and their potential value in interrogating and undoing the whiteness of translation in the West. While the term critical race theory has, in the current culture wars in the United States and elsewhere, taken on a blanket definition far beyond its origins in critical legal studies in the academy, I prefer to use the term critical race studies here as a broad umbrella for fields that engage substantially with race in various ways, including, but not limited to critical race theory, Black studies, African and African American studies, ethnic studies, Indigenous studies, comparative race studies, and postcolonial and decolonial studies as well as subfields like queer of color critique and raciolinguistics.

Critical Race Studies

Translation studies as a field has increasingly attended to issues of power related to social and political structures, an evolution usually described as a series of "turns," drawing on fields that challenge heteropatriarchy and White settler colonialism and imperialism. Along with the cultural turn in translation studies came the postcolonial and feminist turns in the early 1990s as postcolonial studies and feminist/women's studies were gaining institutional ground in the academy.[11] In the last decade, translation has also taken a queer turn, with a number of volumes devoted entirely to bringing queer studies/gender and sexuality studies together with translation studies.[12] Yet while translation studies has formed lasting collaborations with postcolonial, feminist, and queer studies, and forged new connections with decolonial studies in the past few years, to analyze questions of power in the field of translation, it has to date made very few connections with fields engaged in critical race studies, even as these fields have become established in the academy concurrently with postcolonial, feminist, and queer studies.[13] In the United States, for example, ethnic studies departments have existed since the late 1960s, thanks to trenchant student activism. By the 1990s, critical race and ethnic studies were relatively well established institutionally. Critical race theory as a specific legal studies framework emerged in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Yet, though it has now become somewhat standard in academic studies dealing with culture to acknowledge the way power works differentially across categories such as race, gender, and sexuality, the first of these continues to receive scant attention in translation studies. There are, of course, some notable exceptions, such as the two-volume *Translating Slavery* (1994, revised edition 2009), edited by Doris Y. Kadish and Françoise Massardier-Kenney, which includes essays and transcribed conversations about the translation of French abolitionist writing dealing directly with the issue of race as well as excerpted translations. Brent Hayes Edwards's *The Practice of Diaspora: Literature, Translation and the Rise of Black Internationalism* (2003) is also an exemplary work that brings together translation and race in a variety of ways, including the translation of racial identity terminology, the international circulation of Black intellectual writing through translation, and relatedly, translation as an analytical approach for theorizing these transcultural Black internationalist encounters. There are also various journal articles, book chapters, and other short pieces, but these are still somewhat limited, and there has been no subfield-establishing edited collections like those that have appeared for feminist, postcolonial, and queer studies and translation studies.[14]

From the opposite side, critical race studies has also engaged only sporadically with translation in the more narrow, interlingual sense. Instead, translation usually serves as a trope or metaphor, or as a synonym of sorts for the transcultural or comparative. Robert Stam and Ella Shohat's *Race in Translation: Culture Wars around the Postcolonial Atlantic* (2012) is a prime

example. Despite the book's title, the index indicates only eight pages that deal with translation. The book is otherwise concerned with "the transatlantic traffic of 'race' within and between three national zones"—the United States, France, and Brazil—but despite attention to the "politics of the cross-border flow of ideas" (xiii), the book does not address how these ideas move between these nations through interlingual translation. Similarly, in *Lost and Found in Translation: Contemporary Ethnic American Writing and the Politics of Language Diversity* (2005), Martha J. Cutter analyzes how works by Asian American, Native American, African American, and Mexican American writers use the "trope" and "metaphor" of translation to challenge the idea of monolingualism in the United States without turning to texts written in languages other than English that pass into English through translation. By contrast, *Translation and Race* takes interlingual translation, or what Roman Jakobson calls translation "proper," as its central topic in relation to race, keeping in mind, however, that what is understood by "proper" translation and the division between languages often derive from racialized and racist notions.

If *Translation and Race* takes translation as more than a trope or metaphor, it would be helpful to begin by defining what is meant by race here, drawing from critical race studies. As Michael Omi and Howard Winant write, "Because race operates as a 'common-sense' concept, a basic component of social cognition, identity, and socialization … [it] seems obvious and in some ways superficial. … Race appears to be a given attribute, an ordinary 'social fact'" (4). But actually, "Racial identity is a slippery thing" (3), one that shifts across time and space, which makes it particularly difficult to translate into different linguistic and cultural contexts. Indeed, it is the fluid nature of race and racial formation that has made it so durable and long-lasting. Ibram X. Kendi traces the history of "ethnic and religious and color prejudice" (17) back to the ancient world, although he argues that "[c]onstructions of *races*—White Europe, Black Africa, for instance—did not, and therefore racist ideas did not [exist]," even if "the foundations of race and racist ideas were laid" (2016 18, italics original). Kendi locates the first use of the word "race" in a 1481 French poem in reference to hunting dogs, and its first appearance in a dictionary, again French, in 1606 (2016 36). However, premodern scholar Geraldine Heng, in *The Invention of Race in the European Middle Ages*, argues for using the word "race" in studies of the premodern, even if it was not the operative word at the time. Though she warns against presentism and imposing modern conceptions of race onto the past, she maintains,

> the use of the term *race* continues to bear witness to important strategic, epistemological, and political commitments not adequately served by the invocation of categories of greater generality (such as *otherness* or *difference*) or greater benignity in our understanding of human culture and society. (23, italics original)

Central to Heng's argument is that processes of what Omi and Winant call "racial formation" existed prior to the modern period, which is where many scholars of race tend to begin their studies.

Translation and Race deals mainly with the "modern" framework of race and racism that consolidated around imperialism, settler colonialism, transatlantic slavery, industrialization, and the rise of capitalism, since this racial formation continues to have the most purchase today while keeping in mind that "the roots of Western racism took hold in European civilization well before the dawn of capitalism.... [T]he racialization of the proletariat and the invention of whiteness began within Europe itself, long before Europe's modern encounter with African and New World labor," as Robin D. G. Kelley summarizes the history of racial formation outlined by Robinson (xii). Though the racial identities and hierarchies emerging in the modern period have had some lasting power, they also continue to shift across time and space. As mentioned above, for example, different groups, like Jews, that had been racialized as "other" have been assimilated into whiteness, but this assimilation is also not stable, as in the case of persistent antisemitism. In terms of blackness and mixed racial identity, the United States has tended to operate according to the "one-drop rule," where "one drop of African blood" equates to being Black—you either are or you aren't—while in the Francophone Caribbean, there arose a complex system of classifying people according to the fraction of White European and Black African heritage. In sum, racial identity and the processes of racialization are fluid; there is nothing "natural" or "essential" about racial categories, past or present.

While race is a social construct, it nonetheless has real effects in the world, the most obvious manifestation of which is racism. Just as with the word race, Eduardo Bonilla-Silva argues that the term "racism" is often used as if its meaning were "self-evident" (1997 465). He offers a definition of racism as "the racial ideology of a racialized social system" (1997 467). For Kendi, the ideology comes after the racialized systemization; that is, he argues that racist policies (like enslavement) originated first and that racist ideas developed afterward in order to rationalize and justify them, rather than racist policies being the result of racist ideas (2016 9). The systemic way in which racist ideology and racist policies become incorporated into society means that racism must be understood *structurally*: "the social relations between the races become institutionalized (forming a structure as well as a culture) and affect their social life whether individual members of the races want it or not" (Bonilla-Silva 1997 473). This last point prevents viewing racism as a problem limited to bigots or even to individual implicit biases to be rooted out. Regardless of the desires of individual actors, racism "acquires relative autonomy in the social system and performs practical functions" (Bonilla-Silva 1997 474). Structural racism—sometimes called systemic or institutionalized racism—means that racism is baked into institutions, laws, policies,

norms, and values rather than being limited to bad actors. Over time, structural racism has taken on more covert forms, what Omi and Winant call a move from "racial domination to racial hegemony" (14).

Though it might seem odd within the context of a book on race and translation, the vastly disproportionate incarceration of Black men in the United States can help to illustrate the spectrum from overt to covert racism, drawing simultaneously on critical race theory's position that the US legal system is fundamentally racist. The overtly racist position would be that Black men are simply more inclined to criminal behavior because they are "less civilized." A somewhat more generous reading that acknowledges the effects of historical racism but persists in seeing the law as race-neutral would blame increased criminal behavior by Black men on lack of opportunities from education or generational wealth; this position preserves the notion that Black men are inescapably more criminal within a racist society. However, as Michelle Alexander has documented in *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness* (2010), Black men are consistently sentenced to longer terms of incarceration *for the same crimes* as White men—which not only imprisons them but also removes from them certain rights of citizenship, such as the right to vote, which helps to maintain the current political power structure. Black men thus signify as more criminal and less deserving of human rights, a problem not simply limited to a few overtly racist judges. To see the way that racism is embedded into the very law itself, though, we need to look, as Alexander explains, at the 1986 Anti-Drug Abuse Act, which instated heavier minimum sentences for selling crack than powder cocaine, with the former associated more with Black people and the latter with White people. Further, the onslaught of media discourse around "crack whores," "crack babies," and "gangbangers" (66) cemented the image of drug abuse and criminality during the War on Drugs as decidedly Black. This discursive racism naturalizes the incarceration of Black people as "just the way things are" rather than exposing the various levels of structural racism that have caused it. Racism, then, is insidiously systemic, operating not only through historically unequal distribution of resources and blatant discrimination but also through supposedly race-neutral policies, norms, and values, with discourse that masks its workings and makes the status quo seem commonsensical. Though the consequences are not as grave as in the carceral system, this same spectrum of racism exists within the literary translation publishing sector and translation studies in the academy, from blatant discrimination to "race-neutral" norms.

Omi and Winant call the relationship between racialization, social structures, and systems of meaning "racial projects": "Racial projects are efforts to shape the ways in which human identities and social structures are racially signified, and the reciprocal ways that racial meaning becomes embedded in social structures" (13). As Cornell West reminds us, "Culture is as

much a structure as the economy or politics" and not "an ephemeral set of behavioral attitudes and values" (19). Translation and translation studies, then, this book argues, must be understood, too, as racial projects. While the discourse around the Amanda Gorman controversy tended to frame it as a problem of essentializing identity—for those who criticized the call for a Black translator—or a problem of structural barriers to the profession—for those who supported the call—the discussion largely sidestepped the endemic racialization and systemic racism at work in translation. That is, the racism at work in translation is not simply a question of who has access to obtaining qualifications or publishing industry connections but of foundational questions as to what being "qualified" entails or what a "good" translation is. Translation and translation studies are affected by the material conditions of racialization and racism at work in society, but they also produce their own racial meanings and structures.

One of the main ways critics of journalist Janice Deul's argument in the Gorman controversy disclaimed the racial project of literary translation was recourse to the ideal of "colorblindness" when it comes to race. Critical race scholars identify colorblindness as the major framework through which contemporary Western society opts to view race, either as something already achieved or as an ideal to enact in the present. That is, while some (mostly White) people may acknowledge that racism still exists, they believe that the best way to combat it is to act as if they cannot see race and "treat everyone equally." Though people who ascribe to an ideology of colorblindness may view themselves as not perpetuating racism, in fact they engage in what Bonilla-Silva (2013) calls "racism without racists." Colorblind racism maintains the status quo by opposing measures such as affirmative action (also called positive discrimination) on the grounds that they do not treat all races equally and thus amount to racism. According to Bonilla-Silva, "abstract liberalism" is one of the frames used in colorblind racism and where "whites can appear 'reasonable' and even 'moral' while opposing almost all practical approaches to deal with de facto racial inequality" (2013 97).

A colorblind approach pretends that society functions as a meritocracy: if we judge people on the quality of their work and not their color, the most deserving candidates will supposedly be rewarded (Gallagher 2003). It thus posits racism as individual bias and discrimination as opposed to a structural problem. The myth of meritocracy has three major flaws. First, structural barriers to accessing resources that would help a person succeed (education, healthcare, lack of economic precarity) prevent equal opportunities for achieving "merit." In literary translation and translation studies, these resources include acceptance to MFA, MA, and PhD programs; access to study abroad programs for language learners; the ability to accept unpaid internships in the publishing industry; and the financial stability required for the precarious financial situation of graduate school for those entering

translation studies and for poorly remunerated work for those freelancing in literary translation. The material structural barriers to translators and scholars of color will be discussed more in Chapter 2. Even if all the structural barriers could be removed so that there was a "level playing field," however, the evaluation of the "most meritorious" is still based on race-based notions, what Jo Littler (2017) calls "racialised merit." Translation studies in the Western academy will privilege certain types of evidence, knowledge, and styles of scholarly writing as well as presentation in English that are not race-neutral but derive from white norms (Almeida 2015); similarly, the preferences and norms of translation practice, such as the "fluency" identified by Venuti (1995) also operate in a racialized manner. Finally, despite the profession of "colorblindness" and the disavowal of "seeing race," studies consistently show that racial bias—implicit or otherwise—functions in evaluations of merit. "Racialized" names on CVs or written academic work, for example, negatively impact their evaluation in comparison with "White" names, all other factors being equal. During the Gorman controversy, some suggested a fair solution would be to have an open call for translations and select the "best" one, but exposing the myth of meritocracy demonstrates that this "colorblind" solution would still be a racialized process.

Colorblindness and meritocracy are therefore fictions that work to obscure racial inequality. Bonilla-Silva (2013) has identified rhetorical strategies used mainly by White people when discussing racial matters that serve to support the fiction of colorblindness. He specifies that "the intentions of individual actors are largely irrelevant" because "grammar and ideologies are learned socially" (125). These rhetorical strategies include "avoidance of racial language to express racial views," "semantic moves … to avoid dangerous discussions or save face," projection, diminutives like "a little bit," and incoherence when expressing taboo opinions (124). Similarly, in her study of "race talk" by teachers and students in a multicultural Los Angeles high school, Mica Pollock found that "colorblindness can often more accurately be described as purposeful silencing of race words" (2), or what she calls "colormuteness." As she watched subjects try to decide "how race *should* matter" in conversation (1, italics original), it became clear that "absence of race talk showed that race mattered anxiously" (45). While part of this anxiety may be attributed to a fear of unwittingly saying something considered racist, Pollock found that teachers and staff avoided race talk "when they were discussing inequitable patterns potentially implicating themselves" (9). Colorblind rhetoric or colormuteness thus not only serves to avoid being "mistaken" for racist when one considers oneself to be "colorblind" but also serves a self-exculpatory function—an unspoken recognition of participation in racism. The rhetoric of colorblindness, then, by its omissions and dodges preserves the status quo of whiteness and white supremacy because their workings go unarticulated and thus unchallenged. Translation studies

scholars have analyzed translation strategies that essentially function as types of colormuteness, obscuring or softening forms of racialization or racism in texts, whether in terms of racist representations (Hayek 2017, Lockard and Dan 2013), racialized dialect (Berthele 2000, Wu and Chang 2008), or racist language (Trupej 2017). The translation of racism and racist discourse will be discussed more in Chapter 5.

Colorblind rhetoric and colormuteness, then, do not actually function to nullify race since, as Bonilla-Silva argues, they amount to "racism without racial epithets" (2013 125). What is actually being willfully unseen and unspoken is whiteness. Ruth Frankenberg gives a helpful definition of this term:

> whiteness refers to a set of locations that are historically, socially, politically, and culturally produced and, moreover, are intrinsically linked to unfolding relations of domination. Naming "whiteness" displaces it from the unmarked, unnamed status that is itself an effect of its dominance. Among the effects on white people of both race privilege and of the dominance of whiteness are their seeming normativity, their structured invisibility. This normativity is, however, unevenly effective. (6)

Importantly for the Gorman controversy, Gloria Wekker argues that in the Netherlands, too, "whiteness is not acknowledged as a racialized/ethnicized positioning at all. Whiteness is generally seen as so ordinary … so devoid of meaning" (2). This allows the Dutch to see themselves as a just, colorblind nation and to reject the analytic of race as inappropriate in the European context, an imposition of US racial frameworks (2, 4–5). What these two definitions of whiteness highlight is the way whiteness passes as the universal rather than a racialized position by going unspoken.

These same characteristics of whiteness feature in scholarly and cultural production. Even in fields devoted to challenging the white heteropatriarchy, like feminist and queer studies, whiteness itself often goes unexamined by White theorists. The abstract subject of white feminist and queer studies is actually a racialized white subjectivity; when people of color do appear in these theorizations, it is as bodies and not as theorizing subjects (Homans 1994, Johnson 2001). Such theorizations contribute to the reification of whiteness as the universal and other races as the particular. In the field of literature, for example, Toni Morrison frequently met with characterization of her work as somehow provincial because she wrote about Black people. In one interview she was asked, "Wouldn't you rather be known as a great exponent of literature rather than as an African American writer?" (Schappell and Lacour 82). The answer Morrison gives is significant:

> It's very important to me that my work be African American; if it assimilates into a different or larger pool, so much the better. But I shouldn't be

> asked to do that. Joyce is not asked to do that. Tolstoy is not. I mean, they can all be Russian, French, Irish or Catholic, they write out of where they come from, and I do too. (Schappell and Lacour 82, italics original)

Rather than arguing that Black literature "is universal" too, Morrison points to the way that all writers write from a provincialized position—some (White writers) are taken as universal, however, and others (writers of color) are not. Morrison both exposes the provinciality of whiteness and refuses to aspire to the "universal." "Colorblindness" as an ideal in the present—as opposed to in a future in which racial justice has actually been achieved—is largely expressed by White people, because it actually functions to maintain the status quo, to prevent the future of racial justice.

When White people ascribing to colorblindness disavow seeing color, they disavow whiteness in the abstract but not the advantages that come with it. Race scholars have described these advantages in various ways, though they are generally referred to as white privilege. Peggy McIntosh (1989), for example, uses the frame of an "invisible backpack" of "unearned entitlement[s]," "unearned advantage[s]," and "conferred dominance" (12); Cheryl I. Harris (1993) explores the idea of whiteness as property; and W. E. B. Du Bois (1935) writes of the "public and psychological wage" with which a racist system "compensated" working-class White people for their economic exploitation (700). The advantages that White people receive from white privilege give them what George Lipsitz calls a "possessive investment in whiteness," a term that functions on a variety of levels. First, White people invest by "expending time and energy on the creation of whiteness …. [d]espite frequent and intense disavowal that whiteness means anything to [them]" (viii). This also allows them to possess material advantages in financial and social capital, resulting in White people being possessed by "the artificial construction of whiteness" for the possessions it affords them (viii). Chapter 2 elaborates on the types of economic, human, social, intellectual, and symbolic capital that privilege White people in entering the fields of literary translation and translation studies.

Relating white privilege back to the idea of false meritocracy, on the material level, white privilege allows White translators and scholars to accrue experiences traditionally associated with merit—higher education, study abroad, unpaid internships, coaching, and mentorship—while on the psychological level, white privilege enables White translators and scholars to be seen as, and see themselves as, meritorious, deserving of jobs, contracts, grants, publications, etc. Partly, this is due to merit being judged according to criteria shaped by Western norms associated with whiteness, such as scholarly writing in a "standard" European language (hooks 1994, Jordan 1972, Young 2010) and "empirical" evidence (Prescod-Weinstein 2019, Smith 1999) or favoring "mastery" of the target language for a fluent translation (Venuti

1995) directed, I argue, at an imagined bourgeois White audience over other considerations, such as proficiency in the source language or familiarity with the culture and politics, broadly defined, of the source culture.

The axiom often professed by experienced translators and scholars of translation that translators should work into their first language relates to the norm of "fluent" translation (Dziuroz 2017, Petrova 2020). In the Anglophone market, this preference tends to exclude groups with high numbers of people of color: heritage speakers of other languages, immigrants whose first language is not English, non-US/UK-standard-English speakers, and translators living outside Anglophone-majority nations translating from their first language into English. Or, as will be discussed in Chapter 1, it casts the non-first-language-English-speaker in the role of "bridge" translator: a translator who prepares a "literal" translation of a text from their first language for a first-language-English speaker without fluency in the source language to "translate" into fluid English with their "creativity" and "mastery" of English (Kareem 2021). Because bridge translation frequently occurs in non-European languages not studied as widely in Anglophone-majority nations, bridge translation reiterates the hierarchies of anthropological study where the racialized bridge translator serves as "native informant." Due to these merit criteria, racialized translators find themselves in a double bind: their non-US/UK-standard varieties of English are denigrated, but even when they "master" standard English, implicit or explicit biases mean they are still seen as less meritorious. In the emerging field of raciolinguistics, for example, Nelson Flores and Jonathan Rosa (2015) have illustrated how racialized long-term English learners and Standard English learners are routinely perceived as being "deficient" in language fluency despite abiding by the norms of so-called "appropriateness."

The "fluent native speaker" bias certainly occurred in the Gorman translation where Rijneveld was selected despite not having facility with English and not being a spoken word poet. While in this case, cynical capitalism seems to have been a key factor—Rijneveld was a highly recognized writer, having just won the International Booker Prize the previous year—White translators generally benefit from being viewed as qualified, even for texts by authors from non-White-majority cultures with which they have no prior experience. An infamous example comes from the translation of Haitian literature into English, where in an interview, French-language translator Jeanine Herman describes her path to translating a contemporary Haitian novel:

> I came to *Savage Seasons* through Sophie Schiavo, who was at the French Publishers Agency at the time. She encouraged me to take it on… But I didn't know much about the political situation in Haiti, I had not heard of the Haitian classics… I was not at all familiar with Haitian culture or literature…. (Dize 2017 np)

The problem of Herman's qualifications becomes more apparent later when the interviewer Nathan Dize queries her use of the word "voodoo" in the English translation rather than "Vodou," as the former perpetuates racist stereotypes about Haitian primitivism while the latter is the term preferred by Haitians writing in English. Herman notes that while she and the editor discussed at length how to translate the word, they ultimately opted for "voodoo" because it "seemed more accessible" and Herman "thought *voodoo priestess* had a nice ring to it, something almost Baudelairean about it" (np, italics original). That Baudelaire would be the preferred reference point for the translation of a contemporary Haitian novel speaks volumes about the way white frames can shape translation.

In addition to the white privilege of being considered qualified for projects for which they may not be the most appropriate translator, White translators can accrue cultural capital for being a "good White person" by contributing to raising the visibility of an underrepresented racial minority literature. When White translators, publishers, editors, and scholars seek to "help" people of color without challenging white supremacist power structures, however, the result can tend toward white saviorism[15] and actually perpetuate racism, as Herman's "voodoo" translation does. While white saviors—such as popular representations of White teachers or humanitarian aid workers—receive praise for what is ultimately a paternalistic relationship toward racialized others, people of color who directly challenge the structures of such relationships themselves experience retaliation (Ahmed 2021, Yancy 2018). When whiteness is "threatened"—for example by the influx of immigrants from Central and South America into the US and from Africa and Southwest Asia into Europe—there is a deepened reinvestment in whiteness. In spite of their investment in whiteness, most White people do not wish to consider themselves as participating in racism or benefitting from whiteness. Thus, while they shore up whiteness, they also try to defend their self-image as anti-racist when confronted with "racial stress," a phenomenon that Robin DiAngelo has termed "white fragility": "Though white fragility is triggered by discomfort and anxiety, it is born of superiority and entitlement. White fragility is not a weakness per se. In fact, it is a powerful means of white racial control and the protection of white advantage" (2). The Gorman controversy is a classic case of white fragility—an "accusation" of racial inequality met with a self-defensive table-turning where the person of color is accused of "racist" identity politics for not practicing colorblindness, a move that ultimately holds the line of whiteness and its advantages. As scholars like Lipsitz and DiAngelo show, however, in moves like these, whiteness *is* an identity politics, at least in the sense that identity forms the basis for action. Identity politics, and its misappropriation, in translation will be discussed at length in Chapter 3.

While in the Gorman case, many commentators erected a straw-man argument where Deul was supposedly arguing that only a Black person can translate a Black poet, critical race studies and anti-racist activism actually provide frameworks for the participation of White people in racial justice. Allyship as a concept (Carlson et al. 2020), for example, calls on White people to amplify the perspectives of people of color and particularly to focus their efforts on confronting other White people. In the interview on Haitian literature cited above, Dize, the interviewer and a translator of Haitian literature himself, who is also White, functions as an ally by challenging Herman's choice of the word "voodoo," explaining in a preface to the interview the historical and cultural context that reveals how it perpetuates racism, and including further resources in a bibliography (np). Elsewhere I have written about the potential for White women translators to serve as allies for women of color authors in a way that avoids white saviorism (Tachtiris 2020). Some current forms of translation advocacy, however, sit uneasily with the framework of allyship, which calls on allies to center the voices of people of color and divest themselves from power and privilege. The frequent emphasis in translation studies and literary translation on the visibility of the translator, such as in #namethetranslator and #translatorsoncovers (of books), which insist on recognition of the translator as the "author" of the translation, becomes more fraught when the translator is White and the author is a person of color. As Venuti (1998) warns, demands that translators hold the copyright to their work should also avoid the Romantic frame of authorship that relies on the discourse of individual genius and creates a proprietary relationship with the translation, another problematic instance if the White translator "owns" the translated work of an author of color. The relationship between copyright and white supremacy is explored in Chapter 2. White ally translators and translation studies scholars will have to engage more deeply with critical race studies and racial justice activism in order to interrogate the way whiteness structures their work.

While translation studies has a history of considering the potential for activism in translation (Baker 2006, Gould and Tahmasebian 2020, Tymoczko 2007, 2010), frameworks arising from anti-racist activism and scholarship have been underutilized in outlining these arguments. These frameworks include identity politics (Alcoff et al. 2006, Combahee River Collective 1977), intersectionality (Cho et al. 2013, Crenshaw 1991), reparation(s) (Bandia 2008, Coates 2014), abolition (Davis et al. 2022, Gilmore 2022), and relatedly, decolonization (Cusicanqui 2012, Tuck and Yang 2012). They generally share a radical vision of transformative racial justice as opposed to reformist models. Critical race studies scholars and racial justice activists also express suspicion about institutionalized DEI (diversity, equity, and inclusion) initiatives and what has become a sort of anti-racism industry, including diversity trainings and anti-racist self-help books such as Ijeoma Oluo's *So You Want*

to Talk About Race (2018), Kendi's *How to be an Antiracist* (2019), and Layla F. Saad's *Me and White Supremacy* (2020). While these may have their role in anti-racism, institutionalized DEI tends to maintain the institution's racist structures while "self-help" anti-racism can devolve into solipsistic self-reflection without direct action. This book does not simply argue for more racial diversity in translation—"diverse" scholars, educators, translators, publishers, texts, research topics, etc.—where racial diversity amounts to assimilation into existing racist structures, not unlike domesticating translation strategies. Rather, I follow the work of radical racial justice intellectuals and activists, particularly radical Black feminists, to argue that translation's reckoning with race must involve pervasive transformation—of translation theory and practice and the structures of research, education, and publishing in which they operate—and in conjunction with work against sexism, heterosexism, transphobia, ableism, imperialism, and capitalism. The arguments of this book are perhaps sometimes utopian, such as the call in Chapter 2 for the abolition of intellectual property, but as Kelley (2002) maintains, "what we are against tends to take precedence over what we are for" and instead imagination and dreaming are essential to producing "cognitive maps of the future" (10). These dreams should be guided primarily, as the work of this book is, by intellectuals, activists, and translators of color.

Anti-racist theory and practice of translation also have a role to play in critical race studies and anti-racist activism, as discussed in Chapter 4. Just as Western translation studies has dominated the field, US critical race studies with US frameworks of understanding race and racism have similarly come to overshadow global writing and thinking about race and racism, despite early and ongoing contributions to fields like Black and ethnic studies from the Caribbean and South America. As Vrushali Patil (2013) argues in her assessment of intersectionality as a critical approach, it tends to leave out the transnational as an axis of analysis even while it insists on a multiple-axis analysis that simultaneously includes race, gender, sexuality, class, etc. At the most basic level, translation can facilitate dialogue among critical race studies and anti-racist movements around the globe.[16] This work is especially vital for literature, scholarship, and activist texts written in non-European languages, and it would allow for the circulation of texts written by people about communities and contexts of which they are a part, rather than privileging the perspective of White Western writers and researchers. The goal of translating more texts about race and/or by people of color extends beyond mere informational exchange, however. An anti-racist translation practice would highlight rather than domesticate styles, genres, poetics, methodologies, and epistemologies marginalized and denigrated by white supremacist norms, especially in the case of oral literature, narratives, and knowledge, which white imperialism characterized as evidence of a lack of "civilization." But, as feminist, postcolonial, and queer translation studies

has demonstrated, translation should not be considered an inherent good in itself, a movement of texts that somehow idealistically transcends difference, especially differences in power.

It is translation studies' attention to difference and power when exploring what happens when moving between languages and cultures that is particularly valuable to critical race studies. As a social construct, race is partly created in and through language—how we talk about race makes it what it "is"—and reciprocally, race comes to permeate language. As Morrison argues, "there is no escape from racially inflected language" (1993 13). When moving between languages in the translation of texts related to race, the translator works not only across words but also across different histories of colonialism and enslavement, different experiences of different identities, different ways of seeing oneself and being seen by the world. Even "equivalent" words like "b/Black" and "n/Noir" will have different connotations and usages dependent on different histories of self-empowerment and denigration. It is the fissures between these words, cultures, histories—what does not transfer easily, not what is "lost" but what remains, the remainder (Venuti 1998)—that undermines the linguistic foundation on which racism is built, gives the lie to any "intrinsic" notion of race. The difficulty in translating race evidences Omi and Winant's characterization of racial identity as a "slippery thing" (3). As a generative practice, translation allows not only for a deconstruction of race but also for new ways of imagining writing about race, imagining new racial futures. "Since language *is* community, if the cognitive ecology of a language is altered, so is the community," Morrison writes (1997 8, italics original). Though words are bound to the meanings society attaches to them, translation is a means to push and pull on the ties of language to create new bonds between us.

In the chapters that follow, I detail some of the ways whiteness and white supremacy have shaped the norms of translation studies and literary translation in the West, and I point toward possibilities for a more anti-racist translation theory and practice.

From Slavish Translation to Bridge Translation: Translation and/as Racialization

Taking a long-historical view, this chapter traces how modern ideas about translation in the West developed alongside the consolidation of modern ideas about race and racialization. While translators of the Romantic era in Europe came to see imagination as a key component of literary translation, the "scientific" racism of the day—used to justify colonization and enslavement—posited that people racialized as Other lacked the capacity for imagination. Out of racist beliefs but also a need to control populations when they could not speak their languages, Europeans both expected

and demanded those they colonized and enslaved to produce literal translations. This chapter shows how the disparaging term "slavish translation" for "overly" literal translation reveals persistent ideas in the West not only about who translates and how but about who translates how. These attitudes endure today in the practice of bridge translation, in which a literal translation is prepared by a source-language speaker, frequently a person of color, for a usually White poet or author to shape it into a literary text with their imaginative "creative genius."

Translation and Racial Capitalism

Using the lens of racial capitalism, this chapter outlines how the inequitable distribution of forms of capital—including economic, cultural, symbolic, social, and intellectual capital—works to exclude translators of color from the literary publishing industry, specifically in the United States and the United Kingdom. Tracing how this inequitable distribution of capital is reproduced at every step along the way toward publishing careers and the literary translation profession in particular, the chapter exposes the lack of racial diversity in the profession as a systemic problem requiring radical change, especially because under the current structure, whiteness functions as a type of capital that cannot be fully redistributed. The end of the chapter focuses on intellectual capital through copyright, bringing together scholarship from translation studies, critical race studies, and intellectual property studies to show how current copyright law relies upon a logic of authorship and ownership rooted in white supremacist ideas about who is capable of producing "original" work. Transformative racial justice in the literary translation profession will thus require rejecting the racial capitalist logic of ownership and authorship and abandoning intellectual property.

Beyond Racial "Diversity": Identity Politics in Translation

This chapter looks at the controversy around the translation of Amanda Gorman's poem for the US presidential inauguration through the lens of identity politics as originally articulated in the 1970s by the Combahee River Collective, a group of Black radical feminists. The Right and Left alike have criticized a distorted sense of identity politics as a divisive and essentializing concept, but for the women of Combahee, identity is a position from which to launch a politics in solidarity with other marginalized groups rather than a dogmatically policed social category. With this in mind, this chapter reevaluates the public call for a Black woman spoken word poet to translate Gorman's poem into Dutch neither as strict identity matching nor as a simple opportunity for more "diverse" translations but as part of a situated politics in which a Black translator might not only be a different translator but also

translate differently. The chapter presents examples of work by Black women translators who enact identity politics in their practice, demonstrating how it can lead to coalitional solidarity in support of racial justice as opposed to a liberal humanist vision of "diversity" that reproduces the norms of white supremacy.

Translation in Critical Race Studies

While other chapters call for more engagement in translation studies with critical race studies, this chapter argues for more incorporation of translation and translation studies into critical race studies. As with Western academia in general, critical race studies is dominated by English-language scholarship, and its frameworks for understanding race are relatively US-centric. Translation is an important means by which to bring other international perspectives on race into the discipline, but translation studies also demonstrates how the process of translation can still manipulate texts into Western norms of academic discourse. More reflexivity about translation in critical race studies would call attention to translation's role in shaping knowledge-production and also provide a means for exploring the disjunctures between different linguistic and cultural constructions of race in generative ways. Following the work of Brent Hayes Edwards, the last part of the chapter looks at these disjunctures through translations of words designating racial blackness between French and English in texts by Frantz Fanon and Achille Mbembe. Translation emerges as a key site at which racial meanings are negotiated.

Translating Racism

While maintaining that there can be no easy answers about which to follow, Chapter 5 outlines different strategies for translating instances of racism in the source text. Ultimately, the choices made by the translator will depend not on the intent of the author but on the potential impact of the racism in the text as well as on the function and audience envisioned for the translation. In the first strategy discussed, translators may remove or soften racist discourse in the interest of harm reduction, a move supported by the problematization in translation studies of the sacrosanct nature of the original. In some cases, though, this strategy may function as a type of whitewashing that obscures how racism operates in society. The translator may instead choose to leave racist discourse in a text, either to give information about the racial ideology of a person or group in a time period or cultural milieu or because it functions in the text as a critique of racism. However, confronted with a text rife with racist discourse, the translator should ask whose and what interests would be served by translating it and consider the strategy

of de-platforming since canons are no more sacrosanct than originals and always shift over time.

This book does not seek to be the definitive word on translation and race; indeed, I hope that we will soon see a burgeoning of translation studies scholarship directly addressing issues of race as well as an increasing number of published translations from translators of color. This book inevitably suffers from some of the critiques that it raises: heavy reliance on a US anti-racist framework and the Black-White binary, since my background is primarily in Afro-diasporic literatures. We need more translations of translation scholarship; there is already a growing body of translation scholarship around race in Brazil that has had unfortunately limited wider impact due to most of it only being available in Portuguese.[17] If even a European language has trouble circulating in the West, what other voices are being excluded by the global dominance of English? Translation studies as a field and the practice and publishing of literary translations in the West cannot assume a wholly anti-racist stance until they reckon with their own white supremacist origins and the ways they continue to uphold racism and white supremacy, not only through their theories, frameworks, and practices but also through their place in an exclusionary academy and publishing industry. Taking up the question of race requires a fundamental re-evaluation of the ideologies and structures in which translation is rooted. More than anything, this book looks forward to a future for translation that we only tentatively imagine—conditioned as we are by the norms of heteropatriarchy, capitalism, and white supremacy—and that needs to be part of larger feminist, queer, anti-capitalist, and anti-racist struggles.

Notes

1 For a detailed discussion of decisions around racial terminology and capitalization in this book, which varies according to chapter, see the Preface. Briefly, in this Introduction, I capitalize both Black and White when referring to people to call attention to the unacknowledged ways that whiteness functions as a category that has shaped translation norms.

2 Because of the nature of the ALTA survey targeting questions of diversity and inclusivity, it is also possible that translators of color may have disproportionately responded, actually giving an inflated sense of the racial diversity of the literary translation profession into English.

3 The Open Letter/*Publishers Weekly* database is one of the best sources for obtaining more granular data for published literary translations, but its scope and accuracy are still limited. The database covers only translations published or distributed in the United States, and does not include retranslations of texts that have already been published in English translation previously. While some entries are added from publishers' catalogs, review copies, and *Publishers Weekly* reviews, the database also relies on users (especially publishers, editors, and translators) adding entries through an online form. Data entry is thus not systematized and must be considered incomplete.

4 See, for example, Pastor and Hondagneu-Sotelo (2021), Vargas (2015), Rodriguez et al. (2013).
5 I have tried to be as conscientious as possible in determining racial demographics of translators and authors, but I claim any errors as mine alone.
6 I have excluded graphic novels and manga from the data since these have a different publishing ecosystem, which frequently makes use of self-publications and fan translations. No distinction was made between "literary" and "genre" (detective, science fiction, fantasy, etc.) fiction, however.
7 Tiang identifies his parents' heritage as Malaysian Chinese and Sri Lankan Tamil (Tiang 2021).
8 One notable omission reinforces the incomplete nature of the database: Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o's self-translation from Gĩkũyũ of *The Perfect Nine* (2020) was not listed at the time of writing. I have since submitted an entry through the online form.
9 Interestingly, one of the texts explicitly addresses the question of race: Lin Shu's "Paratexts to *A Record of the Black Slaves' Plea to Heaven*" (translated by R. David Arkush, Leo O. Lee, and Michael Gibbs Hill). Lin Shu here discusses his translation of Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*.
10 See, for example, Theodore W. Allen's *The Invention of the White Race* (1994, 1997), Noel Ignatiev's *How the Irish Became White* (1995), Nell Irvin Painter's *The History of White People* (2010).
11 Some of the foundational book-length studies bringing together postcolonial studies with translation studies came from scholars not primarily or not only trained in translation studies: Vicente L. Rafael's *Contracting Colonialism: Translation and Christian Conversion in Tagalog Society Under Early Spanish Rule* (Duke University Press, 1988), Eric Cheyfitz's *The Poetics of Imperialism: Translation and Colonization from* The Tempest *to* Tarzan (Oxford University Press, 1991), and Tejaswini Niranjana's *Siting Translation: History, Post-Structuralism, and the Colonial Context* (University of California Press,1992). Postcolonial translation studies was consolidated some years later in texts such as *Postcolonial Translation: Theory and Practice* (Routledge, 1999), edited by Susan Bassnett and Harish Trivedi, Maria Tymoczko's *Translation in a Postcolonial Context: Early Irish Literature in English Translation* (Routledge, 1999), and *Changing the Terms: Translating in the Postcolonial Era* (University of Ottawa Press, 2000) edited by Sherry Simon and Paul St-Pierre. It is worth noting that most of the specifically translation studies scholars directing these works are White.

    In feminist translation studies, the most well-known early volumes were *Gender in Translation: Cultural Identity and the Politics of Transmission* (Routledge, 1996) by Sherry Simon and *Translation and Gender: Translating in the 'Era of Feminism'* (University of Ottawa Press, 1997) by Luise von Flotow. Later collections include *Translating Women* (University of Ottawa Press, 2011), edited by von Flotow, *Feminist Translation Studies: Local and Transnational Perspectives* (Routledge, 2017), edited by Olga Castro and Emek Ergun, and *The Routledge Handbook of Translation, Feminism and Gender* (Routledge, 2020), edited by von Flotow and Hala Kamal.
12 *Re-Engendering Translation: Transcultural Practice, Gender/Sexuality and the Politics of Alterity*, edited by Christopher Larkosh, led the pack (St. Jerome Publishing, 2011), followed by *Queer in Translation* (Routledge, 2017), edited by B. J. Epstein and Robert Gillett, *Queering Translation, Translating the Queer: Theory, Practice, Activism* (Routledge, 2018), edited by Brian James Baer and Klaus Kaindl, and *Queer Theory and Translation Studies: Language, Politics, Desire* (Routledge, 2020) by Baer.
13 New collections of essays on translation from a decolonial perspective have appeared in the last two years, notably outside the academy. These include *Violent Phenomena: 21 Essays on Translation* (Tilted Axis, 2022), edited by Khavita

Bhanot and Jeremy Tiang, and *River in an Ocean: Essays on Translation* (trace press, 2023), edited by Nuzhat Abbas. *Kitchen Table Translation: An Aster(ix) Anthology* (Blue Sketch Press, 2017), edited by Madhu H. Kaza, can be considered a precursor to these volumes.

14 Among those of particular note, especially in terms of earlier work, are Lavoie (2005), Taronna (2011), Augusto (2014), Perry et al. (2018), and Glover (2019).

15 See Anita Gill's "Introducing *The White Savior Review*" (2016) for a satirical take on white saviorism in publishing.

16 In addition to Keene, see, for example, Taronna (2011), Ofosu-Somuah and Whitney (2020), and the Letters for Black Lives project of the Asian American Writers Workshop (Choudhury et al. 2020).

17 See, for example, work by Cibele de Guadelupe Sousa Araújo, Luciana de Mesquita Silva, and Dennys Silva-Reis, including the editing of a special issue (27.1) of *Revista Ártemis* dedicated to translation and Black feminisms (January 2019), a special issue (13) of *Translatio* devoted to translation and Black diasporas (2017), and a special issue (16) of *Cadernos de Literatura em Tradução* on Negritude and translation (2016).

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1

FROM SLAVISH TRANSLATION TO BRIDGE TRANSLATION

Translation and/as Racialization

> That servile path thou nobly dost decline
> Of tracing word by word and line by line.
> Those are the laboured births of slavish brains,
> Not the effects of poetry, but pains
>
> *John Denham "To Sir Richard Fanshaw Upon His Translation of Pastor Fido" (1648)*

The second edition of the *Oxford English Dictionary* places the first written appearances of the word slavish in English in the 1500s, when it could be used to mean "of, belonging to, or characteristic of, a slave; befitting a slave; servile, abject" (definition 1), "having the character (or status) of slaves; of a submissive, unmanly disposition" (definition 2), "vile, mean, base, ignoble" (definition 3), or "implying or involving slavery" (definition 4). The first example for definition 5, however—"servilely imitative; lacking originality or independence"—comes from 1753, from N. Torriano M.D.'s translation of Dr. Chomel's *An Historical Dissertation on a particular Species of Gangrenous Sore Throat, which Reigned the last Year amongst young Children at Paris*.[1] Torriano explains that he translated the text out of a sense of "duty, and for the publick good; and I hope this Intention will make it acceptable to those who cannot read it in its *original Beauty*" (ix, italics original). At the end of Chomel's text, Torriano notes: "I have not confined myself to a slavish and literal one [that is, translation]" (87). As Torriano's translation of Chomel's 1749 dissertation was published in 1753, he wrote it around the same time that the transatlantic slave trade—which, like the origins of the word slavish, also began in the 1500s—started to peak in the 1750s, when about 70,000 people per year were forcibly embarked on slaving ships.

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In this chapter, I argue that Torriano's describing a "literal" translation as "slavish"—a term which later became a commonplace—does not simply represent a general concept of slavery. Rather, "modern" ideas about translation in the West developed alongside the consolidation of modern ideas about race and racialization, and thus should be examined in this framework. Analyzing discourses of race and racialization in translation (both as a practice and field of knowledge) gives insights into persistent ideas in the West not only about who translates and how but about *who translates how*. The gendered nature of translation discourse has been well established in feminist translation studies, most notably in Lori Chamberlain's foundational essay "Gender and the Metaphorics of Translation" (1988). Chamberlain demonstrates how ways of speaking about translation—such as the axiom *les belles infidèles*, where beautiful translations, like beautiful women, are figured as unfaithful—cast translation as a feminized activity: the original is associated with generative male genius whereas the translation counts as feminized reproductive rather than productive labor. My goal here is not to formulate translation as a racialized activity, with the original as the white author and the translator as the racialized Other, but rather to delineate the process by which certain types of translation—specifically here, "literal" translation—have taken on a racialized aspect.[2]

While often not framed explicitly in terms of race, postcolonial translation studies has illustrated the many ways that Europeans used translation in the colonization of peoples racialized as other than white. In addition to the actual practice of translation helping to run the machinery of colonization, translation served as one of the main imperialist tools for the metaphorical translation of peoples into the logic of the West. Tejaswini Niranjana, for example, in *Siting Translation* (1992) depicts the translation of the subcontinental colonized subject into the Anglicized Indian through English education. In the *Poetics of Imperialism* (1991), Eric Cheyfitz details the translation of the Native American into the "proper" frameworks of European civility and property, dispossessing them of their land. Translation also functions as a process of racialization, a dialectical construction of white Europe and the racialized Other that occurs in and through language. Joshua M. Price, for example, describes the composition of bilingual dictionaries by Spanish missionaries as an instance where "processes of racialization went beyond skin color and extended to the *racialization of languages* themselves, as well as the racialization of *knowledge* and *religion*" (6, italics original). It is this process of translation as racialization that results in La Malinche, who belonged to one of many Indigenous groups in what became Mexico, being figured as a "race traitor" for her role as interpreter for the Spanish conquistador Hernán Cortés; the various Indigenous groups and languages that La Malinche translated—with the help of other mediators in a sort of translation

chain—are subsumed into one racial group set in opposition to the Europeans racialized as white. While postcolonial translation studies has tended to examine Asia and the Americas, in this chapter, I will instead focus mostly on African and black diaspora translators, highlighting the ways white enslavers and colonizers expected and demanded "slavish" translations of them.

It is during the period of the transatlantic slave trade that blackness and slavery are symbolically conflated such that the black slave becomes the quintessential figure of slavery in the West, consolidating around words from various Western European languages derived from the Latin adjective "*nigrum*" for the color black. In the late 1400s and early to mid-1500s, the Portuguese used "*negro*" to refer to anyone thought to belong to an "enslaveable 'race,' regardless of skin color," so that in Brazilian slave inventories, for example, enslaved people might be registered as "*negros da terra*," referring to Indigenous people or "*negros de guiné*," referencing Guinea, i.e. black African people (Sweet 2003 8). According to James H. Sweet,

> in this way, Indian slaves were literally 'blackened' to conform to their social status. … [But] while 'Negro' had some flexibility in its application to people of enslaveable status, *all* peoples from sub-Saharan Africa were considered 'Negroes' and therefore enslaveable. Their color, accentuated by the term 'Negro,' simply became a signifier for their presumed status as slaves. (2003 8–9)

Similarly in Spain,

> Though blackness had long been a reliable indicator of servitude, most of Castile's slaves were Muslim and Caucasian. After the 1460s, the institution of slavery would be considered the preserve of black Africans. Where blackness always had implied slavery in Castile, slavery now implied blackness. (Sweet 1997 155)

Sweet sees in the borrowing of the Iberian word "*negro*" to describe African people by the English, Dutch, German, and French—instead of using existing words from these languages (such as black, *zwart*, *schwarz*, or *noir*)—a borrowing, too, of the conflation of blackness and slavery (2003 20–21). During the French slave trade, for example, as Brent Hayes Edwards outlines,

> there developed an association between *nègre* and *esclave* ('slave') as synonyms, cemented in early dictionaries including Savary's *Dictionnaire universel de commerce* (1723), the work that single-handedly defined the French conception of Africans as a 'race of slaves' in a phrasing copied in almost all the dictionaries of the next two hundred years. (26)

If blackness becomes synonymous with slavishness, then the inverse also holds, and slavery largely becomes equated with blackness in the modern discourse of the West, whether or not this corresponds to the historical fact across time and place of how slavery has operated and continues to operate among different peoples understood, in today's parlance, to be of different races. "Slavish" translation then implies, I argue, a certain type of imagined blackness, and a racialized Other more broadly. Again, this conflation of slavish translation with racialized blackness must be understood within the historical context in which both modern discourses of translation and modern discourses of racialization arose, where "slavery," "blackness," and the norms of translation practice all take on specific meanings. In *Slavery in the Romantic Imagination* (2002), Debbie Lee similarly reasons that when the subject of slavery appears directly or allegorically in works by writers of the Romantic period, it should be seen as a reaction to their historical moment:

> Although many of these writers may seem to be using the terms 'slavery' and 'freedom' in abstract and even universal ways, in the sense that everyone is a slave to something and seeking freedom from it, the terms are, in fact, grounded in the historical specificity of the transatlantic trade and plantation slavery, the stories of which surrounded these writers. (30)

Lee's book makes the case that the concept of imagination that was central to the ideals of Romantic writers is what allows them to imagine themselves in the place of the enslaved Other and express empathy for their plight. But as this chapter aims to show, imagination also, in early modern Western discourse, supposedly sets white Europeans apart from other races, which is key to the racialization of modern translation discourse. The slavish translation lacks imagination.

This chapter first traces the establishment of the norm against "slavish" translation in early modern translation discourse occurring simultaneously with the height of the transatlantic slave trade. Whereas until this period "overly literal" translations had largely been associated with metaphors of *servility*, there emerges a paradoxical metaphorical discourse of *slavery* in texts about translation practice in the mid- to late 1700s. Though translators like John Dryden often describe themselves as unwillingly being "slaves" to the original, they decry at the same time translations that follow the original too closely, and they actually act with a great deal of liberty in their own practice. Translators of the Romantic era come to solve this paradox by using the power of imagination to put themselves in the place of the author through "sympathetic identification," a power they do not, however, attribute to the racialized Other, particularly the black Other, considered, in the hierarchy of "scientific" racism, the least developed race. As the subsequent section of the chapter suggests, a new paradox around slavish translation

arises with enslaved and colonized black translators. Supposedly lacking imagination, these translators should produce an exact, slavish translation of the words of their white masters, but because the colonizers and enslavers cannot independently confirm the accuracy of the translation—as they, by and large, did not learn African languages themselves—an anxiety about the accuracy of these translators develops. The fear of deception makes the demand for slavish translation from the black translator all the stronger, adding to the racialization of slavish translation. This racialization of slavish translation extends to the present day in the form of "bridge" translation, a practice where a frequently racialized "native informant" prepares a literal translation that becomes the fodder for the creative work of the white Western translator—one side of the practice seen as mechanical labor, the other as the work of imagination. This chapter thus calls for a re-evaluation of the norms of translation theory and practice in the West in the light of the white supremacy in which they are historically grounded.

Slavish Translation

While debates about how best to translate have been ongoing since some of the earliest written sources—for example, Augustine and Jerome's debate on "word for word" or "sense for sense" translation—there are nonetheless dominant models in the West. "Literal" translation—or translation that gets called "literal"—has been marginalized in the modern age, even if there are texts within the translation studies canon that call for translating "word for word" in a highly "literal" translation. Most notable are Vladimir Nabokov's reflections on his *Eugene Onegin* translation in which he argues that only literal translation is true translation (1955 134) and that "everything (elegance, euphony, clarity, good taste, modern usage, and even grammar)" should be "sacrificed" to his "ideal of literalism" (1964 x). We are much more likely, however, to read "the prettiest paraphrase" than the "clumsiest literal translation," even if Nabokov prefers the latter (1955 127).

Modern Western norms for translation began to be established in the centuries after the European Middle Ages. Following T.R. Steiner's periodization of translation in Europe, as his focus is England,

> In the Middle Ages and the early Renaissance, there was no theory of translation, literary or any other kind; translation itself could not be defined with certainty. … Lacking any theoretical guide and following rhetoric-school practice in the conversion of foreign texts, the translator was likely to construe literally as long as he could. (7–8)

As more programmatic statements on translation practice subsequently appeared in France and England, their authors tended to move away from

literal renderings (though of course, as during any period, opinions varied). Thus, George Chapman in the preface to his translation of Homer's *Iliad* (1611) writes:

> always conceiving how pedantical and absurd an affectation it is in the interpretation of any author (much more of Homer) to turn him word for word, when … it is the best part of every knowing and judicial interpreter not to follow the number and order of words but the material things themselves, and sentences to weigh diligently, and to clothe and adorn them with words and such a style and form of oration as are most apt for the language into which they are converted. (137)

This type of position filters into the 18th century where, according to Steiner, translators, many of whom were more well known as writers, began to establish "the rules" of translation (27–28) by describing their practice at length in translator prefaces and prescribing best practices for others. These "rules" crystalized around a preference for a more moderate approach, a sort of golden mean between free and literal translation. Steiner, following Samuel Johnson, calls John Dryden the "the lawgiver of English translation" (28), and Dryden's "rules" include a typology of three basic types of translation of which he favors the middle ground: metaphrase (word by word, and line by line); paraphrase (or what he calls "Translation with latitude"); and Imitation ("where the Translator (if he has not lost that Name) assumes the liberty not only to vary from the words and sence, but to forsake them both as he sees occasion") ("Three Types" 172).

Similarly, in the French context, in Étienne Dolet's *La manière de bien traduire d'une langue en aultre* from 1540, the third of his five main points indicates that "one must not be servile [*il ne fault pas asseruir*] to the point of rendering word for word. … Here I do not want to overlook the folly of some translators who submit to servitude in lieu of liberty [*au lieu de liberté se submettent à seruitude*]" (96). Conflating word-for-word translation with servility, as Dolet does here, appears as a common and lasting trope in discourse about translation. For example, writing in the 18th century, Charles Batteux (1747–1748) affirms, "It is also agreed that a translation ought exactly to express the original that it should neither be too free nor too servile" (195), and Anne Dacier (1699) argues against "servile translation" that "becomes unfaithful through too scrupulous a faithfulness; for it loses the spirit to preserve the latter, which is the work of a cold and barren genius" (189).[3]

Yet while translators of the early modern period denounced servility, they sometimes framed themselves as being servants or even slaves to their texts and authors. This arises as an inevitable part of the translation process because the translator is forced to follow the text at hand: the author is a master; the translator, a slave. Etienne Pasquier expresses these sentiments in a 1576 letter:

> The translator is a slave [*Le traducteur comme un esclave*]; he wracks his brains to follow the footprints of the author he is translating, devotes his life to it, and employs every graceful turn of phrase with currency among his peers, in order to conform as closely as possible to the meaning of the other. (112)

The metaphor of following in the master's footsteps reappears in Nicolas Perrot d'Ablancourt's preface to his translation of Tacitus (1640): "Everywhere else I have followed him step by step, and rather as a slave than as a companion [*plutost en esclave qu'en compagnon*]" (32). In both these cases, then, the author blazes a *new* trail and the translator only follows along faithfully on ground that has already been trodden, and this idea of *newness*—of invention, originality, creativity—will become key to the racialized sense of slavish translation. Dryden, Steiner's "lawgiver," draws on the idea of invention as he elaborates on the slave metaphor at great length, and in so doing, reveals what he sees as the main problems of being a translator, especially as regards the translator's obligations to both author and reader (1697):

> But slaves we are, and labour on another man's plantation; we dress the vineyard, but the wine is the owner's: if the soil be sometimes barren, then we are sure of being scourged: if it be fruitful, and our care succeeds, we are not thanked; for the proud reader will only say, the poor drudge has done his duty. … He who invents is master of his thoughts and words; the wretched translator has no such privilege … ("Dedication" 73)

The "wretched" translator here is compelled to "make [the author's] sense intelligible"—is *bound to* the author's sense—even if that means a less aesthetically pleasing text where the translator "untune[s] our own verses" (73). When the reader enjoys the translation, then, the author receives the praise, and when the reader does not enjoy it, the translator receives the blame, even though it was the author's textual "soil" that was "barren" to begin with. Here, the translator as slave is fettered to the meaning of the source text, and yet in Dryden's actual practice, he takes plenty of liberties in order to produce a fruitful translation.

While setting out the rules of translation, translators of this period frequently broke them, making themselves far from slaves to the original. At the end of the translation preface in which Dryden lays out his typology of translation and recommends the middle ground of paraphrase, for example, he admits, "For my own part I am ready to acknowledge that I have transgress'd the Rules which I have given; and taken more liberty than a just Translation will allow" ("Three Types" 174). Similarly, after saying he has followed Tacitus "rather as a slave," d'Ablancourt lists the many freedoms he has taken with the text; he must "take heed that an Author's grace not

be lost through too much scrupulousness, and that the fear of being unfaithful to him in some one thing not result in infidelity to the whole" (32). For d'Ablancourt, this includes using "bold" phrases and adding or removing things so that "the best translations seem to be the least faithful" (32). Thus, even as the translators of the period compare themselves to slaves, they simultaneously reject the notion in favor of freer translation, which allows them to make use of their own creativity and genius. "Wherever you turn in the realm of the arts," Jean le Rond d'Alembert writes in 1758, "you will see mediocrity laying down the law and genius stooping to obey. Genius is a sovereign imprisoned by slaves [*le génie … est un souverain emprisonné par des esclaves*]" (106).

The emphasis on individual genius is what, in the course of modern European discourse on translation, ultimately frees the translator from what Susan Bassnett calls the "legacy of the 'servant-translator'" (3). "With Romanticism," Bassnett states, "came a stress on the vitalist function of the imagination … With the affirmation of individualism came the notion of the freedom of the creative force" (64). This extended to translation, as Bassnett identifies one tendency during this time for the "translator [to be] seen as a creative genius in his own right, in touch with the genius of the original and enriching the literature and language into which he is translating" (65). Steiner, however, places the importance of the imagination to translation earlier, in the period of Dryden (49–60). With a cult of originality emerging in the 18th century, translators and their critics faced the problem of how to reconcile it with the practice of translation. One result was the preference for translators who were also writers themselves and more generally, in the words of Alexander Fraser Tytler and others of the period, a "genius akin" to the authors of the texts they were translating (cited in Steiner 53). This led to the concept—not systematized at the time, Steiner argues, but still a precursor to Romantic ideals—that the translator achieves a sort of "sympathetic identification" with the author, which comes through the power, notably, of imagination rather than study: "The imagination aspires to genius; sympathy flows to kindred spirits" (Steiner 60). It is this capacity for imagination that puts the translator in the author's place, ironically both binding translator closely to author and giving license to the translator's creative freedom.

This, I argue, becomes a recurrent feature in writing about translation throughout the modern era to today: a profession of fidelity while engaging in a highly creative and transformative process. This fits with Douglas Robinson's assertion that "the translator is expected to give the impression of slavishness and hide whatever creativity is required to achieve that impression" (2015 278). The translation that reads "fluently," which Lawrence Venuti (1995) has notably named as the dominant model of literary translation in the contemporary US/UK market, fits with this characterization of creativity hiding in plain sight. In order to achieve a translation whose translatedness

passes imperceptibly to receiving culture readers, translators must actually engage in highly creative solutions to manage differences between the source and receiving languages and cultures. Such translations, Venuti argues, read as if they were "originals," which recalls the Romantic ideal in which the translator usurps the place of the author through the power of imagination so that the translation is imbued with originality.[4] Just as Dryden and his contemporaries bemoaned being slaves to the text while at the same time exerting their influence heavily upon it, present-day translators, readers, and reviewers claim to value vague notions of "faithfulness," but criticize "too much" faithfulness as exhibiting a lack of creativity that merits the derogatory evaluation of "slavishness." Joyelle McSweeney expounds on the current market preference for this type of translation:

> Reading contemporary reviews of translation, one concludes that translation must decide what its appeal will be, and that it has two options—masterful or slavish. See, for example, Kathryn Harrison on Lydia Davis's translation of *Madame Bovary*: "Faithful to the style of the original, but not to the point of slavishness, Davis's effort is transparent—the reader never senses her presence. For *Madame Bovary*, hers is the level of mastery required." … This level of mastery, then, is self-mastery. Also known as scrupulosity, good behavior, also known as taste. Because the best taste is that which cannot be noticed. It cannot be detected. It is merely—exactly—what is "required." Not a slavish display of slavishness, Topsy, we're too civilized for that; that would be a caricature of power relations. (109–110)

McSweeney's invocation here of Topsy from *Uncle Tom's Cabin* clearly references the racialized dimension of slavish translation and the idea that "masterful," "tasteful" translation is a sign of "civilization," read: white, Western civilization. The hallmark of "civilized" translation in the West, then, is vaguely "faithful" but never "slavish," that is, literal—the work of a mind incapable of imagination.

It is perhaps not surprising, then, that modern translation discourse attempts to trace the rejection of "slavish" translation to the foundations of Western civilization: classical Greece and Rome. The chapter "History of Translation Theory" in Bassnett's *Translation Studies*, for example, gives a translation of Horace's *Ars poetica* from Penguin's *Classical Literary Criticism* that reads: "A theme that is familiar can be made your own property so long as you do not waste your time on a hackneyed treatment, nor should you try to render your original word for word like a slavish translator" (44). However, the particular *slavishness* of this type of word-for-word translation appears to be an anachronistic insertion by the translator, T.S. Dorsch. The Latin reads "*reddere fidus interpres*." As a counterexample translation—perhaps a more "literal" one?—the version on the Poetry Foundation website

adapted from translations by Christopher Smart and E.H. Blakeney offers: "nor must you be so faithful a translator, as to take the pains of rendering [the original] word for word" (np, bracketed text inserted by the translator). While Horace warns against such a "faithful" rendering word for word, he does not make a connection between this type of translation and slavishness (or even servility).[5] The modern insertion of the "slavish translator" into Horace's text provides evidence that the translator Dorsch was following Horace's advice—that is, *not* translating word for word. Whether or not the translation maintains the sense—or, as Dryden might say, "the spirit which animates the whole" ("On Translation" 23)—remains more subject to interpretation. While word-for-word translation might long have been linked to a discourse of servility, the consolidation of such ideas into specifically "slavish" translation, I argue, should be read as co-emerging with particular ideas about race during European imperialism and the transatlantic slave trade. As the next section will show, European translators of the period set out to master texts written by the racialized Other, while racialized translators were largely viewed as lacking imagination and so doomed—or commanded—to produce slavish translations.

Mastered Texts and Enslaved Translators

In the preface to his 1885 English translation of the *1001 Nights*, Orientalist Richard Burton asserts a position then already solidified in Western translation discourse: a mastery of the source material without resorting to slavishness in the translation. Though Burton's 1885 translation bears the title *The Book of The Thousand Nights and a Night: A Plain and Literal Translation of the Arabian Nights Entertainments*, he states that it does not "[strain] for *verbum reddere verbo*" but nonetheless "claims to be a faithful copy of the great Eastern Saga-book, by preserving intact, not only the spirit, but even the *mécanique*, the manner and the matter" (xiii, italics original). According to Burton, then, not a slavish, word-for-word translation, but still a "faithful" one in content and form. Tarek Shamma finds that Burton does often translate rather literally, using classical Arabic rhetorical devices and "sometimes cop[ying] even the grammatical structure of the original" (58), but I here propose to read Burton's freer translation of *race* in the *Nights*' frame story as emblematic of racialized attitudes toward translation in the age of European imperialism.[6] The black slave, as he appears in Burton's translation, reveals beliefs and anxieties about blackness as the embodiment of slavishness that can be mapped onto formulations of slavish translation.

During the opening of the frame story, Shah Zaman, who has already slain his own wife for having sex with a black slave, later spies his brother's wife having sex with a black slave in an orgy in the courtyard involving more women and men slaves. While the original from which Burton worked already

evinces anti-black racism—the scandal of the text is not only that the queen betrays the king but that she does so with a black man—Burton ramps up the racist discourse of the orgy scene with an exaggerated description of the black slave for which there is no counterpoint in the source: "and then sprang with a drop-leap from one of the trees a big slobbering blackamoor with rolling eyes which showed the whites, a truly hideous sight" (6). Burton's *unfaithful* translation of the source text here serves as an example of the way white European translators in the age of imperialism often staked a position of taking more freedoms with texts by the racialized Other than with classical texts of Greece and Rome, for which they at least professed to be mere servants.

In this case, the freedom that Burton takes works specifically to construct a representation of blackness as a degenerate state. In the "scientific" racism of the time, the races were aligned hierarchically, with "the black race" occupying the bottom rung, a step away from—and often compared directly to—primates. This representation manifests in Burton's translation when the black slave "spr[ings]" down from and later "swarm[s] up" a tree like a monkey, which, again, does not occur in the source text. Blackness is here, then, linked with animality and carnality, distancing blackness from reason and creativity, which are supposed to find their apotheosis in "the white race." The way Burton depicts the black slave as a degenerate, animal-like creature thus *de*couples him from the imaginative faculties while his coupling with the queen contravenes ideas of sexual fidelity and racial purity. The only creativity to which he seems prone is the capacity to deceive. Despite Burton's own claims to faithfulness, he conjures a blackness from his imagination that presents itself as devoid of imagination and a threat to fidelity—the embodiment of anxieties around translations produced by translators racialized as Other and particularly as black. Black translators, lacking imagination, can only produce "slavish" translations, and yet Europeans fear that they will deceive their white interlocutors, not remaining faithful to the messages they are supposed to convey as intermediaries between colonizer and colonized, between enslaver and enslaved. In the age of imperialism, then, white Europeans mastered the texts they translated, like Burton and the many other European translators of the *Nights* (Borges 1936), to underwrite racist justifications for colonizing and enslaving other peoples while simultaneously mandating "slavish" translations from those populations.

How European translators described their work thus varied considerably depending on the type of text they were translating. In Bassnett's summary,

> The traditional nineteenth-century notion of translation … was based on the idea of master-servant relationship paralleled in the translation process—either the translator takes over the source text and 'improves' and 'civilises' it … or the translator approaches it with humility and seeks to do it homage. (xv)

As discussed earlier in this chapter, humility came into play when translating texts from classical Greece and Rome, and translators gave voice to their humility by characterizing themselves as slaves or at least servants to the text. But the same servile positioning does not generally figure into the translation of texts from colonized cultures. Or, as Robinson puts it, "In translating from Greek and Latin, the English translator conceived his or her work in terms of idealized inferiority: the Greek and Roman poets blazed a path of glory that latter-day British imperialists could only dream of one day following" (*Translation and Taboo* 128). Indeed, in translating the texts of cultures they colonized, Europeans modeled themselves on Rome and its history of translation and imperialism. William Jones, for example, an Orientalist scholar and a judge on the Supreme Court in Calcutta established by the British East India Company, "deployed a discourse that made a direct connection between the British future in India and the late classical Roman past" and is fittingly commemorated with a statue in St. Paul's Cathedral "dressed in a toga" (Cohn 30). European imperialists, then, shifted from learning from the masters of Greek and Roman antiquity to mastering the languages and literatures of the peoples they colonized, what Bernard S. Cohn calls "the command of language and the language of command" (16). The British in India, such as Jones, attempted to master—in the sense not only of proficiency but also control and domination—the classical Indian languages (Arabic, Persian, Sanskrit) to produce dictionaries and grammars and also to translate a "pure" version of laws set down in classical Indian texts in order to govern colonized Indians (Cohn 21–30, Niranjana 11–19). Simultaneously, they attempted to master vernacular languages to facilitate daily interactions with Indians, which also often featured English command—quite literally on the grammatical level of the imperative: one Hindustani phrasebook produced by John Gilchrist "provide[d] the young Englishman in India specific rules on how to talk with Indians, all of whom in his work seem to be servants" (Cohn 39).

European imperialists thus set themselves up as masters not only of land, people, and physical resources but also of languages, texts, and knowledge. In some cases, like with Jones, Europeans learned the languages of the peoples they colonized because they did not trust the locals to provide accurate translations or interpretations of the texts themselves. In others, Europeans used locals as "native informants" while still bestowing upon themselves the capacity to correctly filter and synthesize the information into the European knowledge system, which would then be redistributed back to the locals. At the College of Fort William in India, tasked with compiling and publishing texts in Persian, Arabic, and Sanskrit for language instruction, "The Indian scholar knew he was superior to his European *Master* in respect of Indian languages, [but] he was primarily an informant, a mere tool in the exercise of language teaching to be handled by others" (Sisir Kumar Das, quoted in

Cohn 51, italics mine). While in cases like the College, the English respected and valued their Indian colleagues, more Europeans viewed "the East" as a decadent culture in decline:

> the modern Orientals were degraded remnants of a former greatness; the ancient or 'classical,' civilizations of the Orient were perceivable through the disorders of present decadence, but only … because a white specialist with highly refined scientific techniques could do the sifting and reconstructing. (Said 233)

Though Europeans might acknowledge, then, that the cultures they colonized had a glorious past history in letters, as had ancient Greece and Rome, they represented these cultures as having degenerated into barbarism, from which they needed European culture to save them, partly by translating their own knowledge back to them. Even less generously, Thomas Babington Macaulay notoriously declared that "a single shelf of a good European library was worth the whole native literature of India and Arabia" (quoted in Niranjana 31). If the "barbaric" Other needed to be mastered by the West in order to become civilized people, so, too, did their texts need to be mastered in order to become civilized culture.

Perhaps the most infamous statement of the forceful mastery of the racialized Other's text comes from Edward Fitzgerald, the translator of the *Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyam*, among other texts, in his 1857 letter to E.B. Gowell in which he writes, "It is an amusement for me to take what liberties I like with these Persians, who, (as I think) are not Poets enough to frighten one from such excursions, and who really do want a little Art to shape them" (quoted in Bassnett 3). Here, rather than taking a posture of servitude, the translator works with freedom and *takes liberties*, bringing his own imagination and creative force to the text, which, in need of "Art," lacks them itself. "These Persians," then, have not learned how to "shape" or master texts through Imagination, either as part of their own culture or from translations of other cultures, as writers in various European cultures did by learning from classical Greek and Roman examples. While, Samuel Johnson argues in 1759, "Arabs were the first nation who felt the ardour of translation" because "they found their captives wiser than themselves," he claims they translated mainly medical and philosophical texts: "Whether they attempted the poets is not known: their literary zeal was vehement, but it was short, and probably expired before they had time to add the arts of elegance to those of necessity" (204). The idea that different peoples possess varying degrees of imagination arises out of European "scientific" racism, so that the capacity for imagination becomes central to the constitution of whiteness in the dialectic between the European colonizer racialized as white and the colonized/enslaved racialized as Other. An artful translation

requires Imagination, which allows the translator to identify sympathetically with but also ultimately usurp the place of the author, exerting their creative force on the text—which means taking necessary liberties—to produce an elegant piece of Art. Slavish translation, on the other hand, is the negation of the Imagination, a brainless, artless labor. Imagination thus becomes the relevant dialectical force that brings together modern racialization and norms of translation—what distinguishes the race of slaves from the race of masters and slavish translation from masterful translation.

At the farthest end of the racial hierarchy constructed by Europeans—and thus supposedly most slavish in character—lay black Africans who, in representations intended both negatively and positively, were "in some way closer to nature" and devoid of any glorious past at all, "reveal[ing] what human beings are really like when stripped of the conventions of culture and civilization" (Lively 53). Such portrayals featured even in abolitionist texts, such as Joseph La Vallée's 1789 novel *The Negro as there are Few White Men*, in which the narrator, an African prince tricked into enslavement, claims, "Heaven would undoubtedly not suffer arts and sciences to be bestowed on us, we learn but what can be useful; we see no further than the wants of nature" (quoted in Lively 77). If black populations were believed to have "no culture," then there is "nothing to translate" from African languages to European ones, as opposed to the frequent translations by European Orientalist scholars of texts from languages like Persian, Arabic, and Sanskrit. And even when black people learned European languages, their ability to produce literature in them was constantly questioned. In her study of race, citizenship, and copyright law, *The Color of Creatorship*, Anjali Vats writes, "Imagination is racialized through the invocation of racial scripts that label people of color as imitators who presumptively lack the capacity for groundbreaking thought" or "originality" (10). Vats cites Thomas Jefferson's attack in *Notes on the State of Virginia* (published in 1785) on the capacity of poet Phillis Wheatley, a formerly enslaved Black woman, for imagination. Jefferson's appraisal: "Comparing them [black people] by their faculties of memory, reason, and imagination, it appears to me, that in memory they are equal to whites; in reason much inferior … and that in imagination they are dull, tasteless, and anomalous" (quoted in Vats 36–37). In order to prove her authorship to an incredulous public, Wheatley underwent a series of examinations, culminating in a 1782 tribunal of eighteen leading Boston figures, what Henry Louis Gates, Jr. refers to as "auditioning for the humanity of the entire African people" (27). It was only after the tribunal that Wheatley's book of poetry was published and she was freed in 1783. Nearly 50 years later, Alexis de Tocqueville would visit the United States from France and conclude that the black slave "admires his tyrants even more than he hates them, and finds his joy and pride in *servile imitation* of those who oppress him" (quoted in Mbembe 83, italics mine). This imitation has nothing to do

with Dryden's typology of intertextual transfer in which imitation bears only a loose resemblance to the source and is rather an *imaginative* recreation in a new language. De Tocqueville's "servile imitation" can be nothing other than slavish translation, here on the level of the person: a simple, unimaginative copying that, no matter how faithful it aims to be, will always be out of joint with the original, can never hope to attain its genius. In its complete faithfulness to the original—because it cannot imagine anything else—it is doomed to be a pale imitation, not really faithful at all.

In sum, to translate slavishly is to translate like an actual slave, and at this moment where modern notions of race were consolidated, what a slave is became a specific, racialized thing. Translators like Dryden likened themselves to slaves because they were fettered to their texts; the professed norms of translation—which they nonetheless violated—demanded that they respect the mastery of the classical Greek and Roman texts they were translating. As these classical texts were also literary classics well known among the educated reading public, to depart too far from the original was to open oneself to scrutiny and criticism. However, to translate like a metaphorical slave was not the same as translating slavishly. The slavish translator translates slavishly not because the masterful text demands it but because they lack the capacity to translate otherwise; they do not have the imagination required to produce an artful translation. Slaves, as construed at the time of transatlantic chattel slavery, supposedly lack imagination not because of their condition but because of their essential biology: black Africans and other darker races are pseudoscientifically classified as being less evolved, more like animals, and thus fit mainly to be beasts of burden. As modern translation norms develop concurrently with modern constructions of race, then, the term "slavish translation" takes on a racialized and racist aspect.

While, I argue, the development of modern racialization and modern translation norms is intertwined, Western translation studies as a discipline has, to date, paid little attention to translations by black Africans and Afrodescendant people during the transatlantic slave trade and African colonization. One of the first major works of translation studies to engage directly with questions of race and enslavement—*Translating Slavery* (1994), edited by Doris Y. Kadish and Françoise Massardier-Kenney—actually focuses on abolitionist writing by white French women rather than texts by enslaved or formerly enslaved people or translations by enslaved or formerly enslaved translators.[7] Most of the existing scholarship about African translators and interpreters in the period of European colonization has been done by historians, and even this work is relatively scant.[8] The dearth of written archives from this period with details about African and Afrodescendant interpreters and translators presents a serious challenge to this research, especially as those archives that do exist tend to be written by Europeans, as enslaved Africans were not generally taught to write, although some African interpreters

later attended colonial schools.[9] Though outside the scope of this chapter, further work should be done in translation studies to recover these narratives to expand our ways of thinking about the practices and power structures of translation in the colonial period. The rest of this section more narrowly analyzes how the idea of "slavish translation" came to bear on the work of enslaved and colonized black African and Afrodiasporic translators and interpreters. According to the racist logic of slavish translation, Europeans expected—in the sense both of anticipated and demanded—black translators and interpreters to produce "faithful" literal translations, because racist ideas about imagination and intelligence supposed that was all they were capable of and, paradoxically, because they were always suspected of deception since their translations could not be independently verified.

From early contact with the African continent, Europeans enlisted Africans as interpreters—whether the latter wanted this role or not. In the 1400s, the Portuguese began to capture Africans and send them to Europe to learn the language and serve as interpreters, a practice later followed by other European nations. Another model of the same period saw Africans who had been sold by other Africans as slaves to early Portuguese travelers hired out by their owners as interpreters in exchange for another captive (Fayer 281). Thus, the earliest African interpreters operated literally as slavish—kidnapped and enslaved—translators. As the transatlantic slave trade grew and became more lucrative, and as greater contact between Europeans and Africans led to more Africans learning European languages, slaving ships often hired free black men to serve as interpreters—or "linguists," as they were known on British slave ships—whose job was to inform kidnapped Africans that they had become property of white men and to instruct them how to behave "properly" on the ship (Fayer 286–287); that is, the interpreters or linguists inculcated the Africans into the condition of slavery and slavishness. Similarly, colonial plantation owners in the Americas relied on interpreters among enslaved people to instruct newly arrived and purchased Africans about plantation life and work, especially before the widespread development of creole languages. Captive Africans also continued to serve as interpreters in the Middle Passage between Africa and the Americas. Joan M. Fayer describes the "special privileges they were given to insure their loyalty"—or faithfulness—such as not being chained with the other captured Africans and eating with the sailors (289). Still, the faithfulness of the interpreters to the enslavers does not seem to have been consistently rewarded with reciprocal loyalty. For example, Fayer relates the case of an informal interpreter called Bristol who helped to prevent two rebellions on board a slave ship; he was still eventually sold into slavery in the Caribbean (288). The faithful, slavish translator was condemned to remain a slave. In the period of the transatlantic slave trade, then, black interpreters, many of whom were enslaved, were asked to faithfully translate the instructions of enslavers

to ensure the slavishness—literally the becoming-slave—of kidnapped Africans, and in the other direction of language transfer, they were asked to show their faithfulness to white enslavers by informing on planned mutinies and calming unrest, thus further working to keep black Africans in the condition of slavery. The enslaved and slavish translator was meant to be a *faithful* one.

The need by slave traders to cultivate the faithfulness of black interpreters increased as abolitionist laws began to restrict the transatlantic trade and black interpreters and translators helped to liberate captive Africans by making their testimonies available in European languages. Beginning with Britain, several nations signed onto treaties that outlawed the trade of slaves but not slavery itself. As outlined by Dale T. Graden (2011), a squadron of British navy ships patrolled the waters to enforce these agreements, and African and Afrodescendant interpreters and translators were employed by the squadron and the courts ruling on those apprehended by them in order to determine whether black people aboard ship were free, already enslaved and being transported within the Americas, or born in and transported from Africa. If the last were true, their trade was illegal and the people had the right to be freed. Graden recounts instances of African and Afrodescendant interpreters securing the liberation of Africans held captive or working as crew on slaving ships by translating direct testimony that they had been born in Africa, despite, in some cases, false passports and other documentation produced by slavers in an attempt to pass them off as passengers or American-born (401–406).[10] Court interpreters, mostly born in Africa, also played a key role in the legal case freeing the captive Africans aboard the slaving ship *La Amistad* who had mutinied and commandeered the ship before it was apprehended off US waters (Jeanette Zaragoza-De León 2018). In addition to translating testimonies from people in order to free them, African and Afrodescendant translators and interpreters gathered intelligence useful in suppressing the slave trade more broadly. Thus, while slavers attempted to inculcate slavishness into their captives through the use of interpreters as well as slavishness into the interpreters themselves to safeguard against mutiny, African and Afrodiasporic interpreters and translators worked toward liberation, often risking their own safety as they were subject to racist epithets (Zaragoza-De León 24) and fears of rebellion after the Haitian Revolution (Graden 402).

On the African continent itself during the period of the transatlantic slave trade and European colonization, the role of black African interpreters and translators was more ambivalent. Employed both by Europeans and Africans in positions of authority, they sometimes owned slaves themselves or were slave dealers and entrepreneurs, and so they exhibited no clear loyalty to any side. Recent studies of African colonial intermediaries, some of whom were interpreters seek to "overcome the binary of collaboration and resistance … Instead, African intermediaries used the new opportunities created by colonial

conquest and colonial rule to pursue their own agendas even as they served their employers" (Lawrance et al. 7). The loyalty or faithfulness of Africa interpreters, then, was often ultimately to themselves, managing intercultural communication in ways that provided them with power and material benefits. Because Europeans generally did not learn African languages, interpreters and other African intermediaries formed a "circle of iron" around them (Osborn 29–30), controlling the flow of information and influencing negotiations and actions, so that "a handful of African men exercised considerable influence over the implementation of policy and the production of knowledge in colonial Africa" (Lawrance et al. 20). While historians are giving increasing attention to the key, complex roles Africans interpreters and translators played in the slave trade and European colonial project, I focus here rather on the perception of African interpreters by Europeans at the time and the way these perceptions intersected with ideas about modern racialization and translation. What estimation did Europeans make of the translating abilities of African interpreters, and to what extent did they expect the same type of slavish translation demanded on slaving ships and plantations?

Many Europeans respected the intelligence and effectiveness of African interpreters and translators and acknowledged their indispensability to the colonial project (Brinkman 262–264). African interpreters proved their valuableness by serving in a range of additional roles for their employers, including negotiators, guides, clerks, and cultural informants. Forming an educated elite, Africans in the Kongo kingdom in the 1500s who had attended Portuguese schools and subsequently worked as interpreters and teachers in churches and schools merited the term *mestres*, masters or specialists (Brinkman 260–261). But racist prejudices were still rife. In describing his travels in Africa in the 1600s, for instance, Jacques LeMaire lamented, "They [interpreters] can scarce comprehend that two and two make four … nor have they any Knowledge of their Age, or the Days of the Week, for which they have no Names" (quoted in Fichtelberg 464). Such stereotypes persisted for centuries, as Ulrike Schaper notes in the German colonial context of the 1800s, "Many officials complained about the poor language skills of the African interpreters, often associating the problems of translation in racist terms with a 'black way of thinking'" (760).

These racist attitudes toward African interpreters played metaphorically and literally into conceptions of their slavishness or servility. French travelers in the late 1700s hired *laptots* or "slave sailors" as interpreters for trips down the Senegal River, and the word *laptot* eventually came to mean interpreter in Wolof (Mc Laughlin 722) so that slavishness and translating are linked in the name of the profession itself. Robin Law also recounts a case in Dahomey where an interpreter named Gnahoui "represented himself to the British mission of 1850 as 'the English servant,'" and though this "was evidently merely a courteous hyperbole" since he was "a royal official [of Dahomey] who was

bound to serve the King's interest rather than that of the British," at least a couple of the British officials at the fort "understood it literally" (742). One asserted in his journal "[his] duty is to attend me, and be my *obedient* servant" (quoted in Law 742, italics original). In this case, the interpreter is expected not only to faithfully serve as interpreter but to be a literal faithful servant, suggesting a collapsing of these roles.

Consequently, a main complaint that emerges from the European view of their African interpreters is a lack of faithfulness. Traveling through what is now Senegal, Frenchman Saugnier writes in 1792,

> To be proof against their wiles, it is absolutely necessary to know the Yolof language; for when a man is not acquainted with it, recourse must be had to interpreters, who necessarily belonging to this people, always cheat and share, according to agreement, the produce of their knavery. (quoted in Mc Laughlin 721)

This echoes William Jones's reasoning for having East India Company officials learn the languages of India: "It was found highly dangerous to employ the natives as interpreters, upon whose fidelity they [the East India Company] could not depend." (quoted in Niranjana 16). Yet in the African context, Europeans by and large never learned African languages on the same scale as they had in Asia and therefore could not verify the faithfulness of the translation or the translator.

The inability of the colonizer/enslaver to confirm the faithfulness of the black African translator leads to a paradox in the conception of the slave/ish translation and translator. The black African is supposed to lack imagination and therefore should produce a literal, faithful translation of the message. The faithfulness of the message is all the more important because—unlike the translations of the classical Greek and Latin texts which educated readers would be able to check themselves—the colonizer/enslaver has no means by which to authenticate the translation. It is for this reason that slave traders and colonizers attempt to inculcate slavishness into African interpreters through special privileges on slaving ships or ample salaries and other material benefits on the African continent. The inability to ensure the slavishness of the translation, however, produces a deep distrust of the African translator, even though they should supposedly provide an unimaginative slavish translation, one that follows the message to the word, to the letter. From this anxiety of being betrayed, slavish translation becomes not only an expectation but also an injunction. The only creativity that Europeans seem willing to grant black Africans is that of deceit. Like Burton's "slobbering blackamoor" in the *1001 Nights*, deceiving the king with his wife, the black African translator is figured as idiotic but also knavish and cunning. Just as the slave in *1001 Nights* "pollutes" the royal line with miscegeny, the African

translator "pollutes" the message—a sly exercise of power difficult to detect. As Jeanne Garane writes, "This image of the interpreter as politically powerful, important, and manipulative reverses the conventional expectation that such a person in the employ of the colonizer could be nothing but a compliant servant" (np). It is in the effort to contain this power and keep the servant compliant that the expectation to translate slavishly becomes an injunction for black translators, and this double-edged expectation and injunction persists in racist formulations of who translates how, or who "should" translate how, even today.

Bridge Translations and Race

> *"Bridge translator" is the perfect term for it, because everyone just walks all over you*. Jeremy Tiang, Twitter (2021)

In a review of a translation of Kyung-Sook Shin's *The Court Dancer* by South Korean translator Anton Hur, Peter Gordon writes,

> *The Court Dancer* is so easy to read that one can forget that it was written not in English (nor Italian nor French) but in Korean. … The illusion of *The Court Dancer* being a mainstream English-language novel is partly due to the fluent translation by Anton Hur. (A little too fluent at times…). (np)

Hur's translation, at least in Gordon's estimation, corresponds to norms of translation associated with whiteness—a "fluent" translation with its creativity hiding in plain sight. Yet for Gordon, the translation is *a little too fluent*. The fact that Gordon specifies that the reader forgets the novel was written in *Korean*, and not English, Italian, or French betrays a certain racialized idea about not just who translates but *who translates how*. It might make sense to mention that the novel was not written in French since its titular court dancer marries a French diplomat and moves to France—but why Italian? The review seems to suggest that European literature should read fluently, but Asian literature in translation should exhibit a greater degree of literalness. Beneath the critique that the translation reads "a little too fluently" also lies the implication that it is in some way suspect, that Korean has no business sounding quite so much like English. While a fluent translation usually represents creativity hiding in plain sight, in this case the creativity suggests a kind of deceit, passing Korean literature off as something it is not. In sum, there is the expectation that the translator of color translate the author of color less fluently, more literally—more slavishly. This is certainly how Hur took this particular critique, tweeting that he was "pretty sure [it] meant 'take a load of this here uppity oriental'" (Twitter 2020).

At the same time, translators of color from the source culture or with source-culture heritage may be faced with assumptions that they cannot *master* English well enough to translate fluently, even if English is their first language. The so-called "native-speaker" or "mother-tongue principle"—a norm in Western translation studies presented as a truism that translators should translate into their "native" language or "mother tongue"—doggedly persists to exclude translators whose first or dominant language is the source language. The emerging field of raciolinguistics demonstrates that, as language use and race are co-constructed, people of color and thus translators of color will face greater doubt about their abilities to master "standard" dialects or "literary" registers.[11] Heritage speakers of color—that is, people of color who use the dominant language of the culture in which they live but speak another language with their immigrant or indigenous families at home—are often considered doubly deficient, mastering neither language (Higby et al. 2023). These racist, white supremacist biases cast doubt on the ability of the translator of color who speaks the source language as a first or heritage language to produce a masterful, literary translation in the target language. The fear is that the translation will instead be too awkward, too stilted, too slavish to the source language. As one anonymized translator recounted in an interview about diversity in literary translation,

> An agent I was working with told me there was a publisher interested in acquiring a book I'd translated a sample of, but that they refused to work with me because I was not a native speaker. Another publisher praised the same sample for how fluent it was, especially considering 'she's not a native speaker'. (Patel and Youssef np)

These translators of color are, then, caught in a double bind where their work is either too slavish or not slavish enough. When their translation reads "fluently," it is suspect, and when it contravenes the norms of literariness in the target language, it is deficient.

Caught, then, in the double bind between too slavish and not slavish enough, translators of color are expected—again, in the sense of both anticipated and demanded—to participate in the practice of literary translation in a narrow, racialized way. This role is epitomized in what is known as bridge translation, a practice in which one person produces a "literal" translation of a text, and a second person then hones the literal translation into a work of literary merit.[12] The expertise of the first person is presumed to lie in the source language, and the expertise of the second in creative or literary craft, with the second type of expertise being more highly valued. As Jen Calleja and Sophie Collins note in relation to a trend of workshops pairing a poet without translation experience with an experienced translator, this set-up

> often seem[s] to reaffirm the idea that literary translators are not creative enough to translate the source texts alone, with the assigned poets frequently being credited as the 'translators' (sometimes 'end' or 'final translator') or featured more prominently in write-ups of the collaboration than any other participant. (np)

While the title of Calleja and Collins's essay—"She knows too much"—alludes to the often gendered dynamic of bridge translations (woman translator, male poet), the essay does not make mention of the racialized history of the bridge translation that persists today. Indeed, in French, bridge or literal translators are called "*traducteurs-nègres*" (Muhleisen 2006), based on the French word for ghost-writer, "*ecrivain-nègre*," clearly referencing the idea that the literal, usually uncredited translation is a kind of manual not creative labor. While white Euro-American writers have historically learned other European languages and thus been able to work somewhat independently translating from these languages, non-European languages are much less rarely studied by white Euro-Americans who grew up monolingual. Bridge translations into European languages, then, are more likely to occur from non-European languages, positioning the source-born/based/heritage translator of color as the "literal" translator and the white poet as the "literary" translator (Wang 2021).

In this sense, bridge translation reproduces the colonial logic of translation, as seen in the colonial Indian institutions discussed above, whereby colonized people served as "native informants" about language and cultural practices, but only white colonizers "mastered" this information to shape the translation with art and imagination. The bridge translator, like the colonized subject, brings linguistic and cultural knowledge about the source text but is supposedly unable to produce "literary" language in the translation. The poet, on the other hand, brings imagination, creative force, genius. The bridge translator of color, then, is expected to produce a literal—a slavish—translation *in service to* the white, Western poet. While writers, poets, translators, and leaders of literary organizations, such as the Poetry Translation Centre, that produce translations with bridge translators speak very highly of the labor and skill of bridge translators, their language also betrays an underlying sense that this work is less valuable in the final literary product. Bridge translators rarely seem to be recognized as equal collaborators in the process. For example, the tendency is for translations to be credited to the poet "with" the bridge translator rather than "and" the bridge translator (Richard Price 2018, Howell 2012), a decision that Richard Price claims, in working with bridge translators, "seemed to get the balance right," despite "how fundamental to the process" he notes the bridge translators were (np). This echoes the "clinching rightness" that Edward Doegar ascribes to the term "bridge translator" over "literal translator" in the process used by the Poetry

Translation Centre, where a "language expert" produces a version for poets to workshop into a "final" version—another distinction made among translator roles, though the bridge translator is "[o]ften … the only person involved who knows the source language and can explain the nuance of the original choice of words" (np). As translator and poet Yilin Wang notes, however, this diminishment of the role of the bridge translator proves highly problematic when the source-language author and/or bridge translator are people of color: "Although collaboration can certainly be productive and invaluable in some contexts, why are BIPOC translators seen as less capable of working independently and of writing skillfully in English? Whose skills and experiences are being celebrated versus dismissed?" (np). "[Western poets] do not see us as their counterparts, as their comrades," translator and poet Mona Kareem similarly argues, "their savior-complex is clothed with polished words and a self-described radical poetics. … How can one any longer believe in 'collaboration' or 'translation' without first addressing the power structures that cast their shadows over any two people working together?" (np).

The fact that not all bridge translation in the West occurs through a bridge translator of color and a white poet or author does not mean that a racialized—and racist—logic is not at play in the practice. The difference is in the choice of role available. White translators might choose to produce bridge or literal translations for a variety of reasons—including for scholarly editions—where they are recognized as experts, but this remains a *choice*, whereas translators of color who are first- or heritage-language speakers of the source language are pushed into the role of bridge translation through expectation (that their target-language use will be "awkward" and overly literal, unliterary) and injunction. Bridge translation puts translators of color "back in their place"; the bridge is where they "belong." Their role is to use their linguistic and cultural knowledge to produce a slavish translation *in service of* the imaginative and creative force of the white poet, recalling Fitzgerald's assessment that Persian poets needed "a little Art to shape them." The racist logic of the era of European imperialism and the transatlantic slave trade—in which people of color were figured as lacking creativity and artfulness (aside from the art of deception)—reappears in a more palatable form, the supposed assumption that non-"native speakers" of Western languages do not sufficiently master them at the literary level. Whiteness thus in itself functions as a qualification—mastery of language—while racialization as Other functions as a deficiency. And yet the white poet's lack of knowledge of the source language or culture is not disparaged as deficient, reproducing a hierarchy of roles that prevents the relationship from being framed as an equal collaboration—or the bridge translator of color from moving out from under the classification of "bridge" and being called simply a translator.

The general rejection of literal translation as "slavish" and unsuitable for literary translation thus takes on a specific meaning when its legacy is traced

back through the era in which modern constructions of race and modern translation norms co-evolved. Characterizations of "slavish translation" carry with them ideas about *who translates how*. Slavish translation remains both an expectation and an injunction for translators of color that excludes them from the field of literary translation. Yet, if slavishness represents unimaginative translation by people of color, then "fluent" translation, dialectically, indexes whiteness. Translators of color who translate "fluently" are considered suspect, but if, on the other hand, they challenge white Western norms of translation, using a more literal style, the epithet "slavish" reduces this not to an aesthetic or political choice but to a lack of skill and creativity. Excavating the concept of "slavish" translation demonstrates that modern Western translation norms taken as self-evident truisms—such as avoiding literalism in translation—actually bear some relation to white supremacist frameworks. Taking the role of race in translation seriously will require a historical and contemporary re-evaluation of norms now taken unquestioningly—not to say slavishly—for granted.

Notes

1 Between the writing of this chapter and the final proofread, the *OED* was updated with a third edition in December 2022. That edition lists the relevant definition of "slavish" as 2.d.: "Of imitation, esp. in literary or artistic work, translation, etc.: (excessively) close to a model or original; not showing originality or independence of thought. Hence applied to the creator of such an imitation." There is a 1638 example relating to painting and a 1677 example referring to a "pedantick slavish Writer," but Torriano's remains the first referring to translation.

2 Throughout much of this chapter, I refer to people "racialized as Other" on the one hand and people "racialized as white" on the other. These terms are intended to highlight the fact that this racialization was actively in progress during the era being described, and thus "racialized" should be understood as "being racialized"—a dialectical process in motion. As Geraldine Heng (2018) notes in *The Invention of Race in the European Middle Ages*, forms of racialization predate the early modern period, but it is in the modern period that the category of "white" begins to sediment itself over against all other races "of color," though as discussed in the Introduction, whiteness was and remains a fluid category, as do other racial categories. So as not to impose a modern understanding of race onto this period of racial formation, I do not capitalize black and white in this chapter. In the last section of the chapter, in which I turn to the contemporary period, I switch to "people/translators of color" and "white people/translators" to reflect current usage, though these categories should be understood as legacies of these same processes of racialization in the early modern period. For further discussion of decisions around racial terminology and capitalization in this book, which varies by chapter, see the Preface.

3 This emphasis on the more metaphysical ideas of "genius" and the "spirit" of the text have also endured through the centuries to today, having emerged in this early modern discourse on translation. Denham's prescription (1656) that "poesie [must be translated] into poesie" by transfusing the "a new spirit" into it lest the translator end up with a "*caput mortuum*" is but one famous example ("Preface"

156). This poorly defined "spirit" of the text that is captured by moving away from literal translation remains an obstinate part of translation discourse. See, for example, Natasha Wimmer (2017) describing in an interview the pedagogy of translation: "With practice, the translation student learns to translate more loosely and confidently, mindful of the spirit of the text as well as the letter" (np); or Stephen Miller describing in another interview his translation practice: "I feel I have enormous freedom because my allegiance is to the spirit of the text not to the literal meaning" (np).

4 As discussed in the next chapter, it is also the notion of the *creative*, *original* work of translators that allows them to register translations as their intellectual property through copyright.

5 My thanks to Shannon LaFayette Hogue for discussing the Latin text and translation with me.

As an interesting side note, Horace's father was himself a freed slave, under a very different system of slavery than the chattel slavery of the Americas.

6 On Burton's representation of race in the *Nights* see, for example, Thorn (2002).

7 There are, however, some promising new directions for research in recent doctoral dissertations taking up the question of translation and interpreting related to abolition and emancipation of enslaved black people. Matthew Harrington's 2022 dissertation, for example, looks in part at the English translation of the life story of enslaved Cuban poet Juan Francisco Manzano by Irish abolitionist Richard Robert Madden as well as the 1816 translation of Haitian king Henri Christophe's state papers into English by Prince Saunders, an abolitionist and free black man in Boston. Similarly, Jeanette Zaragoza-De León's dissertation (2018) delves into the crucial role played by black translators and interpreters in securing freedom through the US judicial system for the kidnapped Africans who took over the slaving ship *La Amistad* by force.

8 See, for example, Tamba M'Bayo's *Muslim Interpreters in Colonial Senegal, 1850–1920* (2016) and *Intermediaries, Interpreters, and Clerks: African Employees in the Making of Colonial Africa* (2006), edited by Benjamin N. Lawrance, Emily Lynn Osborn, and Richard L. Roberts, as well as essays by Inge Brinkman (2016), Robin Law (2016), Emily Lynn Osborn (2003), and Ulrike Schaper (2016), and Henri Brunschwig's foundational chapter on the topic of African interpreters in *Noirs et blancs dans l'Afrique noire française* (1983). Raymond Mopoho's essay "Statut de l'interprète dans l'administration coloniale en Afrique francophone" (2001) is unusual for appearing in a translation studies journal, *Meta: Journal des traducteurs*.

9 Saidiya Hartman has notably written about the difficulties of narrating the lives of enslaved Africans from "the constitutive limits of the archives" (11). She advances a methodology of "critical fabulation" to "imagine what might have happened or might have been said or might have been," thus "straining against the limits of the archive to write a cultural history of the captive, and, at the same time, enacting the impossibility of representing the lives of captives precisely through the process of narration" (11).

10 The Registers of Liberated Africans kept by the British provide some of the scant archival information about African and Afrodescendant interpreters as the entries for people liberated often also include the name of the interpreter who interviewed them for the information provided as well as sometimes the interpreter's origin. Interpreters were frequently Africans who themselves had been recently liberated and selected based on similar provenance to those they interviewed. See, for example, Nwokeji and Eltis (2002), Lovejoy (2010), and Anderson et al. (2013).

11 See, for example, H. Samy Alim, John R. Rickford, and Arnetha F. Ball, eds. (2016). Nelson Flores and Jonathan Rosa (2015) describe how people of color are

frequently perceived as "deficient" in their language use even when using "appropriate" language, and Rosa (2016) argues that "racialized ideologies of languagelessness call into question linguistic competence—and, by extension, legitimate personhood—altogether" (163).

12 Bridge translations are also known as literal translations, interlinear translations, intermediary translations, direct translations, trots, or cribs, among other terms.

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2

TRANSLATION AND RACIAL CAPITALISM

In 2016, the International Booker Prize shifted its format to reward a book published in the previous year in English translation in the United Kingdom or Ireland, with the £50,000 prize split equally between author and translator, making it the most prominent—and best remunerated—prize for literary translation in English. Previously the prize, awarded every two years, had recognized the body of a work of an international living writer whose oeuvre was available in English, so the new iteration of the prize gave more direct attention to individual literary translators. The first year of the revamped prize, the jury selected *The Vegetarian*, a novel by South Korean author Han Kang and translated by Deborah Smith from the United Kingdom, which gave a huge boost to copies of the book sold in both English and Korean. The translation saw a 614% increase in sales between the four weeks before the prize was awarded and the four weeks after, and over 90,000 copies have been sold to date (Tivnan 2022). In South Korea, too, sales spiked online in the day after the Booker announcement, and the Korean version of the book sold out at Kyobo, South Korea's largest offline bookstore, together amounting to thousands of copies purchased in one day (*Korea Bizwire*). Following a win by an author of color in the first year of the new format, three other authors of color—Jokha al-Harthi from Oman (2019), David Diop of French and Senegalese heritage (2021), and Geetanjali Shree from India (2022)—have taken home the International Booker, meaning that authors of color have won half the time, followed by their respective sales boosts as well. The racial diversity of the English-language translation market thus looks relatively rosy from the perspective of the highly publicized International Booker Prize.

Yet while the winning book has frequently been from an author of color, the short- and longlists are usually less diverse, with only about three to

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five authors on the longlist per year who might be considered authors of color, after a more racially diverse initial short- and longlist in 2016. Furthermore, most of the translations of long- and shortlisted works by East Asian, Southwest Asian, and African authors have been published in translations by White translators.[1] All of the winning translators have been White. The only Black translator to make even the longlist was Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, an internationally acclaimed author and literary scholar who had translated his own work from Gĩkũyũ. High-visibility books in English translation by authors of color—like the winners of the International Booker Prize—thus give the illusion that the English-translation book industry offers a racially diverse range of literature. But the lack of racial diversity in the US and UK translation sector is glaring when taken as a whole. As the International Booker longlists demonstrate, the racial diversity of authors in English translation by far outpaces the racial diversity of translators themselves. And the important prizes or significant sales of a few authors of color also obscure the fact that books by authors of color actually comprise only a relatively small portion of books in English translation. The lack of readily available data about the racial identity of authors and translators published in translation gets in the way of making a statistical case about a lack of diversity when the market may *seem* diverse because of prizes or a few otherwise high-profile authors, giving the impression that people of color are profiting in terms of cultural and economic capital in the current literary market.

When collected, large datasets of book-industry statistics can provide a robust picture that contests vague impressions about the diversity of the market, not simply as a matter of numbers but to show how power—economic and cultural—is distributed. For example, Richard Jean So uses large-scale data analysis of US fiction in the years 1950–2000 to demonstrate that

> through every phase of the literary field, from production (publishing) to reception (book reviews) to distinction (book sales and prizes), white authors exercise a distinct racial command over minority authors, particularly black novelists. And perhaps most surprisingly, these numbers do not change over time. (3)

As So argues, a figure like Toni Morrison—who championed other Black writers as an editor at Random House, was well-reviewed, had a number-one best-selling novel in *Paradise*, and won a variety of literary prizes, including the Nobel—gives the impression, as International Booker prizewinners might, of increasing racial diversity on the US book market. And while literary historians and critics have, in trying to produce more inclusive narratives, told a story of 20th-century multiculturalism, So shows that they have inadvertently masked—or even missed—the "inertia of whiteness" (9), partly "because our available methods, such as close reading and historicism, are

not well equipped to discern such patterns" (6). The kinds of large-scale data analysis performed by So would be a boon to scholarly and market research about the racial diversity of authors and translators published in English translation, but this data is not currently collected in the most common translation databases, such as the Open Letter/*Publishers Weekly* Database or UNESCO's Index Translationum.[2] Collecting this data about literary translations would prove especially tricky as well, given that different cultures define and classify race differently.

While data collating publications with the racial identity of translators and their authors is not readily available, there is some data, albeit limited, about the racial demographics of literary translators working into English, which points to what, in the Introduction, I refer to as the unbearable whiteness of translation in the West. Survey data from the Authors Guild in the US (2017) and the Equity Advocates of the American Literary Translators Association (2020), provides demographic information from 205 and 362 literary translators into English, respectively. In the Authors Guild survey, which focused on US-based translators, 83% of respondents identified as White, 6.5% as Hispanic or Latinx, 1.5% Black/African American, 1.5% Asian American, and 1% Native American, with the remaining 6.5% selecting "other" or "prefer not to say." Perhaps partly because the ALTA survey was open to any literary translator worldwide working into English, it presented more racial diversity: 72% White, 9% Asian American/Asian, 9% Hispanic/Latinx, 4% Middle Eastern/North African, 3% African American/Black, and only one person identifying as Native American/Alaskan Native.[3] For comparison, in the 2020 US census of the general population, those identifying as one race alone were: 62% White, 12% Black, 6% Asian, 1% American Indian or Native Alaska, and 8% some other race; 18% identified as Hispanic or Latino; 10% identified as multiracial (Jones et al. 2021). White literary translators are thus unsurprisingly overrepresented in relation to the general population, while Black translators are the most underrepresented, with remarkably only 1.5–3% of literary translators identifying as Black in comparison to 12% of the US population.

The racial demographics of literary translators into English in the United States and the United Kingdom reflects the general racial diversity of professionals within the wider publishing industries there. The 2019 Lee and Low Diversity Baseline Survey in the United States reported 76% of publishing staff, review journal staff, and literary agents identify as White, with 7% Asian/Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, 6% Hispanic/Latino/Mexican, 5% Black/African American, 3% biracial/multiracial, and less than 1% each Native American and Middle Eastern (np). In the original baseline survey in 2015, 79% of respondents had identified as White, marking no significant change in publishing industry diversity over the four years. Again, these numbers are out of joint with the racial demographics of the US population as a

whole. A survey in the United Kingdom by the Publishers Association in 2022 found that the proportion of racial and ethnic minorities in the publishing industry (17% total) did more or less match up with that in the general population (18% total), except when isolating the results for London (18).[4] While 46% of the general population of London identifies as an ethnic minority group (excluding White minorities), only 17% of publishing professionals in London similarly identify (19), suggesting that the high cost of living and being looked over for the most prestigious and high-paying publishing jobs work in concert to exclude people of color from the London sector. A similar phenomenon exists in the United States with publishing jobs at the largest publishing houses in New York City, especially those known as the "big five."[5] As James Ledbetter wrote in "The Unbearable Whiteness of Publishing" in *The Village Voice* in 1995, in the biggest companies, "the question is not how many people of color they employ at decision-making levels, but whether they have any at all" (np). Meanwhile, a joint survey by People of Color in Publishing and Latinx in Publishing (2021) found that the relatively few people of color in the industry report on the one hand a very high level of having experienced racism in their jobs and on the other feeling obligated to perform extra work to educate their colleagues about diversity or do sensitivity reads.[6] Thus overall, people of color have been excluded from the publishing industry in the United States and the United Kingdom, and when they do secure publishing jobs, they experience due to their race a sometimes hostile environment and extra labor in an already generally poorly paid sector, a situation that equally affects translators of color.

This overwhelming whiteness in the United States and the United Kingdom of literary translators and other publishing professionals shapes the market in a variety of ways. In her research on comp titles, Laura B. McGrath (2019), for example, presents the market as a self-perpetuating system, where what has sold before determines what will be sold in the future. Comps (comparable or comparative titles) draw similarities between a prospective book and other books that have already been published; when the comp titles have good sales figures, an editor is more likely to acquire a new book in the hopes of similar sales. McGrath found that of the 500 most comped fiction titles for new books published from 2013 to 2019, 478 were by White authors (np), which implies that publishers continue to believe that White authors sell best. Comp titles work likewise in the literary translation sector, favoring translations by and large from White authors writing in European languages.[7] Since, as McGrath concludes, "[c]omps perpetuate the status quo, creating a rigid process of acquisition," then, "[t]he data suggest that there are two options available for writers of color within this system, neither of which is equitable or promising: beat the odds, or comp white" (np). For those authors and translators of color who do beat the odds, the whiteness of the publishing

industry means their work is usually edited and marketed against or in accord with norms of White-authored writing with a White audience in mind. That is, their texts undergo exotification or assimilation. In *Black Writers, White Publishers*, for example, John K. Young details

> the basic dynamic through which most twentieth-century African American literature has been produced [which] derives from an expectation that the individual text will represent the black experience (necessarily understood as exotic) for the white, and therefore implicitly universal, audience. (12)

The supposed universality of the White audience leads to what South Korean translator Anton Hur (2022) calls the "Mythical English Reader" invoked by academics and editors to 'correct' Hur's translations, to make the translation "easier" and more "comfortable" (78). White editors and publishers thus commodify the difference of texts written and translated by people of color at the same time as they assimilate that difference to make it more accessible, and thus more easily saleable, to a projected White audience.[8]

As Hur writes,

> The Mythical English Reader … serves as a superego of whiteness, policing all literature so that it continues to affirm the superiority and cultural capital of whiteness, because in the end, cultural capital leads to actual capital, and the goal is to keep the money within the family. (79)

This chapter looks at the various kinds of capital that have been hoarded by White people in the US/UK publishing industry and the self-perpetuating systems that continue to distribute capital inequitably in the literary translation sector through the lens of racial capitalism. The concept of racial capitalism from critical race studies posits that the historic conditions of capitalism have made it inseparable from an inequitable race-based distribution of wealth: under a system where some people's race signified that they owned property while other people's race signified that they *were* property, whiteness itself becomes a kind of capital that can never fully be redistributed (Harris 1993). Because of the intransigence of whiteness as capital, the current literary publishing system cannot be reformed to distribute capital equitably. Efforts to include translators of color in the system in terms of "diversity" only seek ways to get a few more people of color through the gates of the exclusive, elitist, white supremacist system rather than imagine how to radically transform the system itself. The struggle to disimbricate literary translation from capitalism is made more difficult by popular discourse among literary translators and translation studies scholars that casts literary translation as an art or craft and thus somehow at odds with capitalist logic, obscuring the

deep-seated connections not only with the capitalist system but also the white supremacist frameworks that use this same discourse to exclude people of color from accruing capital.

In this chapter, I outline the various ways that the unequal distribution of forms of capital leads to the exclusion and marginalization of translators of color, keeping in mind that this occurs in different ways between and within racial and ethnic identities racialized as other than White but generally works to maintain white supremacy. The last part of the chapter focuses on intellectual capital, a form of capital that generally receives less attention in both translation and critical race studies. Bringing together the work of scholars dealing with copyright in relation to capitalism, critical race studies, and translation studies, I show how racist notions of ownership and authorship play out in translation copyright under racial capitalism, arguing that to escape racial capitalism, the idea of intellectual *property* must be abandoned.

The Racialized Capitals of Literary Translation

The term racial capitalism emerged around anti-apartheid struggles in South Africa in the 1970s and 1980s but is now most closely associated with Cedric J. Robinson and his book *Black Marxism: The Making of the Black Radical Tradition*, first published in 1983 but which received renewed attention after its republication in 2000. Robinson traces the history of capitalism as it developed from feudalism alongside racialization: "The tendency of European civilization through capitalism was thus not to homogenize but to differentiate—to exaggerate regional, subcultural, and dialectical differences into 'racial' ones" (26). In the introduction to *Histories of Racial Capitalism* Destin Jenkins and Justin Leroy explain, "Racial capitalism is not one of capitalism's varieties. … Rather, from the beginnings of the Atlantic slave trade and the colonization of the Americas onward, all capitalism, in material profitability and ideological coherence, is constitutive of racial capitalism" (1). The functioning of racial capitalism during the age of European imperialism and the transatlantic slave trade was stark: not only was capital unevenly distributed along racial lines, but some races were figured as without capital entirely or as themselves being capital. As Cheryl I. Harris describes, while Black people were made objects of property, Indigenous Americans were not seen by White colonizers as being able to possess property, specifically land, which White settlers used as an excuse to displace Indigenous peoples and take possession of their land (1721). This racist capitalist logic of who can own or who can be made property persists in a variety of ways, including the prison labor system and resource extraction on Indigenous land, but also in more obscure but insidious ways. Jenkins and Leroy note the "ongoingness" of racial capitalism—something that neither began nor ended with chattel slavery, as "its precise nature is dynamic and changing" (12). Here, I am

particularly interested in the ways the logic of racial capitalism determines the distribution of capital in the literary translation publishing sector, not only in terms of financial capital but also cultural capital and other less tangible forms of capital.

As conceived by Pierre Bourdieu, cultural capital represents a range of cultural elements that possess value, confer social status, and serve as class markers. For Bourdieu, these could be embodied (such as manners of dressing, speaking, and behaving along with cultural knowledge, tastes, and preferences), objectified (physical objects such as books and works of art), or institutionalized (as in educational credentials or other qualifications) (1983 17). In his wide-ranging scholarship, Bourdieu described the specific functioning of cultural capital within the literary field (1991). While there is some disagreement among scholars about to what extent Bourdieu actually engaged with race as a social category,[9] it is at least clear that class was a much more important category to his work. Race, however, does not always align with class differences, and class does not always account for differences in social status; constructions of race are often determinative of who "can" possess capital and what kinds of cultural markers are considered to have value. Ghassan Hage, in reference to Australian national belonging, posits markers understood as being "White" as cultural capital that accumulate within a field of power and its ideal form called Whiteness (53–61). These markers of whiteness—such as skin color, accent, religion, kinds of knowledge—are socially determined at a given time and place, as whiteness is not a fixed category (see the Introduction).

In the field of literature, the cultural capital of whiteness can be derived, for example, from certain stylistic features of writing or a preference for certain types of books. As Hage notes, however, Bourdieu distinguished between accumulated capital and capital that is "aristocratic," that is, that is naturalized so as to seem inherent, with the latter accorded more value (Hage 62–67). Thus while people phenotypically racialized as people of color in the literary field might acquire certain capitals of whiteness like style, taste, knowledge, and university credentials, they cannot acquire naturalized capitals of whiteness like skin or hair color, unless social definitions of who "counts" as "White" change. "Being" White thus functions as a kind of aristocratic capital itself, in addition to the other types of capital that whiteness allows people to accumulate because of their historically determined economic and social positions. In what follows, I trace the racially inequitable distribution of capital that serves to exclude people of color from the field of literary translation in the United States all along the path to the profession, starting from childhood. In doing so, I aim to demonstrate the deep and pervasive nature of the exclusion and marginalization of people of color under racial capitalism. Due to the systemic inequitable accumulation of capital along racial lines as well as the problem that "whiteness" itself serves as a

non-accumulable kind of capital for some people, there is no way to simply "diversify" the profession in an equitable way. Equity will require radical transformation and, ultimately, the abolition of racial capitalism.

The general literary field places value on several types of capital, in addition to economic and cultural capital, that are relevant, too, to the more specific field of literary translation. In *Merchants of Culture*, John B. Thompson outlines the various types of capital that determine the relative power of different publishers in the publishing industry: economic, human, social, intellectual, and symbolic capital (5–10). Economic capital—with which publishers pay authors, staff, production costs, and marketing and promotion costs—also allows for how much risk a publisher is able to take, for example on books without high-selling comp titles. Human capital refers to the labor force of skilled editors, but Thompson notes that publishing "is a field in which networks and relationships—i.e. social capital—is crucial" (7) so that skill alone does not determine the value of an editor; it also necessary for them to be well connected to other players in the industry. By intellectual capital, Thompson means intellectual property: "The distinctive feature of the publishing firm is that it possesses the right to use and exploit intellectual content, to 'publish' or make available this content in forms that will generate a financial return" (7). Whereas intellectual capital is relatively concrete in that it is enshrined in contracts and copyright law, symbolic capital is rather intangible and "best understood as the accumulated prestige, recognition and respect accorded to certain individuals and institutions" (8). While Thompson maintains that all five types of capital play a role in a publisher's success, he identifies economic and symbolic capital as carrying the most weight.

Literary translators serve as human capital for publishers, but their marginalized role within the US/UK literary publishing industry means they possess a limited amount of the various other types of capital themselves. Aside from a paltry few exceptions, translators usually lack the kind of symbolic capital—"brand recognition" or reputation—that Thompson attributes to certain publishers as well as authors and their agents because their work frequently goes unnoticed or unacknowledged by the majority of readers, what Lawrence Venuti (1995) calls the "invisibility" of the translator in Anglophone publishing. Translators into English are still fighting for basic acknowledgment of their work, such as having their names on the cover of books they have translated or mentioned in book reviews. This lack of recognition for translators in the US and UK markets also affects their ability to accrue economic and intellectual capital: literary translation contracts, in addition to being largely poorly remunerated, usually carry few subsidiary rights, and in some cases, the translation is contracted as work for hire so that the translator does not retain the copyright to their translation. Notwithstanding—or in some instances because of—the limited capital that literary translators accrue in the literary system, their ability to enter the

market as a professional usually depends upon having accumulated at least a certain amount of the various types of capital, particularly cultural capital. The broadly uneven racial distribution of this capital under racial capitalism, including the capital of whiteness itself, excludes a disproportionate number of people of color from the literary translation publishing sector along every step in the path toward professional literary translation.

As I outline the inequitable functioning of racial capitalism along literary translation professional pathways, I will focus on the context of the United States for the sake of simplicity, as delving into the detailed differences between the United States and the United Kingdom (and other White-majority Western Anglophone publishing sectors, such as in Canada and Australia) would become cumbersome. While concentrating on the United States may also reproduce some aspects of the US-centrism of global academia and literary publishing, the power dynamics between scholars and translators located in the United States, or the West broadly conceived, and scholars and translators located in postcolonial spaces has been relatively well explored in postcolonial translation studies, though not through the particular lens of race; the function of race *within* the United States and the West to exclude translators and translation studies scholars, however, has not received the same attention. As racial capitalism is a global system, many aspects of it function similarly across contexts, and the Anglophone literary publishing industry shares some agents, markets, and distribution networks transnationally. But some of the particulars of racial capitalism—both economic and cultural—also, of course, differ between contexts. As but one example, in the United Kingdom, public schools—what in the US context are called private boarding schools—play a much larger role in class stratification. There is also no space here to fully elaborate the functioning of racial capitalism in its various guises at each step along the path toward the literary translation profession, especially as people of different racial or ethnic identities may be marginalized or excluded in different ways according to different histories and racial logics. For the sake of brevity, some relevant supporting quantitative data is included largely in the endnotes.

The possession of economic or financial capital plays an outsized role in access to other forms of capital, particularly cultural and social capital, so that the unequal racial distribution of economic capital has repercussions all down the line of the literary translation profession, from childhood on.[10] Wealth segregation is maintained through a variety of racist mechanisms, including job discrimination, rates of incarceration, and redlining, whereby people of color, especially Black people, were denied loans for homebuying in wealth- and resource-rich areas. Since property values determine tax revenue available for public schools, racial wealth segregation results in a lack of resources for primary and secondary education in areas with higher proportions of people of color. Recent cuts to funding for foreign language education

and a shortage of foreign language teachers thus hit these areas harder, making access to second-language acquisition at an earlier age difficult for people of color in the United States in monolingual families.[11] The emerging field of raciolinguistics, however, demonstrates that the value placed on language knowledge and acquisition differs along racial lines, so that education segregation due to economic capital does not alone explain the racial inequities in the cultural capital accorded to language proficiency. For example, language immersion programs carry higher cultural capital for White children than for bilingual Latinx children, who are classified as "languageless" (Flores et al. 2020), and heritage speakers who speak English outside the home but another language at home with their immigrant or Indigenous families are viewed as doubly deficient, mastering neither language (Higby et al. 2023). For White students, then, bilingual language learning is figured as enriching, for students of color as remedial.

These racial inequities in accumulating the cultural capital of language proficiency continue into secondary education. Uju Anya and L. J. Randolph, Jr. (2019) highlight how lack of access to foreign language education in K-12 along with negative classroom experiences and the placement of Black students into less academically demanding tracks without foreign languages then cause low enrollment in language courses by Black students at the university level. Black students also participate in study abroad programs at a disproportionately low rate, with study abroad representing a major means of acquiring the cultural capital of linguistic and cultural fluency important to literary translation.[12] Study abroad also provides opportunities to procure social capital by making interpersonal connections with authors, editors, and members of literary and cultural organizations from the potential source culture of translation. The racial inequities that lead to low enrollment in language study and in higher education generally are self-perpetuating, since students rely heavily on their families' economic capital to cover the astronomically rising cost of tuition in the United States as well as on their families' cultural capital of experience with university education to complete their degrees.[13] The ALTA survey shows that current literary translators have tended to benefit in these ways, as 70% of respondents had one/both/all parents/guardians with a four-year post-secondary degree. In terms of admission to elite institutions like Ivy League schools, families' symbolic capital can carry even more weight than economic and cultural capital as these colleges and universities give priority admissions to "legacy" students, that is, students with parents or other family members who are alumni of the school. While affirmative action admissions policies are designed to increase the racial diversity of the student body, they account for a lower rate of college acceptances in relation to legacy admissions, which functions to maintain a certain elite culture of whiteness at these institutions.[14]

While there is no single path toward professional work as a literary translator, at minimum it typically requires some familiarity with at least two languages and some higher or post-secondary education.[15] When they have advanced degrees, literary translators follow various trajectories, including an MA or MFA in translation (though programs are rare), an MFA in creative writing, or an MA or PhD in (comparative) literature, a "national" or "foreign" language or literature, or area studies, among others. In the ALTA survey, 30% of respondents had a PhD or equivalent, 46% an MA or MS, and 19% an MFA; in the Authors Guild survey, 43% held a PhD, and 99.5% had some post-secondary education. This survey data shows that while advanced degrees are not a complete necessity in the literary translation profession, they remain a highly valuable form of cultural capital along with providing social capital in connections with experienced people in the field. But higher degrees also mean additional economic costs, especially as graduate student stipends, fellowships, and teaching and research assistantships may not cover all living expenses, necessitating pre-existing savings, financial support from family, other forms of income that would interfere with study and research, or amassing debt, again making the generational wealth of White families a factor in the accumulation of educational cultural capital.[16] Degrees from certain programs or institutions—such as Iowa's MFA in literary translation or a PhD from an Ivy League university—also provide an added element of symbolic capital.[17] Generational racial segregation of economic, cultural, and symbolic capital thus echoes throughout the educational system, making it more difficult for people of color to acquire the capital usually necessary to enter the literary translation profession.

But the capital of whiteness itself also needs to be taken into account in how racial capitalism functions in the higher education system. Because racial capitalism was founded on the premise that some racial groups cannot own property, that is, cannot accumulate capital, or at least certain types of capital, people of color are still frequently not perceived as having acquired the capital that comes along with the educational qualifications they have completed. For example, women of color faculty in the academy, who have attained the most advanced degrees in their fields, experience being "presumed incompetent" by their colleagues and students (Gutiérrez y Muhs et al. 2012). Higher education, especially in languages, literatures, and creative writing, usually also results in the accrual of linguistic capital important to the work of literary translation: advanced knowledge of the source language and "fluency" in the target language in literary and academic registers. But perceptions of linguistic capital also differ along racial lines. Nelson Flores and Jonathan Rosa, for instance, observe that language-learning models that focus on "appropriateness"—which might be understood as the language variety with the most linguistic capital—"[expect] language-minoritized students to model

their linguistic practices after the white speaking subject despite the fact that the white listening subject continues to perceive these students' language use in racialized ways" (151). Thus, language usage associated with whiteness carries more cultural capital at the same time as people of color are figured as being unable to produce this language and access its capital, even when their language matches the idealized white speaking subject. This places people of color in a double bind where they are perceived as unable of producing language considered valuable as a form of cultural capital and where language varieties racialized as other than White—such as African American Vernacular English, Spanglish, or Indian or Caribbean English—are not considered to be of value in the educated and literary classes (Gupta 1998, hooks 1994, Young 2010). The same can be said of forms of knowledge racialized as other than White that are devalued in Western academia, such as traditional Indigenous forms of knowledge (Smith 1999). Despite the romantic and romanticized ideal of education as a source of uplift, progress, and social and economic leveling, the Western education system reproduces and upholds the inequities of neoliberal racial capitalism (Collins et al. 2023, Melamed 2011, Meyerhoff 2019).

The structure of the literary publishing industry generally and the literary translation sector more specifically further exacerbates inequitable access under racial capitalism. A PEN America report on racial equity in publishing identified

> a host of historically underexplored financial and institutional factors that feed into underrepresentation across the industry, and compound the marginalization of publishing professionals, authors, and booksellers of color. These factors include policies and strategies for entry-level pay, author advances, employee retention, professional mobility, mentorship, book sales, audience development, and marketing. (Tager and Shariyf np)

The publishing industry is notoriously insular (Ledbetter 1995), and many publishers, even independent ones specializing in or open to literary translations, do not accept unsolicited manuscript submissions or book pitches, requiring the social capital of industry connections. As Aaron Robertson writes in urging publishers and editors to take the lead in reaching out to Black translators and other translators of color, "[t]here is an untapped reservoir of translators who want to call Black, Asian, Indigenous, and other voices to wider attention but who lack the insider knowledge or contacts to know that this is possible or understand how to navigate an often-unfriendly industry" (np). These connections are frequently made through unpaid or poorly paid internships or through short-term programs and residencies with tuition costs (Romero and Figueroa 2021), which again require generational wealth or other economic capital in order to be feasible. Literary translators starting their professional careers also often begin establishing their social and

symbolic capital in the field with smaller publications in literary journals, which frequently offer no payment whatsoever.

In addition to social capital to make connections, then, "start-up" economic capital also facilitates the entrance of White translators embarking on literary translation as a profession. As a low-paying field with small demand, work in literary translation usually requires a degree of financial independence through other employment, the support of a partner or spouse, and/or reliance on generational wealth. The Authors Guild survey found, for instance, that only 14 of the 205 respondents earned all of their income from literary translation. Literary translation made up less than 50% of the income for nearly 80% of respondents, and 60% of total respondents devoted less than half their working time to literary translation. In terms of employment other than literary translation, in the Authors Guild and ALTA DEI surveys, 34% and 30%, respectively, also worked in non-literary translation, 45% and 32% were college or university teachers, 37% and 34% writers or poets, and 12% and 18% publishers or editors. Among the remaining additional work with relatively high response rates in the ALTA survey were interpreter (12%), student (10%), nonprofit administration (9%), retiree (8%), and university staff or administration (7%). Taken together, these data points establish that literary translation is not really a "profession"—or at least not the primary one—for the vast majority of its practitioners in the United States as it does not provide for a steady income. This aspect of literary translation, combined with other threads of discourse that cast it as an art or craft rather than work or labor, underlies another, less apparent way in which racial capitalism functions in the literary translation sector, part of the larger racist functioning of the creative industries.

The expectation that work in the arts does not provide for an ample, steady income has become naturalized. After performing ethnographic studies of workers in cultural and creative industries, Orian Brook et al. note, "The prevalence of unpaid work creates a sense that low and no pay is how the system works. A sense that low and no pay is a *characteristic* of cultural occupations, rather than the *consequence* of decisions" (162, italics original). Alex Zucker, a literary translator who helped to prepare a model contract for translations with the Authors Guild, sees this same problem among literary translators:

> I'd like to see more translators think of themselves as workers—again, as people who do a job to earn money—and of their work as labor, not only as art, which unfortunately in our society too often carries with it the expectation that it will be unpaid, or that money is not central, the whole 'labor of love' trope. Honestly, to insist on translation only as a labor of love, without acknowledging that it's also a profession, is a hindrance to translators' efforts to be paid fairly. (np)

Advantageously for those making the most profit at the top of creative industries or for governmental agencies making funding decisions, then, the rewards of cultural work are seen as other than financial, and the place of the creative industries within the capitalist system are mystified. As Laura J. Miller writes in *Reluctant Capitalists*, "the very notion of artistic creativity has come to be in part defined by a sense of standing outside the logic of commerce" (7). In these tropes and perceptions, creative and cultural fields are somehow placed outside of capitalism so that, though cultural and symbolic capital are in play, economic capital is not for most people. As Brook et al. argue, it is this scarcity of economic capital for most creative and cultural workers that keeps these industries racially inequitable. But I would like to focus in the remainder of this chapter on another type of capital—intellectual capital—and how it functions in conjunction with the modern Western idea of creativity under racial capitalism to maintain racial inequities.

Western discourse around creative and cultural production tends to set up a division between creativity and labor. As elaborated in the last chapter, in modern Western translation norms, this emerges as the racialized privileging of the force of imagination over the "mindless" labor of literal or "slavish" translation. In the Romantic ideal of imagination, creative production is also the work of the individual genius, even though, as Howard S. Becker discusses, creative production actually entails cooperative, collaborative, "collective activity" in what he calls "art worlds" (1–6). By erasing the labor of others, the figure of the individual genius lays claims to a piece of art—it *belongs* to the individual genius, is the *property* of the individual genius—whereas laborers under racial capitalism cannot similarly lay claim to their work and accrue the capital associated with it. Harris's formulation of whiteness as property is key here, as settler colonialism and chattel slavery in the Americas characterized Indigenous and Black people as being incapable of owning property, and, especially in the case of Black people, of being property themselves. As Patricia J. Williams writes in "On Being the Object of Property," "Master-slave relations … pursued a vision of blacks as simple-minded, strong-bodied economic actants. Thus, while blacks had an indisputable generative force in the marketplace, their presence could not be called activity; they had no active role in the market" (9–10). Here, Williams emphasizes the dichotomy between creativity and labor in the representation of Black people as "simple-minded" and "strong-bodied," so that Black people become what Rinaldo Walcott in *On Property* calls "labouring commodities" (102). As elaborated in the next section, these racist formulations of creativity and of ownership intersect in the idea of intellectual capital, enshrined in copyright law, which assigns rights for "original" works. On the one hand, translators and translation studies scholars have problematized the idea of originality in literary production,[18] on the other, they have also argued

for the recognition of the creative work of literary translation and advocated for translators to own copyright to their translations, both challenging and reproducing the figure of the individual genius. With the discourse around translators being the creative *authors* of translations comes, notably, the *proprietary* sense of authorship and intellectual capital, following the logic of racial capitalism.

To undo the inequities of racial capitalism, the structures and practices that comprise it must be radically reimagined and transformed, rather than simply trying to introduce a degree of racial diversity among those who benefit from it. As Walcott argues, "Increased inclusion in a corrupt and broken system will do very little to change the system itself" (99). In outlining how racial capitalism functions along the pathway toward professional literary translation, it becomes clear that racial inequity is a systemic problem, not only in the distribution of capital but also in how capital itself is defined: white supremacist logic determines what has value in the system and who can access it. This can be seen in the racist perceptions of language usage and of the legitimacy of forms of knowledge, as well as in the formulation of intellectual property. Diversity and inclusion projects, like mentorships and fellowships, that aim to facilitate access for translators of color to the publishing industry and its attendant gatekeeping are not adequate, then, for undoing the inequities of racial capitalism. They may teach translators of color how to play the game, so to speak, but they don't change the rules. In the short term, it makes sense for translators to advocate for retaining the copyright for their translations along with all its accompanying rights, including subsidiary rights. Contracts with better labor conditions, financial remuneration, and legal rights will help to make translation less a "labor of love" for the privileged few and more feasible as a profession for a more racially diverse group of translators. But as Jenkins and Leroy state,

> First, racial justice cannot be achieved by subsuming it under a generalized call for economic justice; the racially differentiated distribution of suffering under capitalism will not be rectified without a robust analysis of race. Second, capitalism cannot be rehabilitated through the inclusion of previously excluded groups; the racial violence of capitalism does not end where political and legal rights begin. (14)

Undoing the logic of racial capitalism in the translation profession over the long term will then, I argue, require the undoing of capitalism itself and its attendant formulations of property. The next section elaborates the racist foundations of intellectual property and copyright and their relation to translation and makes the case for the abolition of intellectual property.

Ownership Stories: Translation, Originality, and Intellectual Property

Copyright and intellectual property law relate to translation in two main ways: the copyright status of the text being translated and the copyright of the translation itself. If the text being translated is not in the public domain, permissions must be obtained in order to distribute the translation through publication, and for book-length translations especially, permission usually involves payment for the translation rights. This represents one cost covered by the economic capital of publishers of translations—and a barrier for smaller, independent publishers and literary journals. On the other side, translators are working to standardize their retention of copyright for their translations, as evidenced in model contracts like those available in the United States and the United Kingdom from PEN America (2012, updated 2017), the Society of Authors (2016), and the Authors Guild (2021). The legal frameworks regulating the copyright for the source text and translation occur at both the national and international levels, with the latter primarily enshrined in the Berne Convention—first adopted in 1886, with various revisions over the years and additional signatories—and the Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS), which went into effect in 1995 for all members of the World Trade Organization.[19] While these relatively long-standing agreements have naturalized the idea of the legal and moral rights related to copyright, intellectual property historians like Oren Bracha (2008, 2016, 2020) warn against treating copyright as a stable transhistorical and transnational concept. Copyright originally referred to the privilege to copy a book for the purpose of sale, and so it was granted to publishers rather than authors. It also, notably, concerned only a specific textual object such that "secondary uses" such as abridgments and translations did not constitute infringement (Bracha 2020 557). These exceptions were eliminated in the 1800s, Bracha argues, "to extract value from all possible markets" (2020 558), signaling the role of racial capitalism in translation's shifting relationship to copyright and intellectual property, which relied upon certain intersecting notions of authorship, creativity/originality, and ownership.

Conceptually and ideologically, copyright draws from the Romantic myth of the solitary author, despite the collaborative nature of creative work (Townley et al. 27). This framework of authorship brings together "individualism, originality, and ownership" (Bracha 2008 192), where each is needed to create the basis for copyright: a certain expression of an idea cannot be owned if it is already in common circulation or shared among a great many people. Ownership relies upon being able to identify the "origin" of the text-object, and the text-object must have a certain amount of "originality" that sets it apart sufficiently from other text-objects in order for the author to "own" it as intellectual property. As Rosemary J. Coombe writes, when

> the law recognizes an original work understood to embody the personality of a unique creator, as it does when affirming copyright … the power of the author is reinforced. [This] depend[s] for [its] intelligibility upon the assertion of a unitary point of identity—a metaphysics of authorial presence—that denies the investments of others in the commodity/text, and the constitutive history of others in its development, circulation, and significance. (62)

Important here is that it is not authorship or creatorship that leads to ownership; that is, the idea that one has written something original does not inevitably lead to its possession as property. Rather, ownership leads to authorship: it is "the requirement of property that creates creatorship" (McGuigan cited in Townley et al. 32). While copyright is construed as not only a legal but also a moral right, it is what Bracha calls a "motivated mystification" (2008 192) arising out of a tension between "possessive individualism" and "corporate liberalism" (Bracha 2016 310). As Christi A. Merrill writes, "the figure of the author became a convenient legal fiction behind which monopolistic publishing interests made forceful claim to intangible property in the singular for control over the sale of tangible property in the plural" (120). That is, while the myth of the individual Romantic genius remains the ideological representation of the basis for copyright, it actually serves the economic interests of capitalist corporate structures. Authorship and ownership are mutually constitutive in service of the production of capital.

When translators lay claim to copyright under racial capitalism, then, they implicitly must do so according to the logic of authorship as it functions in regard to intellectual property where, as Townley et al. put it, originality is "the threshold requirement for copyright" (29). With their relation to the source text, translations occupy a paradoxal legal status of being classified as "derivative works" in relation to the source text (and its copyright) at the same time as they are "protected as original works without prejudice to the copyright of the original work" (Berne Convention, quoted in Basamalah 102) since "a translator can be said to author a translation because translating originates a new medium of expression, a form for the foreign text in a different language and literature" (Venuti 1998 50). As Merrill writes, then, "The translator [is] cast in the dubious and institutionally duplicitous position of both author of a second original and at the same time copyist of the first original" (116). While translation studies scholars and literary translators, along with intellectual property scholars, have pointed out the derivative and collective nature of all creative work, the ascription of copyright continues to rely on notions of ownership tied to originality. In advocating for more recognition and better remuneration for their work, literary translators seeking to obtain and retain copyright of their translations consequently make recourse to these same notions of authorship, creativity, and originality

in reference to literary translation. The ALTA guide to entering the literary translation profession (2003), for example, states as one of its "few givens" that "[a] literary translation should stand on its own as a discrete work of literature of which the translator is the author" (8–9). This discourse draws from the "cult of originality" discussed in the previous chapter in which writer-translators usurped the author of the source text through the power of imaginative identification. The imagination in the last chapter that historically set the White translator apart from the "slavish" translator racialized as Other is the same creativity and originality that grants the (White) translator the right to own intellectual property in the form of the translation. It should be reiterated here, as Salah Basamalah does (11), that this cult of originality is a specifically Western formulation imposed on other parts of the world through international copyright agreements that seek to make of Western particularities universal, naturalized "truths."

The basis of copyright in individual authorship and originality was not an inevitability. Venuti, for example, discusses at least one other major competing framework, that of labor. As Venuti writes, under this "conflicting concept of authorship" that

> had prevailed before the mid-nineteenth century … copyright was reserved for the author, not because the work represented a personality, but because it was a product of labor, not because it expressed thoughts and feelings, but because it resulted from an investment of time and effort, mental and physical. (1998 54)

The framework of individual genius and originality mystifies and invisibilizes this labor, recuperating it as capital, a feature of capitalism in general. David Greetham discusses this invisibilization of labor in regard to scholarly editions where the "sweat of the brow" of the scholar is relegated to the back of the book, preserving the illusion that the text is singly authored by the individual genius whose work is being annotated and commented upon (139). This also, of course, calls to mind Venuti's invisibility of the translator, whose work is mystified and obscured by the "fluent" translation that reads "as if it were the original" (1995). What arises is a division between the genius of creation on the one hand and menial reproduction on the other. Lori Chamberlain's (1998) foundational essay on "Gender and the Metaphorics of Translation" demonstrates how this division occurs along gendered lines, with the idealized male genius producing the original and the female translator reproducing it. This division relates, too, to processes of racialization that emerge in the era of European imperialism and chattel slavery and that persist today in racial capitalism. Under chattel slavery in the United States, the patent for inventions by enslaved people was the property of their masters; enslavers "owned" the bodies and minds of the people they enslaved, and

consequently owned the products of their labor, both physical and intellectual. Bracha outlines a similar change in racial capitalism around the turn of the 20th century where employee-creators became employee wage-laborers for corporations, with the work of the employee coming to be the intellectual property of the employer (2016 130–132). As discussed below, such frameworks rely on racialized ideas about who "can" produce original work and who "can" own property that underline the inequitable distribution of intellectual property under racial capitalism.

As a key scholar at the intersection of critical race theory and the study of intellectual property, K.J. Greene identifies two main threads of how intellectual property upholds racism:

> First, black authors and inventors have found their works routinely appropriated and divested. Second, appropriated and distorted creative works protected by copyright, and trade symbols and imagery protected by trademark, have promoted derogatory racial stereotypes that facilitate racial subordination. (370)

By design, then, racial capitalism excludes or hinders people of color from accumulating economic, intellectual, cultural, and symbolic capital, exemplified in intellectual property law and practice. As Anjali Vats writes in *The Color of Creatorship*, "The consumer gaze is racialized through racial scripts that label people of color as objects, not subjects, of consumption and therefore neither the producers nor the consumers that trademark law was intended to protect" (10). Greene and Vats take many of their case studies and illustrations from music, for example in White blues musicians appropriating the work of Black musicians, copyrighting it, and profiting from it, while Black blues artists were swindled out of their copyrights or were excluded from claiming them through prejudicial definitions of authorship. In cases like this, the blues became Black music produced for a White audience by White blues musicians, following Vats's outline of the racialization of the objects, consumers, and producers or subjects of cultural goods. An early test case for international copyright law in relation to translation exemplifies this racialization as well: one of the major cases that led to current translation copyright law was Harriet Beecher Stowe's lawsuit alleging that her copyright had been infringed by an unauthorized German translation of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* serialized in a US newspaper—a book by a White author for White audiences that made Black people its object. (Stowe lost the case, but it became part of the turning point from copyright understood as the right to copy to understood as intellectual property.) Though he does not explicitly mention race, Basamalah notes a similar configuration of racialized intellectual property in the process of European imperialism:

> Colonial translations treat originals produced in the colonies as acquired property, and their originality as fundamentally different from that of European works. The colonized original, although it occupies the same position in terms of the translation process as the European original, cannot pretend to the same high-ranking position. (108)

What racial scripts of authorship, to use Vats's phrase, persist today when a White translator claims ownership over the translation of an author of color's work?

As Greene argues, "authorship, like race and gender, is socially constructed" (379). With the legal framework of authorship tied to originality, "[i]magination is articulated," Vats writes,

> with such characteristics as creativity and originality. Imagination is racialized through the invocation of racial scripts that label people of color as imitators who presumptively lack the capacity for groundbreaking thought. … Human progress is racialized through repeated racial scripts that label people of color as lazy thieves who are capable of only rote reproduction. (2020 10)

This dynamic in regard to translation is discussed at length in the previous chapter through the lens of "slavish" translation. The work of White translators in the modern era is understood in the West as the work of imagination and originality, thus fulfilling the requisites for copyright status, whereas translators of color are expected—both in terms of anticipated and demanded—to produce "mindless" literal translations, a work of labor rather than a work of genius. This dichotomy originated out of enslaved and colonized translators and interpreters of color, and as Vats states, "In the context of intellectual property law, conceptions of Black creatorship simply did not exist; it was not even until the late 1800s that they became structurally thinkable" (2019 116). Despite becoming structurally thinkable, these racial scripts persist today, for example, in the work of bridge translators of color who prepare a "literal" version of the source text for a White poet or creative writer and who are given secondary status in the authorship of translations. Vats (2019) describes how the musical artist Prince also linked contemporary copyright inequities to historical origins. In protest of his record label Warner Brothers' ownership of "Prince" as a commodity and its exploitative contracts, he performed with the word "SLAVE" written on his face and changed his name to an unpronounceable symbol outside of this copyright regime.

Vats presents Prince as an "intellectual property radical" (2019 114) who insisted on the right of Black creators to own the copyright to their works. In addition to fighting his record label for copyright, he was notorious for

scrupulously challenging any copyright infringement, including in fan videos (Vats 2019 115). While Prince's insistence that the imagination and originality of Black creators should guarantee them ownership of their work functions as a critique of racial capitalism, it nonetheless upholds a capitalist system, and therefore racial capitalism as a whole. As Vats notes, Prince's

> embrace of Black capitalism endorses an economic order that is both intertwined with race liberalism and the necessary oppression of labor. Prince, then, offers important starting points for envisioning Black creatorship and Black personhood but not radical racial justice. Achieving the latter requires dramatic reimagining of economic relationality, including intellectual property itself. (2019 124)

With this in mind, it is important to remember Bracha's "commitment … to push against a strong tendency generated by immersion in the practices of a market society to project these practices as natural, universal, or inevitable for any human society…" (2020 567). Not only are the formulations of authorship under copyright not natural or inevitable, neither, too, is copyright itself. And if, as Ibram X. Kendi argues, racist policies and practices preceded racist discourse, rather than vice versa (9)—that is, racist discourse was not the basis for creating racist policies but rather was used as an excuse for exploitative practices—then it is not enough to change the racist logic at the heart of copyright when the practice itself is rooted in racist exploitation of the labor of people of color for a gain in intellectual (and economic, cultural, and symbolic) capital for White people. Bracha reads the history of intellectual property in/as the history of capitalism (2020), and since as Jenkins and Leroy maintain, there is no capitalism outside of racial capitalism, the only way out of racial capitalism in relation to the intellectual capital or intellectual property of copyright is its abolition. In the Black radical tradition, Walcott posits the abolition of property as a necessary part of Black liberation, a move I here tie specifically to intellectual property.

In this, my reimagining of translation's relationship to intellectual property differs from others who have critiqued copyright's treatment of translation. Venuti, for example, takes a more reformist tack of limiting copyright for both source text author and translator (1998 65–66), and Merrill argues that "[o]ur task as scholars engaged in critical translation studies is to theorize the makeshift ownership translation practice already engaged in ways that make productive (and possibly reproductive) use of the tensions inherent in concepts of intellectual property" (127). And though Basalamah "question[s] the legitimacy of international copyright law" due to its basis in European colonization and inequitable distribution of intellectual and economic capital between so-called developing and developed countries (109), he ultimately calls for a kind of debt forgiveness or reparations toward more "ethical copyright

and translation rights" (112). Over the short term and under the current system of racial capitalism, advocating for translator copyright, especially for translators of color, can serve as an important means to make the profession more financially sustainable and thus potentially accessible to more translators of color, a move I support. However, there is a danger over the long term of leaning too heavily into a conception of the creative work of translation entangled with notions of authorship and ownership. Translation can and should be celebrated as creative work, but not in ways that link creation to ownership. Along with short-term advocacy for copyright, for racial justice in the field of literary translation, a long-term reimagining of the creative work of translation needs to occur, no matter how utopian.

As Walcott argues in reference to the work of Black women abolitionists, abolition is not or not only a tearing down but a building of something new (105). I suggest a turn toward literary translation as labor rather than as authorship under copyright regime. Importantly, however, this turn toward labor would also avoid the logic of labor being grounds for ownership of intellectual property, as outlined by Venuti, or in the capitalist sense described by Merrill in which land or the commons becomes property through the work of labor and cultivation, a logic which nonetheless excluded peasants from property in favor of landowners (122–123). Instead, the labor of translation would be remunerated in itself, without leading to the production of intellectual capital or ownership. This would return "the work"—the legal term for the intangible object of copyright law—to the process of production, to a verb in motion, rather than being a product for accumulation. It simultaneously returns property to the commons, so that work functions for the common good. As Walcott writes, "A renewed idea of the commons for our times brings along with it a different idea of care … Stewardship is an essential aspect of abolition, and in this instance would include collective responsibility for our shared resources as a basis for how we care for each other" (95). Walcott here draws from the Black radical tradition of communalism (96), which occurs alongside but is not synonymous with Marxist alternatives to capitalism. If creative workers were adequately compensated for their labor, the insistence on ownership of the work would not be necessary, and cultural and creative works would be freely accessible to wider audiences.[20] In order for literary translators to be sustained economically, resources would need to be reallocated to amply remunerate the *labor* of translation, and other social structures would need to be in place, like equitable access to education, healthcare, and housing. What I want to emphasize here is that true racial justice in the literary translation profession is not possible through a few DEI initiatives—it requires radical, systemic transformation of social and cultural structures. Bringing race and racial capitalism into the discussion of translation studies and literary translation thus asks us to think in new and bigger ways, even when our actions might be small. As prison abolitionist Mariame

Kaba writes, "Changing everything might sound daunting, but it also means there are many places to start, infinite opportunities to collaborate, and endless imaginative interventions and experiments to create" (5).

Notes

1 For a detailed discussion of decisions around racial terminology and capitalization in this book, which varies by chapter, see the Preface. Briefly, in this chapter, I capitalize Black and White as demographic categories.
2 "Where Is All the Book Data?" (2022), an introduction by Melanie Walsh to a special section of *Public Books* called "Hacking the Culture Industries," reveals how little of any data about book sales is actually available to academic researchers or anyone outside of the book industry. The best sales data can be found in the BookScan database, but only certain types of individuals and institutions are allowed to purchase a license for it, and even its sales data is incomplete along with not tracking for things like race and ethnicity of the author. The Post45 Data Collective (https://data.post45.org/), who collaborated with *Public Books* on the special section, comprise one important initiative to make book-industry data open access.
3 The ALTA survey was specifically designed not only to provide demographic data but also feedback about the experience of people with marginalized identities with the organization. Because it targeted questions of diversity and inclusivity, it is possible that translators of color may have disproportionately responded, somewhat skewing the percentages and giving an inflated sense of the racial diversity of literary translators into English.
4 The disaggregated numbers are 9% Asian or Asian British in the publishing industry, in line with the general demographics of England and Wales; 3% Black, Black British, Caribbean, or African in the publishing industry vs. 4% England and Wales; 4% Mixed or Multiple ethnic group in the publishing industry vs. 3% England and Wales; and 1% other vs. 2% England and Wales (18).
5 The "big five" US publishing companies are Hachette Livre, HarperCollins, Macmillan Publishers, Penguin Random House, and Simon & Schuster. In 2020, Penguin Random House attempted to purchase Simon & Schuster, which would have made it the big four, but the merger fell through after being blocked due to antitrust law.
6 Seventy-three percent of respondents reported having experienced microaggressions at work, with microaggressions defined as "brief and commonplace comments, actions, or environmental indignities (whether intentional or unintentional) that subtly communicate a prejudiced attitude toward any marginalized group" (12). Eighty-nine percent of respondents had "felt that it was their job to educate others about diversity" (15), and 47% had "been asked to do a sensitivity read or cultural consultation on [a] project not directly related to their job or lived experience" (16). The survey data, which included both quantitative and qualitative responses, was collected in 2018 and published in 2021.
7 According to a 2015 report from the UK-based organization Literature Across Frontiers analyzing data from the British Library for translations published in English from 2000 to 2012, the top ten most translated languages were: French, German, Spanish, Russian, Italian, Swedish, Norwegian, Dutch, Arabic, and Japanese, respectively (Büchler and Trentacosti 2015).
8 For more on the way authors of color, particularly postcolonial authors, are packaged and marketed in the West, see, for example, Sarah Brouillette's *Postcolonial Writers in the Global Literary Marketplace* (2007) and Graham Huggan's *The Postcolonial Exotic: Marketing the Margins* (2001).

9 See, for example, Wallace (2017) and Chiang (2023).

10 A 2017 report (Dettling et al.) from the Federal Reserve System states that "Black families' median and mean net worth is less than 15 percent that of white families," and Hispanic family median and mean net worth was 20% or less of White family wealth. Though the report indicates that family wealth has recently increased across all racial and ethnic groups, the "long-standing and substantial" disparity between White families and families of other races and ethnicities has not changed much.

11 A 2017 report from the Commission on Language Learning of the American Academy of Arts & Sciences noted that "more states report a teacher shortage in languages than in any other subject" (10). It showed a significant drop in the number of middle schools offering world languages over the period 1997–2008, from 75% to 58% (8). The number of public elementary schools teaching languages other than English also dropped to only 15% over the same period, in comparison with about 50% of private elementary schools offering language instruction in 2008.

12 According to 2021 data from NAFSA: Association of International Educators, while Black students comprised 13.1% of post-secondary enrollment in the United States in the 2020–2021 academic year, they comprised only 4.1% of U.S. students abroad.

13 A 2018 study (Cataldi et al.) by the National Center for Education Statistics found that students whose parents had not attended college or had attended some college without obtaining a degree were less likely to take advanced courses in high school, less likely to enroll in college themselves, and more likely to drop out of college before obtaining a degree than their peers who had at least one parent with a college degree. In another report (Redford and Hoyer) from 2017, White students made up 70% of the group whose parents had attended college but only 49% of first-generation students; Black students 11% and 14%, respectively, and Hispanic/Latino students 9% and 27%, respectively.

14 For example, at Harvard, "the admission rate for legacy applicants … was higher than 33 percent, compared to 6 percent for non-legacies" between 2010 and 2015, while "70 percent of legacy students were white" in the class of 2019 (Cineas 2023). Meanwhile, "the African American admit rate fell from 12.9% to 6.2%" from the classes of 2009 and 2016, due to the "sharp rise in the number of low-scoring African American applicants," with scoring encompassing the SAT general and subject tests and high school grades (Arcidiacono et al. 2).

On June 29, 2023, the US Supreme Court ruled that race could not be considered a factor in college and university admissions.

15 As the previous chapter shows, however, sometimes even knowledge of two languages is not required when translators work collaboratively or in "bridge translation" relationships where a literal translation is prepared by a translator and then "polished" into a "literary" text by a second person with no knowledge of the source language. Bridge translation frequently involves a bridge translator of color and a White poet, demonstrating already how whiteness functions as a kind of qualification, or, in the terms of this chapter, capital that replaces other basic qualifications to translate.

16 According to 2016 data from the Association of Writers and Writing Programs, there was a mean of 73% White students across creative writing programs, from Associate in Arts through PhD. This proportion was highest (80%) at the MA level, followed by 77% at BFA, 76% at BA, and 75% at MFA. Interestingly, 23% of students enrolled in PhD programs in creative writing were Black and only 50% White. Across the other degrees, the percentage of Black students ranges from 8% to 13%.

17 In a study on the degrees held by literary prizewinners, Claire Grossman et al. (2021) found that those with an elite degree (Ivy League, Stanford, University of Chicago) are nine times more likely to win than those without one. More specifically, "those who attended Harvard are 17 times more likely to win," and a writer who earned their MFA from the Iowa Writers' Workshop is "49 times more likely to win compared to writers who earned their MFA at any other program since 2000" (np). Thus, while the study found that "since 2000 those who identify as other than white are 3.5 times more likely to win a literary prize," this was also correlated with writers who had attended an elite program so that "although Black writers have won more prizes in recent years, they have had to do more, be 'better' educated, to be recognized as excellent." And while Black writers have been winning a higher proportion of prizes recently, the growth in the number of prizes means that White writers have still been winning a higher total number of prizes per year than previously. It would be instructive to calculate similar data for translation prizes and grants.

18 See, for example, Karen Emmerich's *Literary Translation and the Making of Originals* (2017) and Rebecca L. Walkowitz's *Born Translated* (2016), among many others.

19 For a detailed account of the negotiations that led to the Berne Convention rules about translations, and the stances taken by different nations, see Wirtén (2011).

20 For another vision of a collectivist, collaborative, and communalist future for literary translation, framed in terms of eco-translation, see Meg Berkobien's 2020 dissertation, "(E)co-Translation: Toward a Collective Task."

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3

BEYOND RACIAL "DIVERSITY"

Identity Politics in Translation

This book is being written at a particular moment of "culture wars" over race and racism in the West, especially in the United States. In the summer of 2020, at the height of COVID-19 pandemic lockdowns, a wave of Black Lives Matter protests swept the United States and world following the murders of Ahmaud Arbery, George Floyd, and Breonna Taylor. While the Black Lives Matter movement for racial justice and particularly against racist police brutality had been growing since it was founded in 2013 after the acquittal of Trayvon Martin's murderer, the 2020 protests reached unprecedented numbers, with estimates placing it as the largest movement in US history (Buchanan et al. 2020). The protests also spread across Europe, Central and South America, Africa, and Asia. One thing setting the protests apart from past racial justice and civil rights movements was the heightened participation by white people; three-quarters of protests were held in majority-white counties in the United States (Buchanan et al. 2020).[1] With the public interest and outcry so widespread, businesses and institutions of all kinds released statements in support of racial justice and made promises to improve diversity, equity, and inclusion within their ranks. The protests also sparked huge interest in anti-racist writing, with books like Robin DiAngelo's *White Fragility*, Ibram X. Kendi's *How to be an Antiracist*, and Ijeoma Oluo's *So You Want to Talk About Race*—some of which were years old—topping bestseller lists. Even in the years leading up to 2020, diversity training was becoming common at schools and places of employment, and candidates for academic jobs began to be asked to submit a "diversity statement" about their experiences with and commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion in line with the institution's stated mission.

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At the same time as, and in response to, the mainstreaming of anti-racism, a surge of anti-anti-racism has erupted. One tactic of this backlash is the appropriation and deformation of terms from Black anti-racist organizing, scholarship, and popular culture, though this culture war is much more than discursive. Starting in mid-2020, prominent politicians and public intellectuals on the right in the United States have weaponized the term "critical race theory," characterizing it as a form of racism itself that seeks to shame white students into guilt for historical racism.[2] At the time of writing, bills or other measures to ban the teaching of "critical race theory" (CRT)—or teaching about race in certain ways—have been enacted in 15 states, with similar proposals in a total of 41 states, some of which were stalled, vetoed, or voted down and some of which are continuing to move through legislatures. The actual target of the anti-CRT campaign is anti-racist education and diversity training more broadly, since critical race theory, as discussed in the Introduction, emerged more narrowly out of legal studies, though its application has spread to other fields. Part of the success in this culture war by the Right has been to leave liberals quibbling over whether the targets of bans really constitute critical race theory, when, as Kendi (2021) has argued, the Right is not interested in actually challenging anti-racist views held by the Left: "They aren't arguing against anti-racist thinkers. They aren't arguing against critical race theorists. These critics are arguing against themselves" by creating straw-man definitions of anti-racist positions (np).

While liberals have pushed back against misrepresentations of the term "critical race theory," however, they have participated in the appropriation and distortion of other terms from Black organizing and culture, such as "woke," "cancel," and "identity politics." "Woke" originally referred to being aware of social oppression, how it functions, and one's relationship to it, a usage that dates back to the first half of the 20th century (Newman-Bremang 2023). As this meaning moved into usage by white mainstream culture in the 2010s, it eventually became twisted to mean a self-righteous and hardline type of social justice activism ready to criticize any deviations from a supposed "correct" way to speak about or act toward oppressed identities. It also refers to activists who mainly use social media rather than taking "real" action. Similarly, "cancel"—originally a term used by Black Twitter users to indicate they would stop supporting cultural artists they found problematic—evolved to a term associated with censorship and "witch hunts." While Black vernacular is consistently appropriated by mainstream culture, as Clyde McGrady (2021) writes, "With 'canceled' and 'woke.' there's a twist: Not only have these words been appropriated from Black culture, but they have also been weaponized to sneer at the values of many young Black liberals" (np). The deformation of terms like woke, cancel, critical race theory, and—the focus of this

chapter—identity politics serves to usurp these tools designed for racial justice analysis and activism and turn them against racial justice struggles.

The culture wars around these contested words and ideas have filtered into discussions of translation, and these terms have also spread internationally through the act of translation itself via neologisms and loanwords. Thus, the current French Minister of National Education Jean-Michel Blanquer has denounced "*le wokisme*" (Battaglia et al. 2021); a journalist wonders in *Die Welt* (Schneider 2022) whether the German government's *Regenbogenportal* (Rainbow Portal) was infected by the "*Woke-Virus*" for its definitions of whiteness and Blackness that pointed to white privilege and capitalized Black but not white as a sign of empowerment; and an Argentine feature (Grosso 2021) about *"cultura de la cancelación"* gives the resignation of Dutch writer Marieke Lucas Rijneveld from the project to translate US poet Amanda Gorman's "The Hill We Climb" as an example of the phenomenon. As discussed in the Introduction, critiques, particularly from Black cultural commentators in the Netherlands, such as fashion journalist Janice Deul and spoken word poet Zaïre Krieger, prompted Rijneveld, who is white, to step down from translating the poem by Black spoken word poet Gorman, who recited it at the US presidential inauguration of Joe Biden on January 20, 2021. Proving popular with the inauguration audience, the poem was subsequently released as a stand-alone book, with a preface by US media icon Oprah Winfrey, and translated into various other languages for international distribution. The announcement of Rijneveld's selection for the Dutch translation elicited disappointed reactions on social media and a now-infamous opinion piece by Deul (2021), which ran under the headline "A white translator for the poetry of Amanda Gorman: incomprehensible."[3] This criticism of white translators being hired to translate Gorman's poetry was often characterized as an uproar from a "woke mob" resulting in the "cancellation" of Rijneveld and later the Catalan translator Victor Obiols, whom Gorman's team asked to be replaced for a translator with a "different profile." Recourse to such rhetorical strategies must be understood within the larger context of anti-anti-racism enacted both by the social conservatism of the Right and by the liberal humanism discourse of the Left (see also Kotze 2021).

In this chapter, I look more closely at the Gorman controversy and the question of the translator's race through the lens of identity politics, another term maligned by many on the Right and Left alike. Yet again, however, the meaning of identity politics has been distorted from its original usage, as formulated by Black radical feminist organizers and intellectuals, in what Olúfẹ́mi O. Táíwò calls "elite capture," which "describe[s] how political projects can be hijacked in principle or in effect by the well positioned and resourced … and helps to explain how public resources such as knowledge, attention, and values become distorted and distributed by power structures"

(10). Given how the term has been highjacked and distorted, I begin by turning to the concept of identity politics as first articulated in a 1977 statement by the Combahee River Collective, an organizing group comprised of Black socialist lesbian feminists. For the women of Combahee, identity is a position from which to launch a politics in solidarity with other marginalized groups rather than a dogmatically policed social category. In my analysis of the Gorman controversy, I show that the positions critiquing identity politics actually practice it in the distorted sense, while the position critiqued reaches toward the original sense. The result is that even some defenders of selecting a Black translator for the Gorman translations reproduce the talking points of anti-anti-racist discourse and allow, what I call in the Introduction, the norms of whiteness in translation to go unnamed and masquerade as "universal." Instead of simply calling for a Black translator in the interest of more "diversity," what might it mean to take seriously the idea that a Black translator might translate differently—not from an essentialized experience but from a situated politics? At the end of the chapter, in order to illustrate what this might look like, I present the work of translators of color, particularly Black women, who enact identity politics in their practice. Rather than being divisive, identity politics in the context of translation, I argue, can lead to coalitional solidarity in support of racial justice as opposed to a liberal humanist vision of social justice in the form of "diversity" that reproduces the norms of white supremacy.

Identity Politics Revisited

I begin this section by quoting at length from the Combahee River Collective statement in order to foreground the words of these groundbreaking women activists, intellectuals, writers, and editors and to return us here to their initial formulation:

> Above all else, our politics initially sprang from the shared belief that Black women are inherently valuable, that our liberation is a necessity not as an adjunct to somebody else's but because of our need as human persons for autonomy. This may seem so obvious as to sound simplistic, but it is apparent that no other ostensibly progressive movement has ever considered our specific oppression as a priority or worked seriously for the ending of that oppression. … Our politics evolve from a healthy love for ourselves, our sisters and our community which allows us to continue our struggle and work.
>
> This focusing upon our own oppression is embodied in the concept of identity politics. We believe that the most profound and potentially radical politics come directly out of our own identity, as opposed to working to end somebody else's oppression. (18–19)

The Combahee River Collective arose from the marginalization of women of color from the second-wave feminist movement along with sexism and homophobia in the Black liberation movement of the same time (16–17). The position of the women within the collective was informed by their multiple oppressed identities, which they found to be interlocking rather than additive. That is, they were not simply oppressed as women, as Black people, and as lesbians, but specifically as queer Black women. This framework of analysis served as a predecessor to Kimberlé Crenshaw's (1989) concept of intersectionality, which developed from her work in critical race theory around anti-discrimination lawsuits brought forward by Black women. At the heart of intersectional thinking and the identity politics of the Combahee River Collective is the idea that the causes of oppression, too, are interlocking and cannot be tackled independently: racism, misogyny, homophobia, capitalism, and imperialism work in concert, and real justice can only be achieved by taking all of these into account when engaging in intellectual work and activism (Combahee 19–20, 22). For this reason, they advocate for coalitions with other oppressed identity groups since they share the same overarching targets for action. International coalitions are also highlighted, as the collective expresses solidarity with "Third World women" generally (26).

Identity politics has been subject to a range of criticism over the years, including much that misconstrues its function and aims. As Linda Martín Alcoff and Satya P. Mohanty summarize the negative attitudes along the political spectrum, the Right finds that identity-based groups "appear to be threatening individual freedom" while the Left "[sees them] as threatening the progressive coalition and wallowing in victimization" (2). Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor also describes a tendency among some liberals and others on the left to take identity politics to mean "that unless you suffer a particular oppression, that you have no role in the struggle against it. And so there's this real emphasis on experience … as the main kind of way that gives you the ability to fight a particular oppression" (62). In academia, where identity politics has also been prevalent, it is sometimes criticized as essentializing and problematic in light of a belief that "identities are ideological fictions, imposed from above, and used to divide and control populations" (Alcoff and Mohanty 3). While such critiques cast identity politics as rigid and divisive, they ignore the importance to the Black feminists who developed it of solidarity and coalition-building. In an interview with Taylor, Barbara Smith, a founding Combahee member whose name has become most associated with identity politics explains:

> we are people who embody all these identities [women, Black, lesbians, working class, workers], and we have a right to build and define political theory and practice based upon that reality. That was all we were trying to say. … We didn't mean that if you're not the same as us you're nothing.

> We were not saying that we didn't care about anybody who wasn't exactly like us. … it would be really boring only to do political work with people who are exactly like me. (Taylor 61)

For Smith, it is important for people to take action even when an issue may not concern them directly because "justice is more important than their status and their privilege" (Taylor 63–64, 65). While identity might be the position from which a politics is articulated, Smith maintains that sharing in organizing and intellectual work means having a shared analysis, and notably, one that is anti-capitalist and revolutionary (Taylor 69).

Identity politics, I argue, is one effective strategy against the unbearable whiteness of translation studies and literary translation described in the Introduction. The intersectional thinking identity politics proposes provides a multi-axis analysis that does not leave race out of the equation as feminist and queer translation studies have tended to do. According to Alcoff and Mohanty, past social movements, including feminist and civil rights movements, advanced two main ideas: "(1) that identities are often resources of knowledge especially relevant for social change, and that; (2) oppressed groups need to be at the forefront of their own liberation" (2). That we draw from identity in knowledge- and culture-production is often gestured at in a vague way by white scholars and translators by mentioning their positionality without much deeper analysis of its effects. In a conversation in *Translating Slavery* (1994)—the first major work to specifically take up the frame of race, as opposed to colonialism, in translation—Sharon Bell and Françoise Massardier-Kenney give clear evidence of how identity and experience shape their work. While translating a text by 19th-century French abolitionist Germaine de Staël, they found that Bell—an African-American woman—primarily applied the lens of race, whereas Massardier-Kenney—a white French woman—primarily applied the lens of class (Kadish and Massardier-Kenney 176–182). It hardly seems controversial here, as it did in the Gorman case, that race matters in developing a politics of analyzing and translating texts, even if it is not essentially determinative.

Through their discussion, Bell and Massardier-Kenney arrive at a shared multi-axis analysis of the text, which points toward a sort of coalitional solidarity. But without the second idea above—that scholars and translators of color should lead an anti-racist transformation of translation—the white status quo in translation would remain, even if there were more diverse representation. To admit more scholars and translators of color into academia and publishing through gatekeeping that maintains the same standards of "merit" and then trains these scholars and translators according to these standards simply maintains translation norms and values shaped by whiteness, as described in the Introduction. To ask these scholars and translators to *only* focus on diversity issues also signals tokenism and the idea that they

are not qualified to participate in other conversations around translation. As we will see in the next section, the literary translation and translation studies communities continue to hold the line of whiteness in these ways, pushing back on an identity politics that would be truly transformative for translation.

Any anti-racist project in translation studies and the literary translation sector, then, must not only push back against anti-anti-racist backlash but also be attentive to the critiques made by Black activists and intellectuals of the commodification of anti-racism into the "anti-racism industry"; of the institutionalization of diversity, equity, and inclusion as ineffective measures; and of a liberal focus on individualism in anti-racist work rather than collective, structural transformation. Black studies scholar Rinaldo Walcott provides a useful synthesis of these critiques:

> the neoliberal organization of life has rendered most politics reformist and thus the return of diversity. Significantly, the present stalemate is characterized by rhetorics of diversity and inclusion and a niche placement that often does not fundamentally question the foundational arrangements that have produced the institutional and structural conditions of contemporary life. (401)

Translator Madhu H. Kaza addresses this same issue in the literary translation sector, arguing for more inclusion but also a fundamental shift in the institutions and practices of literary translation, not merely assimilation into existing structures and norms:

> We need to create more conversations, contribute more resources to commissioning works by people of color who don't necessarily already see themselves as translators. It's resources. It's invitations. If you're having this big translation party, it involves opening the doors so that more people can come to the party. But the party has to change, too. … That's the part that doesn't get said as often. Because, for me, the problem with very reductive ideas of diversity and inclusion is that it's like, "We're going to keep doing the same thing, but we'll add three different people of color to this." (Perry et al. 186–187)

As Kaza highlights here, the status quo is one of whiteness, not only in who is present "at the party" but also in how things are done. For Táíwò, elite capture also severely limits which people with marginalized identities are admitted into the "room" of the party to begin with, and so he advocates for "building a new house" instead, that is, building new institutions by "redistributing social resources and power" (78, 113). Drawing from the lessons of Combahee's identity politics, Táíwò's "constructionist approach" requires

a "politics of solidarity" (121). This call for solidarity in building "a new house" recalls Audre Lorde's warning that "the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house," such that the only way forward for feminism is solidarity with those "identified as outside the structures," such as Black women, lesbians, working-class women, older women, and women in the Third World: "Without community there is no liberation, only the most vulnerable and temporary armistice between an individual and her oppression" (1984 112).[4] For truly radical transformation, then, anti-racist action within translation studies and the literary translator sector must be guided by and in solidarity with those marginalized by its structures.

In the controversy around the Gorman translations, critics of Deul on both the right and left invoked identity politics as leading to divisive cultural fragmentation, distorting it from its original call for solidarity and coalition-building. Even those sympathetic to demands for a more "diverse" pool of professional translators often failed to fully account for the differences it might make *in the translation itself* for a Black translator to take on the project. Instead of "allowing" more translators of color into the room in a politics of representation, identity politics urges us to think about how to transform the room—the structures, norms, and practices—of translation itself. After all, Gorman's own personal success, while symbolically important, has done little to significantly alter the landscape of poetry publishing. The Gorman controversy illustrates the limits of simple calls for "more diversity" while not tending to the lessons of identity politics in its original sense, especially in its multi-axis analysis, of which anti-capitalism and international solidarity are key components. In the next section, I reconsider the Gorman case through the lens of the Combahee River Collective's identity politics and show how even supporters of Deul's call for a Black translator reproduced some of the discourse of anti-anti-racism, thus wittingly or not underpinning the side of white supremacy in the culture wars.

The Gorman Case and Identity Politics

Ironically, many translators commented on Deul's critique of the selection of Rijneveld without actually having read a full translation from Dutch of Deul's opinion piece. Her text was published in *De Volkskrant* on February 25, 2021; news stories began appearing in the international press the next day; and an English translation was finally made available to a wide international audience when Haidee Kotze published hers online, with Deul's permission, on March 18. International media and social media commentators latched onto two excerpts from Deul's opinion piece:

> Harvard alumna Gorman … describes herself as a 'skinny Black girl.' And her work and life are coloured by her experiences and identity as a black woman. Is it then—to put it most mildly—not a missed opportunity to

> commission Marieke Lucas Rijneveld for this job? They are white, non-binary, have no experience in this area, but yet are, according to [Dutch publisher] Meulenhoff, the 'dream translator'?[5]
>
> Nothing to the detriment of Rijneveld's qualities, but why not choose a writer who—just like Gorman—is a spoken word artist, young, female, *and:* unapologetically Black? (np, italics original)

Critics of Deul interpreted her statements to mean that only Black women can properly and should translate Black women authors, a straw-man argument, especially in the context of the piece as a whole. There, Deul notes,

> A similar vote of confidence is not often afforded to people of colour. Quite the contrary. Whether in fashion, art, business, politics or literature, the merits and qualities of black people are only sporadically valued—if they are noticed, at all. Something that applies even more so to black women, who are systematically marginalised. (np)

Deul lists several Black women poets who could have been commissioned instead and urges "[a]gents, publishers, editors, translators, reviewers in the Netherlands" to publish, hire, and fairly compensate "homegrown" people of color, not just international ones like Gorman (np). Deul points, then, not to identity in an essentialist way but to structures of power that marginalize people of color—especially Black women—and therefore maintain white supremacy.

Before addressing the way that critics repackaged Deul's argument and their responses to it, it is worth analyzing the characterization of Deul and other Black Dutch women activists, journalists, and poets, such as Krieger, who tweeted about Rijneveld's selection. Deul's profession as fashion journalist was regularly mentioned in order to discredit her qualifications to comment on the issue. She and the other Dutch Black women were also frequently described as a "social media mob" of "activists," again, with the latter term serving to undermine the merits of their argument. This, instead of viewing them as readers and potential creators of translations. Similarly, in social media discussion spaces such as the Literary Translation group on Facebook (comprised of literary translators located mainly in Anglophone contexts but also throughout the world), translators who defended calls for a Black translator were also labeled "activists," implicitly—and sometimes explicitly—questioning whether they were actually experienced translators and understood literary translation. In addition to representing the situation as wokeness gone wild, critics in Europe also framed it as a specifically US brand of wokeness and racial politics imposed upon other cultures.

The consistent use of "activist" in a pejorative sense here functions as a type of gatekeeping: race is seen as an unsuitable topic for discussion—except in an abstract, colorblind way—in the liberal humanist practice of literary translation, which only "qualified" translators should comment upon. The critique raised by Deul and others is classified instead as what Sara Ahmed calls complaint, the way claims of sexism and racism are received by institutions: "To be heard as making a tiresome complaint is to be heard as being tiresome, as distracting somebody from doing '*important* work elsewhere'" (2, italics original). Due to the intersection of sexism and anti-Blackness, or what Moya Bailey (2021) has named misogynoir, "Black women who make claims of discrimination and who demand that policies and procedures may not be as fair as they seem can more easily be dismissed as complainers who want special, unearned favors" (Patricia Hill Collins, cited in Ahmed 2). In one piece only tangentially mentioning the Gorman controversy, for example, the authors describe Deul as having "set off a powder keg" (*mettait le feu aux poudres*) through her "incendiary" (*incendiare*) opinion piece, which she "chokes out" (*s'était-elle étranglée*) onto the page (Deneufbourg and Michel 110). Deul is thus characterized as overly emotional as well as insurrectionist, reproducing the stereotype of the "angry Black woman."[6] All of this discourse in response to Deul's and others' concerns holds the line of whiteness, pushing out questions of race in order to let the dominance of whiteness go unnamed and silencing people of color, especially Black women.

Another means by which critics sought to discredit Deul's position was, as mentioned above, to distort it into a straw-man argument that only a Black poet can translate a Black poet. While Deul never actually made this claim, the way in which critiques of this position were articulated is telling: on the one hand, they attacked "identity politics," and on the other, upheld colorblindness as an ideal in translation. Kenan Malik in *The Guardian*, for example, decried "a world divided on identity lines" where "[p]articular experiences or cultural forms are deemed to 'belong' to particular groups, and out of bounds for others. 'Stay in your lane' is the fashionable mantra" (np), recalling the distorted sense of identity politics described by Taylor. Attacking this version of identity politics passes as anti-racism because it condemns discrimination based on racial identity. As Charles A. Gallagher writes, "When racial identity shifts from being an individual expression to one that is used to organize politically or make group based grievances whites view it as racist" (31), though I would add that, as critical race studies argues, one does not have to be white in order to make recourse to frameworks that uphold white supremacy, as Malik does here. Malik does acknowledge the racism in the literary translation sector and also refers to Ralph Ellison to put forward a vision of identity more in line with the Combahee statement:

> Identity, for Ellison, was a means of engaging with the word [world?], of gaining entry into the inner lives of others. One's experiences as a black man provided the raw material through which to understand the experiences of white workers or of Jewish women. And their experiences could help them to empathise with yours. (np)

On the whole, however, Malik's piece ends up mired, like many others, in the distortion of Deul's argument, a means to an end in decrying contemporary "identity politics."

In contrast to a dystopian vision of translation divided along identity lines, critics of "Deul's" text largely couched their responses in the language of universal humanism and colorblindness, which, as we have seen in the Introduction, are frameworks that attempt to pass as anti-racist while actually maintaining the status quo of white supremacy. One of the most common rhetorical strategies was to posit translation as a humanist transcendence of difference. Writer and translator Jhumpa Lahiri, for example, expressed in an interview:

> It goes against what translation at heart really is, which is a bringing together of those who are different, and don't know one another's experiences vis a vis language. What's beautiful and powerful and ethically valuable about translation is this intense attention to the other, and not only attention, but an identification with a sort of transference. (Gutterman np)

Translation here is framed as transcendent of difference, as inherently—or at least "at heart"—good. With translation signifying universal humanism, Deul and others' criticism of the choice of translator, then, became refashioned into a threat not only to translation but to liberal humanism itself. Mridula Nath Chakraborty closed her essay on the controversy: "So let a thousand translations bloom: that would be a start and not an end to translation as we know it now" (np). This is an odd conclusion, given that Chakraborty details through her generally balanced essay how translation has worked not only as a force for transcultural understanding but also for domination and colonialism, "a weapon privileging the powerful" (np). Given the many ways it has served oppression, do we really want translation to stay the way we know it now?

According to Chakraborty, "The act and the art of translation requires the permission to transcend borders, the permission to make mistakes, and the permission to be repeated, by anyone who feels the tempestuous tug, and the clarion call, of the unfamiliar" (np). This continued framing of translation as an inherent good in service of universal humanism that "anyone" should be allowed to practice despite "mak[ing] mistakes" also serves as an alibi for

white translators to give themselves "permission" to translate anything, regardless of whether their practice perpetuates dominance, colonialism, racism, and other inequities. Even many white translators sympathetic to the argument for more diversity in the literary translator sector dodged the implication that they should not accept some jobs for which a translator of color might be more suitable, and so a self-defensive backlash emerged in the form of white fragility, the target of Korean translator Anton Hur's "The Great White Canceling" satirizing the hyperbolic responses of white translators worried about losing the benefits of white privilege in the translation sector: "It's too bad that instead of confronting your repressed guilt and conceding some of your systemic power, you had to project your guilt instead and, well, [have your skull] end up in my dishwasher" (2021 np).

The question of systemic power and not just "permission" but institutional support to translate is the main thrust of Deul's actual argument. As Haidee Kotze argues in perhaps the most insightful piece to arise in the wake of the controversy,

> [t]he question raised by Deul is not principally about who 'may' (who has permission) or even 'can' (is able to) write or translate particular experiences. The question is who is, institutionally, given the space to articulate this experience, to participate, to be visible. Who gets to have a seat at the table? A place on the podium? A prize? An interview or column in the newspaper? The exclusions, historically and contemporary, along race and gender lines, among others, are clear. The point is how institutions, like publishers, can work towards more inclusivity. ("Translation is the canary" np)[7]

This perspective was similarly raised in statements by the American Literary Translators Association in the United States and the Translators Association of the Society of Authors in the United Kingdom, but also always with the caveat that identity should not determine the authors or literatures one translates.[8] For example, the ALTA statement notes, "Legitimizing translation according to a simplistic schema of identity matching would be a problem, but that is not what occurred in this case" (np); instead "the foundational problem this controversy reveals is the scarcity of Black translators and other translators of color, a scarcity caused by long-term patterns of discrimination in education and publishing" (np). The Society of Authors Statement claims, "We have heard calls to limit who can translate whom, for translators to be chosen on the basis of their identity" (np)—from whom? In response, the SOA position is that

> an individual's identity should never be a limiting factor. But this debate has reminded us of the urgent need for more openness and opportunities

> in publishing, more visibility of translators of colour and more proactive intervention to help dismantle the institutional barriers faced by early career translators. (np)

These examples demonstrate how the distorted sense of identity politics comes to dictate the terms of the debate and must be reckoned with even when it is not present. What might it mean, however, to lean into identity politics, not in its distorted sense but in the way articulated by radical Black feminists? How might literary translation as a practice be transformed if the institutional barriers into the "room" were not only dismantled but if the house of literary translation itself was rebuilt? How might a translator of color not only be a *different translator* but *translate differently*?

It is useful to contrast the reaction to Deul's opinion piece to the public response to the release of Emily Wilson's translation of *The Odyssey* in 2018, the first published translation of the text into English by a woman translator. This latter fact often dominated coverage of the translation, and Wilson was lauded for the way her translation veered from past misogynist translation choices made by men. In her translator's note, Wilson explains that the Greek text does not use derogatory language to characterize the slave women hanged by Telemachus toward the end of the epic, whereas past male translators have inserted misogynist language by opting for words like "sluts" or "whores," "suggesting that these women are being punished for a genuinely objectionable pattern of behavior, as if their sexual history actually justified their deaths" (89). What is at work in Wilson's translation at this point is identity politics: her identity as a woman has shaped her analysis of patriarchy and misogyny as well as her political response to it.[9] She seems not to have received the same backlash misinterpreting her position to mean that *only* women can translate according to a feminist praxis and politics, nor that Wilson's identity as a woman *innately* determined her feminism.[10] Whereas a white feminist receives accolades for her resistance to misogyny, Black feminists are treated as dogmatic, angry, and irrational—as complainers. The nuance applied to interpreting Wilson's position becomes a distortion of Black feminists' arguments into simplistic straw men greeted with racist talking points. Race emerges as the limit case of identity politics in literary translation.

Ironically, in the Gorman controversy, while critics accused Black women of applying identity politics in the distorted sense, it was actually often these same critics who applied it in their discourse about Gorman herself. As news media reported that Gorman had been enthusiastic about the choice of Rijneveld—who was presented to her by the Dutch publisher and her own team of agents—this was often portrayed by critics as Gorman having personally handpicked Rijneveld from a selection of translators. This misrepresentation of the situation was used to imply that Gorman's agency as a Black

woman had been removed from her by the social media response. Even some sympathetic to Deul's position wrung their hands over Gorman's supposed choice being negated. The implication was that denying a Black woman from making her own choice amounted to its own form of racism. These critics, then, enacted the same "identity politics" they pretended to decry by suggesting that anyone challenging Gorman's supposed choice should "stay in their lane." The problem, of course, which seems to have escaped their argumentation, is that Deul is also a Black woman—did she not have the same free choice to voice her preferences? And what would they have said if Gorman had insisted that she only wanted young Black women to translate her poem because only they could properly understand it? The way out of these logical conundrums is identity *politics* rather than *identity* politics, that is, identity as a base from which to formulate a politics instead of a politics that reifies identity.

Gorman, notably, did not release a statement or otherwise speak about the controversy, which generally led people to see her as caught in an impossible situation. But what did it mean for Gorman not to defend her supposed choice of translator for the Dutch edition? Or to not address the second controversy around the Catalan translation? Especially given her own position as a Black woman poet who had just eleven days before the controversy shared on Twitter a clip of an interview in which she asserted that women of color have the right to request diverse representation:

> Maybe you're in a class that teaches STEM or art and you're looking at the curriculum and there is no women or people of color mentioned. You as a student are entitled to go meet with that professor and demand that that be added. I actually had to do that several times in my classes and I would say, "Here's who you have us reading, here's a list of other people we should be reading and why." (Malala Fund, np)

The echoes with Deul's call for a Black woman translator are uncanny. As Kotze points out, Gorman's selection for the presidential inauguration also served a symbolic function, which could have been extended to the Dutch context as well: "Gorman's visibility, as a young black woman, matters: She is *part of* the message" ("Translation is the canary" np, italics original). Biden used Gorman as a symbol of racial reconciliation after the summer of Black Lives Matter protests and end of the Donald Trump presidency. But her inclusion was actually only symbolic, since it was not accompanied by a plan on Biden's part to address the concerns of the Black Lives Matter movement. Indeed, while the 2020 protests, which arose specifically in response to racist police brutality, saw a mainstreaming—if somewhat limited—of calls to abolish or at least defund the police, Biden has consistently called for *more* police funding.

What I am ultimately arguing is that Gorman's practice of identity politics—in the sense laid out by the Combahee River Collective—was limited when she was assimilated into mainstream (white) culture by being featured at the inauguration. Since, as Robert Bernard Hass (2021) argues, Gorman's free expression is circumscribed by the circumstances of the event, her poem "The Hill We Climb" presents a fairly standard call for the need to come together in "national unity" (np):

> We are striving to forge a union with purpose, / To compose a country committed / To all cultures, colors, characters / And conditions of man. / And so we lift our gazes not / To what stands between us, / But what stands before us. / We close the divide, / Because we know to put / Our future first, we must first / Put our differences aside. (Gorman 15–16)

This multicultural vision fits Walcott's definition of neoliberal diversity as reformist at best, symbolic at worst, without fundamental transformative change. Neoliberalism is also at play in the commodification of Gorman, who accepted lucrative book and modelling contracts. As Canan Marasligil (2021) argues, the choice of Rijneveld for the Dutch translation also smacks of maximizing profit—since Rijneveld's recent International Booker win had made him a high-profile commodity—rather than an affinity between the poets. I would speculate that Gorman's team also advised her that silence on the issue would be the least damaging to her profitable public image, since then neither side had any direct statement to criticize.

While Gorman's selection for the inauguration functions as identity politics in a distorted sense—using her blackness as a symbolic but largely empty gesture of racial reconciliation—her silence on the controversy surrounding the translation falls outside of the identity politics put forward by the Combahee River Collective because it marks an absence of anti-capitalist analysis and activism and also a failure to act in coalitional solidarity with Black women abroad. And while the news and social media often characterized Rijneveld as being silenced—or cancelled—by woke identity politics gone wild, this discounts Rijneveld's own framing of his decision to step down from the project as one of solidarity with Black women. Upon withdrawing from the project, for example, Rijneveld tweeted the statement

> I am shocked by the uproar surrounding my involvement in the spread of Amanda Gorman's message and I understand the people who feel hurt by Meulenhoff's choice to ask me. I had happily devoted myself to translating Amanda's work, seeing it as the greatest task to keep her strength, tone and style. However, I realise that I am in a position to think and feel that way, where many are not. I still wish that her ideas reach as many readers as possible and open hearts. (Flood np)

However, the first *Guardian* story on the controversy, for example, plays up the "cancel-culture" angle with the headline "'Shocked by the uproar': Amanda Gorman's white translator quits" (Flood np), instead of foregrounding his understanding of the criticisms after the initial shock. Rijneveld later wrote a poem about his decision that situates it as one of solidarity:

> Never lost that resistance and yet able to grasp when it / isn't your place, when you must kneel for a poem because / another person can make it more inhabitable; not out of / unwillingness, not out of dismay, but because you know / there is so much inequality… (np)

Of note here is the way the poem not only highlights the desire to make way for a Black woman poet because of inequality but that a Black woman poet might also translate the poem differently ("another person can make it more inhabitable"). The language of habitability here recalls Táíwò's metaphorical framework of rooms to which certain people are admitted or not.

In formulating his act of solidarity, then, Rijneveld does not simply suggest that a Black woman poet be "allowed" into the room of the text to translate it, in a politics of representation, but argues that she will transform the text-room, a room in which she might otherwise be alienated. How might a Black woman poet—and other translators of color—translate to make texts more inhabitable, both for themselves and their readers? In the next section, I look at the work of certain theorists and translators of color, especially Black women translators, who might be characterized as practicing identity politics in translation. In doing so, they challenge notions about who translates, how, and for whom. By making their translations more inhabitable for readers of color, they reject liberal humanist notions of translation as a transcendence of difference to reach a "universal," where the universal actually represents norms of whiteness.

Identity Politics in Translation Theory and Practice

In an essay infrequently cited in translation studies, Geri Augusto (2014) calls for a "Black transnational praxis of translation" that posits translation as an "ontological act" (633). She makes three other major points about this praxis: (1) "that a feeling for certain realities of diaspora—slavery, racism in its multiple facets and manifestations, the triple load of many black women, and the struggle against all these—is important for translation of African and diasporic literatures"; (2) the importance of "orality, visuality, … liturgical practices … and other expressive and performative acts of Africans and Afrodescendant peoples" as "critical resources for translation"; (3) that "translating can be a radical, transgressive black practice" due to the racism that has framed Black people as unable to "[cross] language borders" because they

supposedly do not have an aptitude for learning languages or "opportunities for travel" (633). In this list, we see a combination of the *experiential*, the *aesthetic*, and the *political*, which will be key to the argument in this section. While Augusto contends that these three categories are shared across Africa and the African diaspora, she also emphasizes that there are localized differences (634). Indeed, in his essay on "Translating Poetry, Translating Blackness," John Keene identifies this balance of similarities and differences as the main reason that more non-Anglophone Black poetry needs to be translated into English for a US audience: "Were more black voices translated we would have a clearer sense of the connections and commonalities, as well as the differences across the African Diaspora, and better understand an array of regional, national, and hemispheric issues" (np). This would also, he argues, help Black US-Americans to have a less hegemonic, US-centric view of the Black experience, facilitating the type of international solidarity for which the Combahee River Collective advocated. As Augusto proclaims in the title of and throughout her essay, "Language should not keep us apart!"

While Augusto does not reify an essentialized shared experience of Blackness, she nonetheless insists upon the usefulness of lived experience in the translation of diasporic Black literature, drawing on Conceição Evaristo's concept of *escrevivência*, "a particular relation between writing and living," which Augusto translates as "livature," a term that plays on the Jamaican Rastafari/patois term "livity" (634–635). In outlining a Black feminist praxis of translation, Cibele de Guadalupe Sousa Araújo, Luciana de Mesquita Silva, and Dennys Silva-Reis also adapt the concept of *escrevivência*, into *transvivência*: "The texts of black women are the staging of their speeches, actual linguistic performances of their bodies and experiences. Therefore, translating is not just a transposition of linguistic material from one language to another, but rather a *transvivência*" (15, italics original). The movement from *escrevivência*/livature to *transvivência* involves, according to Adrienne N. Merritt, a double translation: first of lived experience into text, then of that text into a text of another language (4–5). For Merritt, the multisensorial and affective experiences of Black diasporic life engender a certain ineffability that might elude translation without an attention to hapticity, a term she borrows from the work of Tina Campt, where hapticity represents "the labor of feeling across difference and precarity; the effort of feeling implicated or affected in ways that create restorative intimacy; how we feel with and through another in the absence of touch" (Campt 42). This affective labor of reaching toward the ineffable in Black diasporic writing, Merritt argues, can more easily be carried out by those with similar experiences since Black-authored work frequently practices, following Campt, a type of refusal: a refusal of the frame of whiteness and the negation it involves for the Black subject. Here, importantly, experience does not stand essentially on its own but instead as a position from which to articulate a politics, in this case a

politics of refusal, which also implies replacing what is refused—namely, the frame of whiteness—with another frame.

In articulating a translation politics based in the experience of identity, Augusto and Merritt follow in a line of Black feminist thinking on embodied experience as a form of knowledge.[11] As is common in the academy more broadly, however, experiential knowledge has been marginalized in translation studies. Moira Inghilleri (2021 98) and Carolyn Shread (2021 104), for example, note how translation theory and practice have legitimated certain epistemologies and disputed others, including embodied knowledge. This is not surprising given Western translation studies' foundations in empirical linguistics on the one hand and on the other the Romantic ideal of sympathetic genius, wherein the translator assumes the place of the author through the power of Imagination (see Chapter 2). These twin convictions—the ability to learn through "empirical" study and the ability to transcend difference imaginatively—connect to the ridicule with which the idea that a Black-authored work might be better served by a Black translator was met in the Gorman controversy. Here, rational and imaginative forms of understanding are privileged above experiential, aesthetic, and political ones.

Recently, however, the role of the experiential has received more attention in translation studies, particularly with a provocation piece by Şebnem Susam-Saraeva titled "Representing experiential knowledge: Who may translate whom?" (2021) along with several responses published in *Translation Studies* just a few months before the Gorman case. Susam-Saraeva uses the example of first-person accounts of childbirth to reflect on the "difficulty of accurately expressing corporeal and experiential knowledge in a given language, let alone translating it into another," but she concludes that "having experienced 'the same' life event is never sufficient" (86). Different people may experience the "same" event differently, just as people with the "same" identities may experience them differently (90). To avoid projecting one's individual experience onto others sharing a similar identity or experience, Susam-Saraeva recommends following Sharon Deane-Cox's idea of "translation as secondary witness"—which relies on "[b]eing fully present, listening and showing empathy" and "conscientious meditation"—as well as "debriefing," as used in doula training to work through one's own emotions and avoid "having an agenda of one's own" (Susam-Saraeva 87). While acknowledging the important differences between interpreting and literary translation, I note, too, that not "having an agenda of one's own" suggests a de-politicization of translation that might not serve anti-racist translation practice.

To some extent, Merritt echoes these arguments about the possible incongruous experiences between people having lived through similar events or with similar identities. She gives several examples of work by Black German women writers translated by Black US-American women that seem to ignore

some of the specificities of the Black *German* experience or the specificities of the particular text being translated. However, she also describes her own haptic translation practice of "reach[ing] toward" a text by a Black woman addressed to her son, and feeling "drawn together by an understanding of living in Black precarity and doing one's best to be a mother while Black in the process" (22). Still, in this case, Merritt's practice involved dialogue with the author, the editor, and other readers, creating an intimate "archive of experience … collected and shared" between them (23). Though not all of these interlocutors have the same identity, they work collaboratively—or coalitionally—from and across their experiences in a collective experience toward the shared aim of the translated text. In taking up Campt's hapticity, I argue, Merritt brings us closer to the relationship between embodied experience and identity politics, in its original sense, than Susam-Saraeva's "secondary witness" and "debriefing," which hinge on the practice of empathy. For Campt, "Hapticity is not empathy; it is not 'feeling for' another. It is the work of feeling precarious or feeling precarity in relation to differentially valued and devalued bodies in the absence of any guarantee of respite, respect, or recognition" (43). Thus while empathy might maintain power differentials or reiterate tropes of white saviorism, hapticity calls for precarity and vulnerability. Unlike the model of anti-racism in which people with white privilege use their power "for good," which ultimately, as Táíwò argues, maintains the overarching status quo of power relations, hapticity here entails the renunciation of power. And though empathy may suggest an affective relationship rather than actions taken, for Campt, hapticity is "an effortful practice of exertion" (43)—to not "feel for" another but to be *in solidarity with* another, as advocated by the Combahee River Collective.

The kind of solidarity that an identity politics of translation demands, I argue, is what Roseann Liu and Savannah Shange call "thick solidarity," which is "based on a radical belief in the inherent value of each other's lives despite never being able to fully understand or fully share in the experience of those lives" (190).[12] Thus, in distinction from a triumphant universal humanist "transcendence" of difference, in thick solidarity, what is shared is not a universal human experience but rather a struggle against oppression. As Cathy Cohen writes about solidarity across identities, "I am suggesting that the process of movement-building be rooted not in our shared history or identity, but in our shared marginal relationship to dominant power which normalizes, legitimizes, and privileges" (458). The key to identity politics, then, is not an essentialized experience of identity but the experience of power and how one analyzes and directs that experience toward a politics that is anti-racist, anti-sexist, anti-heteronormative, anti-capitalist, and anti-imperialist. Again, as Smith and Taylor note, while critics of identity politics in its distorted sense insist it requires people to "stay in their lane," identity politics in its original sense calls for a broad coalition against

all types of oppressive power. Its goal is transformational—a redistribution of power that "rebuilds the house."

This broad and multi-axis analysis and struggle against power demonstrates that supposed "identity matching" is not the goal of an identity politics of translation. For example, Aaron Robertson, a Black US translator, explains in an essay about translating an author of the Ethiopian aristocracy that while he shares a racial identity and an anti-racist analysis with the author and her writing, hers is also an "incomplete analysis of power" in relation to class (62), which circumscribes his relationship to the text in terms of political affinities and coalitional possibilities. The importance of coalitionality and solidarity to identity politics is also why it does not preclude white translators from translating work by authors of color. However, though different oppressed and marginalized groups may all experience the same overarching structures of power, they experience it differently. As Barbara Ofosu-Somuah and Candice Whitney—two Black US-based translators, one born in Ghana, one in the United States—note in describing their translations of Black women writers based in Italy, people sharing the "same" racial identity also experience the structures of power differently, which makes translation, for them, a fundamentally "relational" rather than essentialist practice (2020 np). In a relational practice, difference is acknowledged and not "transcended" into a universal experience. Since an identity politics of translation is based, in part, on a politics of refusal of the frames of whiteness, translators ascribing to a "universal," "colorblind" notion of translation may refuse instead to see these frames—translation practices, norms, and values—as being shaped by whiteness. White translators, or translators of color racialized differently than the authors they are translating, may also not have the same aesthetic tools, as described below, available to them in resisting dominant frames of whiteness. The refusal of the frames of whiteness means that an identity politics of translation is not only about *who* translates but also *what*, *how*, and *for whom*.

As discussed in the Introduction, the abstract translator and reader in translation studies is, I contend, an unspoken bourgeois white subject. Lawrence Venuti's monolingual reader who prefers that cultural differences be domesticated or explained does not take into account the diasporic—African, Asian, Latinx—or Indigenous reader.[13] Free of the implicit demands of a supposed white reader, translators of color may choose to translate otherwise. For example, for her translation of the Haitian novel *Hadriana dans tous mes rêves*, Kaiama L. Glover, who describes herself as "an African-American woman of Caribbean descent" (30), had in mind primarily Black US-Americans and the Black diaspora in the Anglophone Caribbean; then Anglophone and Creolophone Haitian diaspora readers; and finally other general readers (32–33). Glover focuses, then, on making the translation more *inhabitable* to Black diasporic readers rather than a "universal" (white) reader, in the same way

that Rijneveld's poem claims that a Black translator can make Gorman's poem more inhabitable for (Black) readers of the translation like Deul and Krieger. One of the issues Glover confronted was translating the novel's eroticism for the "relatively Puritanical culture of the Anglosphere" (34). After speaking about the novel with students in various contexts, Glover indeed found that first-generation Caribbean-American students and others from the "Americas writ large" appreciated the novel's representations of Caribbean culture, while students at an elite New York university with backgrounds in postcolonial and feminist theory but who did not have Caribbean heritage "expressed discomfort with the perceived excesses of Depestre's carnivalesque presentation of Vodou and hyper-sexualization of [the protagonist]" (36). While Glover notes the risks in preserving the novel's eroticism, which could be greeted by either distaste or lurid curiosity for its "exoticism" by some readers, her decision to prioritize Afro-diasporic readers makes the risk worth taking.

With a different audience in mind than a mainstream white one, translators of color also have greater license to draw from different linguistic, aesthetic, and rhetorical reserves. Black translation studies scholar and translator Aaron Coleman explores "how literary translation can be a tool to make more vivid the relationships between different Afro-descendant peoples around the Americas and ultimately, hopefully, around the world" (Benitez-James np), and he highlights language use as an important aspect of this relationship. Noting how Afro-diasporic people were generally dispossessed of their African languages and forced to speak colonizing languages, he argues that "language is also so much more than just syntax and particular words. Languages are embodied in a particular way… There's something that has survived," including "particular relationships to rhythm or musicality" (np). These rhythmic and musical habits of language use, along with racialized vernaculars, are more readily available to translators of the same diaspora. Bell (1995), for example, explains her decision to translate some of the Creolized French in a Haitian novel into US Black English, to recreate the same sense of intimacy of language used among "home people" (55), a term that ties into the idea of the habitability of the text for readers of color. In one of the only published responses to the Gorman controversy to actually take into account the difference a Black translator would make, Cuban-American writer and translator Achy Obejas also raises the problem of the flattening of African American Vernacular English in the translation of Toni Morrison's *Beloved* into Spanish—as well as the translation of "slave" by "serviente" and the n-word as "negros/blacks" (Bhanoo 2021 np). These examples show that questions of translator "diversity" extend beyond simple "inclusion" into existing structures, norms, and practices.

While translators of color may prioritize reaching a different audience from white translators, they may also not see translation as desirable in cases

where the translation could be used to perpetuate racial injustice. Critics of the "identity politics" of the Gorman controversy framed their responses in the language of universal humanism, where translation is an inherent good that transcends difference. But Patricia Hill Collins notes:

> Translating the ideas of women, Black people and indigenous peoples into language that dominant groups can understand may help our individual careers in the academy. But at what cost to ourselves and to the people whose ideas that we translate? The risk we run is that making certain anti-racist and feminist knowledge public may make it easier for dominant groups to manage subordinated groups. What appears to be translation as activism to make subordinated people more respectable can be a form of selling out. (Silva-Reis 227)

Similarly, Khairani Barokka writes about the right to access—which is often seized by white-centered forms of capitalism or cultural and political imperialism—as opposed to the right to refusal to be translated, to have one's culture extracted and commodified (66). Refusing translation functions, then, as keeping the text inhospitable to white readers. Recalling Campt's practice of refusal, Khairani Barokka's right to refusal points to how translation can function as a type of epistemic violence (Spivak 1988) where knowledge is translated into the epistemology of the dominant group (Asad 1986). Edouard Glissant argues that "understanding"—or "grasping"—the other is an act of reduction and appropriation (191–192), to which he opposes the "right to opacity" in a larger framework that makes recourse "not to Humanity but to the exultant divergence of humanities" (190). The right to opacity does not imply a sort of factionalism along the line of "identity politics" in the distorted sense. But Glissant argues not for a transcendence of difference but for difference as the basis of Relation:

> I thus am able to conceive of the opacity of the other for me, without reproach for my opacity to him. To feel in solidarity with him or to build with him or to like what he does, it is not necessary for me to grasp him. It is not necessary to try to become the other (to become other) nor to "make" him in my image. (193)

Glissant leads us back to a thick, coalitional solidarity that refuses the assimilationist gestures of "diversity" and "inclusion."

While the current culture wars would like to suggest that identity politics is divisive, a coalitional identity politics that takes it lead from the analyses of scholars and translators of color can benefit all members of the translation and translation studies communities as it advocates for transformative change, a rebuilding of our institutions and practices. I argue that the

question of race is not aside from but central to other issues in contemporary discussions in translation studies and the literary translation sector, issues like the (in)visibility of the translator, translator working conditions, domesticating vs. foreignizing translation, and non-normative modes of translation. As the Combahee River Collective maintains, improving conditions for the most marginalized improves conditions for everyone: "If Black women were free, it would mean that everyone else would have to be free since our freedom would necessitate the destruction of all the systems of oppression" (22–23). What benefits could there be in working conditions for all translators, what freedom could there be in the practice and style of translation, if we actually made the profession accessible for Black women, for Spanish heritage speakers, for South Asian immigrants, for East Asians based abroad? What space might be opened for theorizing translation in exciting new ways if institutions of knowledge-production were accessible to Indigenous intellectuals, to Global South intellectuals who do not write in English, if we were not beholden to a system that demands certain types of research and pushes promising new voices into precarity through adjunctification? How can we build a new house of translation that is more habitable for all?

Notes

1 For a detailed discussion of decisions around racial terminology and capitalization in this book, which varies according to chapter, see the Preface. Briefly, in this chapter, I capitalize Black but not white to follow the general conventions of writing about identity politics and because I am making a politicized gesture in asserting a Black translation praxis against the norms of whiteness masquerading as universal.
2 On the pre-meditated fomenting of the culture war around race and racism, see, for example, Benjamin Wallace-Wells's "How a Conservative Activist Invented the Conflict over Critical Race Theory" (2021).
3 In the introduction to her English translation, Haidee Kotze notes that the title originally submitted by Deul for the Dutch piece was "Be the light, not the hill" (in English), which is a line from Gorman's poem. The newspaper changed the headline for publication (np).
4 My thanks to Adrienne Perry for making this connection between Lorde's metaphor and Táíwò's.
5 At the time, Rijneveld identified as non-binary and used they/them pronouns in Anglophone contexts. Rijneveld announced a change to he/him pronouns in a January 7, 2022 Twitter post with a selfie and the caption "He/him!". When quoting from materials published at the time, I will leave the language as it was, but will refer to Rijneveld with his current pronouns otherwise.
6 On the stereotype of the "angry Black woman," see Jones and Norwood (2017), in which they describe "the consequences [for Black women] of exercising voice, whether in angry or moderated tones, and how that exercise can render one hyper visible and threatening" as well as "the phenomenon of displaced blame and how any response to an aggressive encounter immediately risks deflecting attention from the aggressor and placing blame squarely on the target" (2021). On "the uses of anger," see Audre Lorde's piece of this title (1981) in which she indicates

that "[a]nger is an appropriate reaction to racist attitudes, as is fury when the actions arising from those attitudes do not change" (282).

7 I highly recommend reading Kotze's essay in full as well as her subsequent piece, "Translation, representativeness, representation" (June 2021). Our arguments overlap in many ways, though in this context, I am more narrowly focused on the question of race and white supremacy as a structure of oppression and on identity politics as a strategy for its opposition.

8 For full disclosure: I was a member of the ALTA Board at the time the statement was released and at the time of writing this chapter.

9 Wilson's translation also practices identity politics in the sense of coalitional solidarity. She deliberately chooses the word "slaves" (and sometimes "house boy" or "house girl") over "domestic servants" or "maids" in order not to dissimulate the "fact and horror of slavery" (88–89), even if the slavery here is not racialized. Her introduction as a whole and her translator's note also present hospitality to the foreigner as a key theme in the text, a choice no doubt responding to the xenophobia of the "migrant crisis" in Europe and North America at the time she was translating.

10 It should be noted that with the heightening of the culture wars post-2020, Wilson's *Iliad* translation, published in 2023, was met with some criticism of being "woke," though this position was the minority and not generally shared among more liberal readers.

11 See, for example, Patricia Hill Collins's articulation of a Black feminist epistemology in *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment* (1990), which draws on and complicates feminist standpoint theory.

12 In the context of translation studies, "thick solidarity" no doubt calls to mind Kwame Anthony Appiah's "thick translation" (1993). While the two share a respect for and attention to the specificities of difference between the self and other, Appiah's "thick translation" has more interest in making these differences legible to the Western(ized) reader through glosses, annotations, etc., whereas, in the thick solidarity in translation that I propose, "understanding" may not always be desirable in rejecting the frame of whiteness, as the rest of the chapter explains.

13 See also Anton Hur's "The Mythical English Reader" (2022).

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4

TRANSLATION IN CRITICAL RACE STUDIES

"We frequently find," wrote W. Napoleon Rivers in 1934,

> that some white scholars working in Romance literature and political history do the same thing that authors do in writing United States histories. They belittle the Negro by omission, misinterpretation, or downright falsification. … The Negro will have to learn these languages to combat falsification, omission, belittlement, and to obtain the whole truth. (123–125)

Rivers, a black professor and translator, was chair of the foreign languages department at a Washington D.C. black teachers college.[1] In his essay "Why Negroes Should Study Romance Languages and Literatures," he makes the case that language study and instruction for black teachers and scholars, to which he had dedicated his career, is necessary to combat the control of knowledge-production by white scholars about African and Afro-diasporic peoples. Unfiltered by white scholars and translators, the translingual exchange of texts and knowledge across the diaspora and among other colonized and formerly colonized people of color could help to unite them in their common struggle against racism and imperialism. Nearly a century later, in a 2021 lecture, John Keene notes that Rivers's "call is still quite salient, unfulfilled, and necessary,"

> given the continuing lack of knowledge … about black peoples across the globe, including by some black people in the US, which I lay at the doorstep of our overall still too ahistorical, incomplete, and Eurocentric educational system, shaped as it is by racism, white supremacy, misogyny, classism, homophobia, and a host of other problems. (np)

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Indeed, Keene himself had launched a similar call in 2016 in the essay "Translating Poetry, Translating Blackness," stating the need for more translations into English of black-authored work from around the world. "What might happen," Keene posed,

> if through our engagement with these translated works we were able to deepen our understanding of the conversations already underway across linguistic and cultural barriers, while also learning from them new ways to decenter Western and U.S. hegemonic perspectives about blackness and black people, which might include black Americans' participation in furthering that hegemony[?]. (2016 np)

In consonance with these calls from Rivers and Keene, this chapter focuses on the roles that translation does and could play in the various fields that might be said to comprise critical race studies. While the rest of the book tends to approach these two fields through the lack of engagement in translation studies with critical race studies, this chapter examines how critical race studies has reciprocally not taken full advantage of the lens that translation studies can provide for studies of race. I use the term critical race studies here as an umbrella term for fields that engage substantially with race in various ways, including, but not limited to critical race theory, Black studies, African and African American studies, ethnic studies, Indigenous studies, comparative race studies, and postcolonial and decolonial studies, many of which, by their nature, include multilingual, multicultural, and transnational research. The more narrow field of critical race theory emerged out of legal studies in the United States, exposing the ways that supposedly race-neutral law and legal structures actually function in racially discriminatory ways (Crenshaw et al. 1995). Though the legal framework of the United States is nationally specific, many of the general concepts are portable to other contexts, such as Kimberlé Crenshaw's "intersectionality," which describes the overlapping identity categories, like race and gender, through which people are oppressed and which therefore indicates a need for "multi-axis analysis" of oppression and discrimination (1989). In taking stock of intersectionality's usage twenty years later, Vrushali Patil (2013) notes, however, that intersectional analysis frequently lacks a transnational dimension. Patil's critique gets at a larger issue with scholarship on race in the West, and certainly within the United States: that its concepts and frameworks tend to derive from US-based racial formations and structural racism, which are not necessarily directly applicable to other contexts. US-centric critical race studies thus maintains a hegemonic relationship to scholarship on race in other places based on different historic, cultural, and social circumstances.[2] This chapter sets this power imbalance in the larger context of knowledge-production in the academy before examining ways that translation can serve to counteract it.

English, Translation, and Knowledge-Production about Race

The hegemony of US texts and concepts about race and their travel both in English and in translation is part, of course, of the larger global dominance of English as the medium for academic writing and of the Western academy as the site of prestige for knowledge-production. With the neoliberalization of higher learning comes additional pressure for academics worldwide to publish in English to access, for example, "high impact" journals quantified for decisions in hiring, promotion, and grants (Curry and Lillis 6). As Mary Jane Curry and Theresa Lillis note, the problem of English's dominance for non-Anglophone (or non-primarily Anglophone) academics is not simply one of finding someone to translate their work or acquiring "fluency" in "standard" academic English; rather, the dominance of English shapes the scholarship itself:

> the interventions of some brokers [like journal editors and peer reviewers] may result in pressure on multilingual academics to skew their writing to achieve publication by matching the preferences of center-based journals. Our research provides evidence of the relegation of periphery scholars to roles in which they consume and confirm center-based research but are not allowed access to platforms from which to contribute different perspectives and findings. (6)

This research speaks to the hegemonic directionality of knowledge-production and distribution: knowledge is produced in English in the West and disseminated in the "periphery," which can supposedly only consume, not produce, knowledge, unless its knowledge-production serves to support knowledge from the West, both in form and content.

This also means that, in addition to being consumers of Western knowledge, peoples in the "periphery" are its objects—Western scholars travel to the periphery, "make sense" of it, and then tell the periphery about itself at the same time as they tell the West about the periphery. In his well-known essay on cultural translation in anthropology, Talal Asad compares this relationship between Western scholar and non-Western people to that of psychoanalyst and patient, where only the psychoanalyst can interpret the patient's unconscious and find the real meaning there; so, too, with the collective unconscious of a people, where anthropologists set themselves up as the one to make meaning from the culture they observe and, in creating a text from their observations, to not only author but authorize meaning (161–163). In "translating" the culture being studied into the anthropological text, the translation is not only linguistic and cultural but also discursive; namely, the anthropologist translates a culture into the form of English academic writing:

> When anthropologists return to their countries, they must write up "their people," and they must do so in the conventions of representation already circumscribed … by their discipline, institutional life, and wider society. "Cultural translation" must accommodate itself to a different language not only in the sense of English as opposed to Dinka, or English as opposed to Kabbashi Arabic, but also in the sense of a British, middle class, academic game as opposed to the modes of life of the "tribal" Sudan. …. The translation is addressed to a very specific audience, which is waiting to read *about* another mode of life and to manipulate the text it reads according to established rules. (159, italics original)

Though Asad does not specifically frame it in this way, the anthropologists he discusses and their audiences are not only generally British or Western but also white, and the peoples they are writing about are generally people of color, racializing the production and consumption of knowledge.

Even when academics inside Western academia are people of color, as happens relatively more frequently in the range of fields that fall in some way under critical race studies, their work often follows Western theoretical frameworks, perspectives, and writing conventions, which should be understood as part of the function of their disciplines—in the literal sense. That is, Western academics of color are *disciplined* into producing scholarship in a certain way. As Curry and Lillis note in relation to academics in the periphery, academics within the West writing in English are also constrained by the same modes of gatekeeping that determines what counts as scholarship, theory, or academic writing and what kind of work merits publication, grants and fellowships, and employment within the academy. Thus, Asad emphasizes that the issues he raises in relation to anthropology must be approached as *institutionalized* (148), such that the actions of individual anthropologists matter less than the overall power structure:

> In the long run, therefore, it is not the personal authority of the ethnographer, but the social authority of his ethnography [a written, "scientific" text] that matters. And that authority is inscribed in the institutionalized forces of industrialized capitalist society …, which are constantly *tending* to push the meanings of various Third World societies in a single direction. (163, italics original)

Because of the dominance of English in global academia and the power and prestige of US universities, even scholarship by academics of color within the West that resists Western standards of scholarship will still hold a hegemonic position in knowledge-production over academic scholarship or other modes

of knowledge-production produced by people of color outside the Western academy, including knowledge-production about race.

Through the process of translation, scholarship by people of color outside the Western academy can, as Curry and Lillis write, "confirm center-based research" either by following or being made to follow the discursive norms of Western Anglophone scholarship or, perhaps even more troublingly, being made to fit the ideas not of Western scholarship but of what Western scholarship says *about* their culture. That is, through translation, the work of the non-Western scholar of color is de-authorized and de-authoritized, leaving the process of meaning-making again to the white Western scholar acting as translator or reader of the translation. Amanda Walker Johnson describes such a case in the translation into English by Dorothy S. Blair of *La Parole aux Négresses* (1978) by Senegalese scholar and activist Awa Thiam, published in 1986 as *Speak Out, Black Sisters: Feminism and Oppression in Black Africa*. Johnson details how the English translation omits "notes, references, and numerical facts," which "de-formalizes" the text (2); uses more idiomatic language than Thiam's text (5); "de-philosophizes" the text by obscuring references to the Marxist concepts of mystification and alienation as well as references to Simone de Beauvoir and Frantz Fanon (5–8); "untraces" connections to the intellectual tradition of Negritude; and invisibilizes "early theorizing of intersectionality" (9, 11). In conclusion, Johnson finds, "Because English serves as a vehicle for undermining Thiam's authority, theoretical contributions and activist insights, the translation contributes both to the tendency to disregard the theoretical contributions of African writers and to English-language hegemony" (16). Scholars like Thiam thus confront a double bind in Western translation where only certain Western theoretical frameworks hold legitimacy but "Third-World" scholars are not considered to be legitimate users of these frameworks, further racializing knowledge-production in the Western academy. Simply translating the work of more non-Western scholars of color into English, then, is not sufficient to undo the hegemonic production of knowledge about race by the Western, and particularly the US, academy because of how their texts are transformed in translation.

Translation thus produces many problems—the imposition of Western discursive norms, the manipulation of work by non-Western scholars of color, the exclusion of non-Western work through lack of translation—as well as, as Rivers and Keene argue, many potentialities for knowledge-production and dissemination about race. Yet there is relatively little engagement in the disciplines of critical race studies on translation's role in how knowledge about race is produced and how race itself is produced. Just as the global hegemony of English is an academy-wide phenomenon, regardless of discipline, so, too, is the lack of consideration given to translation. For example, 30 years after Asad's essay about translation in anthropology, Erynn Masi de Casanova and

Tamara R. Mose found from reviewing contemporary ethnographic scholarship about Spanish-speaking subjects that "[d]espite abundant discussion of ethnography as cultural translation, linguistic translation of this type is rarely addressed in the literature on ethnographic methodology" (3). According to Casanova and Mose, "even researchers who are quite reflexive in other ways generally do not discuss how they represent their own language and the language of the research participants" (5), and this was the case whether the researchers were "native" or "non-native" speakers of Spanish (4). Similarly, what Brian James Baer argues about sexuality studies applies to critical race studies as well: "questions of translation have yet to be fully incorporated into Global Sexuality Studies, which retains a strong Western if not Anglophone bias," but "a focus on translation can extend and enrich discussions of subaltern agency and of the global circulation of sexual knowledge, while also exposing the persistent imperial asymmetries of the field" (54).

When translation is included in work in critical race studies, particularly transnational or comparative race and ethnic studies, it is often "deployed figuratively" (Alvarez 1) or used as a "metaphor" (García Peña 7) rather than addressed directly as an interlingual process with its own repercussions. In *Race in Translation* (2012), a comparative study of race in Brazil, France, and the United States, Robert Stam and Ella Shohat state that "in the case of traveling debates, translation is not merely a trope" (57). But while they describe the differences between Portuguese, French, and English in naming, for example, indigenous peoples, racial identities, and immigration (58–59), Stam and Shohat do not reflect on the movement between these languages, including in regard to their own practice of translating discourse not written in English for the purpose of their book, and despite the book's title, translation is only referenced in eight pages in the index. This indicates the same lack of self-reflexivity about translation in scholarship that Casanova and Mose note among ethnographers; Stam and Shohat mention in the preface that they

> not only engage the politics of translation but also cite and literally translate texts from French, Portuguese, Spanish, and other languages in order to convey the thrust of the arguments, as well as the tone, the grain, and the cultural accents of the voices through which the arguments are presented (xiv–xv)

but there is little elaboration of their practice in concrete terms or of the implications of the choices they make. More generally, works in critical race studies that tend to treat translation as a trope or metaphor reveal how untapped the potential is for approaching translation as an interlingual practice that shapes what knowledge about race is made available interculturally, shapes the discursive norms with which that knowledge is produced, and

consequently shapes that knowledge and even the concept of race itself. In the remainder of this chapter, I focus on how interlingual translation has been addressed in these ways in critical race studies, even if in a limited capacity, to indicate the possibilities for deeper and more sustained engagement between these fields. While I return to the calls from Rivers and Keene at the end of the chapter by looking at translation and black internationalism—through the exemplary work of Brent Hayes Edwards and translations of Frantz Fanon and Achille Mbembe—the remainder of this section draws primarily from what might broadly be called decolonial studies in the Americas.

While forms of racialization predate the modern era (Heng 2018, Ndiaye and Markey 2023, Schine 2022), the prevailing modern categories and constructions of race emerged in the era of European colonialism, creating a racial hierarchy used to justify enslavement, genocide, and land and resource theft by Europeans who came to be racialized as white. As postcolonial scholars of translation have established, translation played a significant role in the processes of colonization, but translation's relationship to racialization more specifically has been less explored. Joshua M. Price's recent book *Translation and Epistemicide: Racialization of Languages in the Americas* (2023) helps to fill that gap; there, he argues that

> translating epistemologies from one language to another presupposed and played a crucial role in arranging people and traditions of knowledge into hierarchical categories of worthiness. In this way, translation was, and is, sometimes involved in race-making. Translation has been, and can be, enlisted as part of a racializing project. (6)

In the first part of the book, Price studies the racializing project of colonialism through the compilation of bilingual dictionaries by Christian missionaries in the Americas. The translations that these missionaries effected in creating their dictionaries involved "processes of racialization [that] went beyond skin color and extended to *racialization of languages* themselves, as well as the racialization of *knowledge* and *religion*" (6, italics original). While Price chronicles the organization of race around language and religion, Allison Margaret Bigelow (2019) examines the organization of race around language and science, focusing on knowledge-production about mining in the Americas. She explains how Quechua terms for types of ore based on how deep they were located were (mis)translated into the color-based terms *paco*, *mulato*, and *negrillo* by Andalucian priest Álvaro Alonso Barba in the book *Arte de los metales*, published in 1640. Barba's text in Quechuañol, a "hybrid technical language" between Quechua and Spanish, was then further (mis)translated into the European languages of English, German, and French. Bigelow argues that the "confusion caused by the racialized color terminology of the Spanish colonial source—confusion that is faithfully preserved in

Atlantic translations—reflects a mistranslation of natural knowledge from the Andes" (250) such that "these translations … may have helped to give organizing power to racial categories at a key time in the formation of Western scientific thought" (251). The translation at work in colonial Western knowledge-production—in dictionaries, scientific treatises, and other texts—thus functioned as a mechanism of racialization.

Racialization also operated in regard to interpreters and translators of color communicating with and for colonizing Europeans. Chapter 1 explores this phenomenon in relation to the concept of "slavish" translation and African and Afro-diasporic translators. In the Americas, a quintessential figure of the racialized indigenous interpreter occurs in Malintzin/Marina/La Malinche, a Nahua woman in what is now Mexico who was given to Spanish conquistador Hernán Cortés as a slave and became his interpreter as well as bearing his children. Norma Alarcón traces the various ambivalent depictions of Malintzin in the Mexican consciousness—traitor, victim, influential agent—and ties them to similarly ambivalent attitudes toward translation:

> As translator [Malintzin] mediates between antagonistic cultural and historical domains. If we assume that language is always in some sense metaphoric, then any discourse, oral or written, is liable to be implicated in treachery when perceived to be going beyond repetition of what the community perceives as the "true" and/or "authentic" concept, image, or narrative. The act of translating, which often introduces different concepts and perceptions, displaces and may even do violence to local knowledge through language. In the process, these may be assessed as false or inauthentic. (113)

Here, translation in knowledge-production leads to colonizing and indigenous forms of knowledge competing for "truth," and the translator—raced and gendered as a woman of color—is figured as a traitor who replaces "authentic" forms of knowledge with "inauthentic" ones. Later, Alarcón connects the figure of Malintzin as translator not only to contemporary knowledge-production but also to the contemporary production of race and gender, particularly in relation to Chicana women:

> La Malinche demonstrates that crossing ethnic and racial boundaries does not necessarily free her from 'violence against herself'; moreover, once her usefulness is over she is an Indian and a woman. She crosses over to a site where there is no 'legitimated' place for her in the conqueror's new order. (129)

Similarly, Chicana and other women of color feminists in the late 20th century found that, in relation to white feminists and institutionalized theorizations

of gender, "despite some shared critical perspectives, boundaries exist and continue to exist, thus accounting for differential experiences that cannot be contained under the sign of a universal woman or women" (129). Translation, then, not only participates in racialized constructions of gender but also racialized structures of knowledge-production about gender.

Writers, scholars, and activists in decolonial traditions, then, must reckon with the long history of colonizing European languages vs. local or indigenous languages in relation to racial and ethnic identity formation and to knowledge-production and dissemination around race and ethnicity, whether they explicitly tie these issues to interlingual translation or not.[3] These concerns are particularly complex and loaded for writers living at the intersection of multiple languages, identities, and ways of knowing. For example, in her foundational text of Chicana literature and theory, *Borderlands/La Frontera*, Gloria Anzaldúa lists the many ways she identifies when not "copping out" by "acculturating" to hegemonic Anglophone US or Hispanophone Mexican culture:

> we call ourselves Mexican, referring to race and ancestry, *mestizo* when affirming both our Indian and Spanish (but we hardly ever own our Black ancest[ry]; Chicano when referring to a politically aware people born and/or raised in the U.S.; *Raza* when referring to Chicanos; *tejanos* when we are Chicanos from Texas. (62–63, italics original)

Anzaldúa thus ascribes to a relational set of identities tied to language, race and ethnicity, and nation and place that resist dominant citizenship-based ideas of belonging and language norms that aim to separate and standardize usage between and within languages. She writes:

> Ethnic identity is twin skin to linguistic identity—I am my language. Until I can take pride in my language, I cannot take pride in myself. Until I can accept as legitimate Chicano Texas Spanish, Tex-Mex and all the other languages I speak, I cannot accept the legitimacy of myself. Until I am free to write bilingually and to switch codes without having always to translate, while I still have to speak English or Spanish when I would rather speak Spanglish, as long as I have to accommodate the English speakers rather than having them accommodate me, my tongue will be illegitimate. (59)

Here, language is constitutive of identity and knowledge- and culture-production, and the refusal to speak "standard" languages echoes the refusal to fit into racial and ethnic categories as determined by the state or the academy. Further, by laying claim to her own language and refusing to translate, Anzaldúa articulates a refusal, too, to be assimilated into hegemonic knowledge-production either as the authoritative and authoritarian academic, associated

with whiteness, or as the native informant to the academic, racialized as a person of color.

This attention to the intersections of language, race and ethnicity, knowledge-production, and translation continues to echo through the work of decolonial feminist and queer writers in the intellectual tradition of Alarcón, Anzaldúa, and other women of color, such as those featured in *This Bridge Called My Back*, edited by Anzaldúa and Cherríe Moraga (1981).[4] The more recent collection *Translocalities/Translocalidades: Feminist Politics of Translation in the Latin/a Américas* (2014), for example, sets out to explore the movement of knowledge between US Latina and Latin American intellectuals and activists through linguistic and cultural translation, though the emphasis is more on the latter type of translation. In an introductory essay in the volume, Claudia de Lima Costa observes the need for racial specificity in decolonial feminist work, not only against the norms of white feminism masquerading as universal but also between women of color in different cultural locations. Indeed, as de Lima Costa notes "political labels such as 'women of color' are not always translatable in Latin America, especially in certain contexts (e.g. Brazil) and in relation to more 'fluid' markers of race and, precisely, 'color'" (2014 32). Thus, in the words of Sonia E. Alvarez, "race can be a mobile signifier across borders" (3), as she herself finds her racial identity "translated" into the racial formations of the geographical and cultural context of different locales when she travels (3).

It is not only racial categories that translate uneasily across linguistic and cultural borders but also "race" itself, that is, the signifier for "race" and what it signifies. John Hartigan, for example, looks at the interlingual translation of "race" between English and Spanish and concludes that "the cognates 'race' and 'raza,' which we might assume share a common set of referents, signify in such distinct manners that establishing a form of equivalence between two domains of meaning risks obscuring as much as it reveals about racial matters" (31). According to Hartigan, while the English term in the United States "is principally a form of classification," often broadly construed in relation to skin color, in Mexico "La Raza" can serve as "a reference to an immaterial form of identity more than a biological entity" (32). Further, "raza" "names forms of collective identity that are as much tied to place as they are to any literal notion of biological inheritance" and is also used to signify "breeds" of animal (32). In a translation practice that assumes that "race" and "raza" are essentially the same, the cultural and biological associations of "raza" are effaced (37–38), which imposes the US meaning of race upon the Mexican context. Attention to interlingual translation, then, demonstrates how even in the very notion of "race" itself US and English-language knowledge-production takes a hegemonic position.

Decolonial approaches in critical race studies to the translation of race thus aim to undo the knowledge-production put in place by colonialism that

sought to fix race in a hierarchical, oppressive system, often through the medium of translation, as well as the hegemony of US-centric, English-language-centric knowledge-production that operates through a lack of translation from other knowledge-production systems and assimilative translation into the discursive norms and conceptual frameworks of the US academy. In opposition to translational "equivalents" signifying race with fixed meanings, decolonial scholars suggest ways of theorizing translation that entail contingency and gaps in meaning. Price, for example, proposes the concept of "desnudez/bewilderment" to "question one's own need for protection, and to conceive of translation as the possibility of being transformed" because it "captures the hesitancy engendered by catching a glimpse or a glimmer of alternative constructions of the world" outside of Western rationality (154–155). In a similar vein, de Lima Costa applies Eduardo Viveiros de Castro's concept of "equivocation" to translation (2016 53), where categories like class, race, and ethnicity are colonial constructions and "equivocal categories" that in translation "appear to be the same (i.e. to have the same meaning), [but] in fact they may not be when signified by other communities" such as indigenous communities (2016 53). For de Lima Costa, "equivocation (in the sense of misinterpretation, error) calls for translation: it is from politically motivated and unfaithful translations that the plurality of worlds are interconnected without becoming commensurate" (2016 53). Price, de Lima Costa, and other decolonial and critical race scholars thus call for modes of translation that unfix Western racial categories and undermine Western knowledge-production that both relies on and reproduces them. This alternative type of translation establishes relationality between knowledge systems without reducing difference into supposedly universal categories. Returning to the calls from Rivers and Keene, in the final section of this chapter, I examine the way translations of racial categories designating "blackness"[5] reveal this kind of epistemological instability, even in terms that seem "equivalent," such as b/Black and n/Noir. I follow Edwards in bringing Black studies together with translation studies and look at translations of Fanon and Mbembe as case studies.

Translating "blackness"

With *The Practice of Diaspora: Literature, Translation, and the Rise of Black Internationalism* (2003), Edwards provides a prime model of scholarship bringing together critical race studies with translation studies that treats translation as more than a trope or metaphor. The book addresses translation in three interconnected ways. First, Edwards considers the intricacies of translation as an actual interlingual practice, discussing the etymologies and histories of words that designate "blackness" in English and French—like b/Black, n/Noir, n/Negro, n/Nègre, and the English n-word—as well as

translations between them (25–37), showing how translation is not a simple process of finding corresponding words in each language but also a site where racial meaning is negotiated and altered. He argues that "translations open 'race' to the influence of an exterior, pulling and tugging at the same signified in an interminable practice of difference, through an unclosed field of signifiers … whose shifts inescapably reshape the possibilities of what black modern culture might be" (116). In *The Practice of Diaspora*, this black modern culture is transnational, and it is his study of translations between black writers and intellectuals in New York and Paris in the 1920s and 1930s that comprises the second way in which Edwards takes up translation. The black internationalist collaboration he describes corresponds with the kind advocated for by Rivers and Keene, where the sharing of texts across the black diaspora not only helps to unite black people in a common struggle but also reflects the multiplicity of black experiences and ideas about blackness. As Edwards writes, "translation is not just the arena of any possible institutionalization of internationalism, but also the arena of ideological argument over its particular contours and applications" (20). Finally, beyond the actual interlinguistic practice of translation and the history and consequences of its circulation, Edwards uses translation as a means of conceptualizing the junctures and disjunctures in knowledge-production about "blackness" and race in black internationalism. Borrowing a term from French, Edwards uses *décalage*—which can refer to gaps or disjunctures in time and space—to analyze articulations of "race" in black internationalism: "*décalage* is proper to the structure of a diasporic 'racial' formation, and its return in the form of *disarticulation*—the points of misunderstanding, bad faith, unhappy translation—must be considered a necessary haunting" (14, italics original). Similar to desnudez/bewilderment and equivocation, then, *décalage* refers to how translation leads to joints but also gaps in intercultural knowledge-production around race.

In the remaining pages of this chapter, I briefly analyze the disjunctures in translation between words designating "blackness" in translations of two texts by Fanon and Mbembe into English, revealing the *décalage* in ideas about how race functions between the Francophone and Anglophone contexts. Fanon and Mbembe number among the few intellectuals writing about race in languages other than English whose texts and ideas have gained traction within the (globalized) English-language academy, yet their translatedness is rarely addressed, even in relation to racial terminology.[6] Fanon's *Peau noire, masques blancs* (1952) has been twice translated as *Black Skin, White Masks* by Charles Lam Markmann (1967) and Richard Philcox (2008), with its retranslation highlighting its canonical status, while Mbembe's *Critique de la raison nègre* (2013), itself heavily influenced by Fanon's work, was published in Laurent Dubois's translation as *Critique of Black Reason* (2017). These texts explain the dialectical racial formation of blackness as a category,

and the terms by which blackness is designated are central to their arguments, particularly in the joints and gaps between the words "n/Noir" and "n/Nègre." Briefly, "n/Noir" is the more neutral term, with "n/Nègre" being pejorative, at one point a synonym for "slave," though it was also reclaimed in a positive sense by the Negritude movement.[7] As mentioned above, Edwards outlines the etymologies and histories of these terms at length, but here I will focus rather on the meaning that emerges from Fanon and Mbembe's usage. An analysis of how these terms pass into English in the translations of Fanon and Mbembe's texts illustrates the *décalage* between them and the resulting imposition of Anglophone ideas about racial formation as well as the potential to push against these ideas and introduce different ways of thinking about race. Similarly to Rivers, Keene, Edwards, and other scholars, like Lorgia García Peña, then, here translation helps to "[move] away from the simplistic grouping of Black experiences to complexify the narrating, sharing, and historicizing of the multiplicity of global and relational Black experiences" (García Peña 8).[8]

As noted in the next chapter, theoretical or critical texts aimed largely at a more scholarly audience often have an attached scholarly apparatus in the form of introductions, notes, or commentary, such that translations of these works can more easily accommodate a translator's introduction or notes. However, neither translation of Fanon's *Peau noire, masques blancs* includes a translator's introduction that explains any part of their translation approach or particular problems the text presented, particularly around the issue of race words; Markmann does precede his translation with a "Translator's Note," but it takes instead the form of acknowledgments for those whom he consulted in preparing the text, especially regarding slang and specialized terminology, though he does not mention race. Philcox does, though, address the problem of translating the word "n/Nègre"—what he calls "that word dreaded by all translators of French Caribbean texts"—in an afterword to his 2004 retranslation of Fanon's *Les damnés de la terre* (247). There, he states that the term has both a "sting" in its racist use by white colonizers and an "embrace" in the reclamation of the term in the Negritude movement, but he argues that this dual signification is "irretrievable" in his translation (248). Locating his own translation in the 21st century and its language politics, Philcox indicates that he has "updated the word *Negro* [used by the first translator Constance Farrington], when [Fanon] refers to the peoples of Africa or the diaspora, to *black*, and use[s] *nigger* when it is the colonizer referring to the same. In some cases, [he has] left *Negro* in its historical context" (248, italics original). But Fanon's use of "n/Nègre" differs in *Peau noire, masques blancs*, especially in relation to his use of the word "n/Noir," and consequently so does Philcox's strategy for dealing with these words designating blackness. While there is not space here to fully elaborate all the nuances of Fanon's theorization of race and blackness in the text, a

few examples will depict some key points as well the *décalage* created by the English translation between how the production of race is represented in the French and English versions.

One central question to an interpretation of Fanon's framework of racial formation is whether n/Noir and n/Nègre signify more or less the same thing, and the answer is both no and yes. The distinction between them can be seen in passages like the following, quoted in the French and the two English translations

> Une étude rigoureuse devrait se présenter ainsi:
>
> —interprétation psychanalytique de l'expérience vécue du Noir ;
> —interprétation psychanalytique du mythe nègre. (Fanon 123)
>
> A close study should be divided into two parts :
>
> 1 a psychoanalytic interpretation of the life experience of the black man;
> 2 a psychoanalytic interpretation of the Negro myth (Markmann 151)
>
> An in-depth study ought to be conducted as follows:
>
> Psychoanalytic interpretation of the black man's lived experience
> Psychoanalytic interpretation of the black myth (Philcox 129)

Here, the Noir is an actual person with lived experience whereas the nègre is a myth created by white Europeans, a myth with all its associated racist stereotypes that Europeans use to erect a racial hierarchy. The Noir is a person with dark skin from Africa or of African heritage; the nègre is the discursive creation of white colonizers. While Philcox's translation flattens the distinction by using "black" in both cases, Markmann's reproduces the difference by using the more pejorative and less phenotypically denotative term "Negro" in reference to the myth. But in Fanon, through the process of interpellation and internalization,[9] the categories "noir" and "nègre" collapse into each other; that is, the Noir comes to see himself (since Fanon is generally speaking of the male subject) as a nègre. This slippage can be seen in the following passage:

> Le Noir, dans la mesure où il reste chez lui, réalise a peu de choses près le destin du petit Blanc. Mais qu'il aille en Europe, il aura à repenser son sort. Car le nègre en France, dans son pays, se sentira différent des autres. On a vite dit : le nègre s'infériorise. La vérité est qu'on l'infériorise. (Fanon 121)
>
> As long as he remains among his own people, the little black follows very nearly the same course as the little white. But if he goes to Europe, he

> will have to reappraise his lot. For the Negro in France, which is his country, will feel different from other people. One can hear the glib remark: The Negro makes himself inferior. But the truth is that he is made inferior. (Markmann 149)
>
> As long as the black child remains on his home ground his life follows more or less the same course as that of the white child. But if he goes to Europe he will have to rethink his life, for in France, his country, he will feel different from the rest. We said rather too quickly that the black man feels inferior. The truth is that he is made to feel inferior. (Philcox 127)

It is that situation of being made to feel inferior that causes the Noir to also become the nègre, an interiorization of the myth of the nègre that is again flattened by Philcox's translation, where the second instance of the word "nègre" is translated as "black man" and the first is eliminated entirely with the pronoun "he." According to Doyle Calhoun, in his essay on Fanon's semantically neologistic use of "noirceur," this latter term "lexicalizes this process of racialization, negation and subalternization" (174) and "designates a reflexive psychosocial condition that points to Blackness—as it is lived, as it is perceived—considered in its historically conditioned and existential complexity" (172). But the psychosocial condition results from the process; that is, "looking black" or rather "looking noir" (the condition of blackness) leads one to be interpreted and interpellated (the process of "negrification") as "nègre," a social and psychological position. When both "noir" and "nègre" are translated as "black" in English, this process of negrification is obscured, since the black person is always-already black.

In many ways, Mbembe follows Fanon's distinction between "n/Noir" as an actual person and "n/Nègre" as a discursive construction, but his approach is more philosophical and material than psychoanalytical.[10] For example, Mbembe writes,

> En effet, on se donne pas seulement un objet imaginaire. On se donne aussi un homme imaginaire, le Noir. On l'appellera d'abord « le Nègre » (sorte d'homme matière puisque marchandise quantifiable), puis « l'homme noir » et on lui trouvera une substance impérissable que l'on désignera comme « l'âme noire ». (111)

which Dubois translates as

> Europe does not simply conjure an imaginary object. It offers itself an imaginary human being, the Black Man. He was first called 'Nègre' (a kind of human thing, or quantifiable merchandise) and then 'Black Man' (*l'homme noir*), in which they located an imperishable substance called the 'Black soul'. (72, italics and parentheticals original)

Here, we see again what Nadia Yala Kisukidi calls a "sliding" of signifiers where "[t]he noun 'Noir' becomes the noun 'nègre'—and *vice versa*" (97, italics original, translation mine); that is, the supposedly neutral term "Noir" takes on the racist associations of the pejorative term "Nègre." Dubois makes the relationship between the two French terms clear by including "homme noir" (in apposition to "Black Man") as well as the term "Nègre" in the English translation. Yet this practice is not consistent throughout the book, where he tends to only use variants of Black(s)/ Black Man, without parenthetically referring to the French. Just a couple of pages later, for example, when Mbembe notes, "Dans le discours proto-raciste européen … dire l' « homme noir », c'est donc … renvoyer au statut d'être inférieur auquel est consigné le Nègre" (113), Dubois eliminates the doubling of racial terms: "In the proto-racist European discourse … to say 'Black Man' was to … refer to the inferior status to which he was consigned" (73–74). Yet, there are still ways that Dubois's translation gestures toward the discursive racial formation Mbembe articulates in his text even when he translates "Nègre" with a variant of "Black."

Unlike the translators of Fanon, Dubois includes a lengthy translator's introduction in which he directly addresses the translation of race words, and similarly to Philcox, he affirms that the most difficult problem the book posed was how to translate the word "Nègre" (xiv). Recognizing the role of language in knowledge-production about race as well as the *décalage* between the French terms in the text and the English options available to him, Dubois writes:

> Because the book's language here often serves as a conceptual and historical cartography, my task has been to create a new map in a new language. The problem has been that the existing cartography of terms, particularly those dealing with race, is quite different in French and English. The same symbols can mean different things in the two languages, resonating with vastly different histories of interpretation and sensibility. (xiv)

Ultimately, he decides to translate the "unity of 'le Nègre'" with "a trinity of words"—Blacks, Blackness, and the Black Man (xiv)—but he does not give further information about which instances call for one variant or another. From the perspective of the reader, however, Dubois's three different terms do gesture to the sliding of signifiers in the French. Further, his unconventional spelling of "Black Man," with the "M" capitalized, indicates a type or discursive construction, which corresponds to the way, in Fanon and Mbembe, that certain characteristics and heritages are racialized so that these neutral characteristics come to represent racially stereotypical notions of those people, turning them from person to type. Thus, Dubois uses translation to "pull and tug," as Edwards writes, at the signifier b/Black m/Man and ultimately

the way "blackness" signifies in English. The *décalage* between French and English then becomes a generative space for meaning-making, and Dubois also notes the *décalage* between signifier and signified intralingually as well, which also opens space for knowledge-production about race and in racialized structures to break from the afterlife of colonial frameworks:

> Once embarked in the text, readers will understand that the term [Nègre]—or, in the translation, the trinity of terms—is always insufficient, always just to the side, approaching but not arriving. And this is, in a sense, precisely the point. Mbembe offers here … the first hint of the constitution of a beyond [colonialism and racial thinking]. (xv)

These brief examples demonstrate the many uses of translation and translation studies in the work of critical race studies, broadly defined, especially in challenging the hegemony of US and English-language categories and frameworks of race in scholarship. While, as shown in the beginning of this chapter, translation can be used to assimilate transnational scholarship into English-language and Western norms of knowledge-production about race, ideally translation not only helps to bring work from different languages into conversation but also—through the disjunctures between languages and cultures—pushes against existing racial categories and understandings of race. While the flattening of racial terminology in translation or the pretense of neat equivalents can serve to fix language and knowledge about race, a self-reflexive practice of interlingual scholarship urges the scholar to interrogate even the most fundamental concepts like supposedly "neutral" racial designations, cognates, and the word "race" itself—how it functions and what it signifies. Fanon and Mbembe both argue for recuperative moves in the discourse of racial formation. As Calhoun argues in regard to Fanon, "Blackness is an imposed, overdetermined (and *overdetermining*) category of racialization, but it is also an identity that can be seized and wrestled from the language of the Other" (167, italics original). Because translation is a site where racial meaning is negotiated, it is a valuable means of effecting this kind of struggle.

Notes

1 For a detailed discussion of decisions around racial terminology and capitalization in this book, which varies by chapter, see the Preface. Briefly, in this chapter, because I call for less US-centrism and English-language-centrism in critical race studies, including in ideas about racial identity and racial formation, I capitalize neither black nor white to indicate the lack of fixity in these terms that occurs through translation.
2 The same can be said for writing about race for general audiences, with ideas filtering in from critical race studies and racial justice activism. The global trade

imbalance of this type of writing between the United States and other places was only magnified by the worldwide spread of the Black Lives Matter protests in the spring and summer of 2020, when more people became engaged in learning more about race and racism. In 2020 and 2021, for example, Robin DiAngelo's *White Fragility* (2018) was published in Korean, Dutch, French, Italian, Danish, German, and Spanish translation; it had not, to my knowledge, been previously published in translation. Ibram X. Kendi's *How to be an Antiracist* (2019) was published in French (in France and Canada), Spanish, Catalan, Swedish, Italian, and Japanese in 2020 and 2021, while his 500-page history *Stamped from the Beginning* (2016) was released in Spanish in 2021, having previously been translated into German in 2017 and Chinese in 2019. On the other hand, similar books from abroad have not reached Anglophone audiences in translation. In the French context, for example, journalist and activist Rokhaya Diallo has written several books comparable in topic, style, and form to the US books above, including *Racisme: mode d'emploi* (Racism: a guide) from 2011 and *Comment parler du racisme aux enfants* (How to talk to kids about racism, 2013), but none of them has been translated into English. Similarly, neither of the two books co-authored by French activist Assa Traoré have been translated into English. Traoré is the founder of The Committee for Truth and Justice for Adama; her brother Adama died in French police custody in 2016 after having been pinned to the ground, similarly to Eric Garner in 2014 and George Floyd in 2020, whose murder was one of the main catalysts for the 2020 Black Lives Matter protests. Those protests renewed interest in Adama Traoré's death in France and raised Assa Traoré's profile as an activist, but her *Lettre à Adama* (Letter to Adama, 2017, written with Elsa Vigoureux) and *Le Combat Adama* (*The Adama Struggle*, 2019, written with Geoffroy de Lagasnerie) have still not been translated out of French.

3 On the other hand, there is also a wide corpus of texts in decolonial and postcolonial traditions that discuss knowledge-production and (neo)coloniality in relation to translation that do not explicitly mention or theorize race. For example, Kenyan writer Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o argues that African authors writing in colonizing European languages perform a sort of "mental translation" ("Translated by the Author" 18–20), whereas he associates writing in African languages with a "natural" link between language and culture. The relationship between colonizing and formerly colonized cultures is not addressed in terms of race. Ngũgĩ has also advocated for translation as a means for the cultures of the "periphery" in Africa, Asia, and South America to share knowledge with each other in service of collective struggle against neoimperialism, situating translation positively as "the language of languages, a language through which all languages can talk to one another" (*Something Torn* 96). As Brendon Nicholls writes, "In Ngũgĩ's view, polycentric translation is the cultural corollary to the lateral distribution of global power and wealth" (197). For more on postcolonial African literature, linguistic shifts, and shifts from oral to written discourse, see Paul Bandia's *Translation as Reparation* (2008).

4 Some of the members of the Combahee River Collective, discussed in Chapter 1, were also involved in publishing the work of feminist women of color and "Third-World" women through the creation of Kitchen Table: Women of Color Press.

5 Here and elsewhere in the remainder of this chapter, I put "blackness" in quotation marks to indicate that it is a signified with shifting meaning, not a pre-existing, fixed identity that needs only to be designated by a signifier. That is, "blackness" in quotes points to race as a construct, with the contours of the category (who is and who is not included) and connotative associations unfixed.

6 It should be noted that the translation of Fanon's *Les damnés de la terre* (translated into English as *The Wretched of the Earth*) has received much more attention in

scholarship than the translation of *Peau noire, masques blancs*, including an entire collection of essays that discuss translations of the text into various languages: *Translating Frantz Fanon Across Continents and Languages* (2017), edited by Kathryn Batchelor and Sue-Ann Harding. The question of racial formation is not as central, however, to *Les damnés de la terre* as it is to *Peau noire, masques blancs*.

7 In addition to Edwards (25–37), see also Massardier-Kenney (2009, 10–12) on the denotative and connotative meanings of n/Noir, n/Nègre, b/Black, and n/Negro as relevant to translation.

8 A new collected volume that seems relevant to this discussion, *Black Feminist Constellations: Dialogue and Translation Across the Americas* (Smith and Leu, eds. 2023), was due to be published after this book went to press so could not be included more fully here.

9 Chapter 5 of *Peau noire* famously begins with the interpellation "*Sale* (dirty) *nègre*!" (88).

10 For an extended discussion of Mbembe's use of Fanon's ideas as well as how Mbembe's thinking differs from his predecessor's, see Marriott (2018).

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5

TRANSLATING RACISM

This book has outlined several ways that the theory and practice of literary translation in the West derive from and perpetuate white supremacist ideas and structures. The "unbearable whiteness of translation" in the West is not simply a matter of the disproportionate racial demographics of translation studies scholars and literary translators but also of norms rooted in racist frameworks arising in the period of European imperialism and the transatlantic slave trade and persisting through today. In a vicious circle, these frameworks affect who translates and how, who profits from it, who produces knowledge about translation, and what that knowledge says about how translation functions and which practices are valued. Since neither translation studies as a field nor literary translation as a profession have fully reckoned with the role of race in producing conceptual frameworks and norms of practice in the West, these frameworks and norms tend to pass as universal or race-neutral. As discussed in Chapter 3, translation is often posited as an inherent good that should bring people together across differences in a liberal humanist framework (as in Gutterman 2021) without sufficiently taking into account the many ways translation has been used as a tool of oppression, as postcolonial translation studies has elaborated at length. Indeed, translation is one means by which racist discourse in all its forms spreads globally. Yet until recently, Western scholars and literary translators have rarely discussed race in translation, even as an issue that directly arises in texts being translated. By contrast, there are now many books and dozens of essays devoted to gender in translation and feminist approaches to translation practice, including feminist strategies for translating gendered language as well as sexism in texts. Relatively little, however, has been written about translating racial identity terminology, including racial slurs, even though

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these words raise complex translation problems at a variety of levels, including lexical, cultural, historical, political, and ethical.

The complexity of the issues around race and translation would suggest that they are rich for exploration, but it is, I would argue, not *despite* but *because of* how difficult they are considered to be that they have tended to be ignored. White scholars and translators might find these questions unimportant or irrelevant; more generously, they might feel it is not "their place" to address these issues or they may be wary of saying or doing the "wrong thing" and thus appearing racist themselves, an instance of what Robin DiAngelo calls "white fragility," where White people are more concerned with their own reputation than racial justice.[1] With translation studies scholars in the West being predominantly White, the marginalization of race as a category of analysis in translation studies serves to maintain a supposedly race-neutral theorization of translation that actually obscures how race, and white supremacy in particular, function in both the theory and practice of translation. Despite this reticence on issues of race, many White translators continue to translate texts by both authors of color and White authors where racial identity terms and racially marked characterizations appear—including instances of blatant racism—without systemic reflection, ultimately perpetuating white supremacy. As DiAngelo writes, "Though white fragility is triggered by discomfort and anxiety, it is born of superiority and entitlement. White fragility … is a powerful means of white racial control and the protection of white advantage" (2018 2). In keeping with the coalitional solidarity toward racial justice discussed in Chapter 3, though, John Keene (2021) argues that, even as we specifically need more Black translators in the profession, all translators have their role to play in anti-racist translation. Given how translation itself is shaped by and gives shape to racism, then, how might scholars and literary translators, especially White ones, address these questions without perpetuating racism? This chapter draws from critical race studies and anti-racist activism along with translation studies to think through ethical strategies for translating racist discourse. As with other issues around race and translation discussed throughout this book, directly confronting the problem of translating racist discourse outside norms based in whiteness requires a re-evaluation of who translates how as well as who and what translation is for.

Interpreting Racism: Intent vs. Impact

"What is a racist translation?", Tiphaine Samoyault asks in the title of her essay (2021), considering cases where a text that is not racist or is "less racist" is made (more) racist by the translator as well as cases of texts that are already racist.[2] As an example of the former, we can turn to the case in this book's Introduction where a White translator of a Haitian novel translated *manbo* with "voodoo priestess," using a spelling for the religion that is

associated with racist stereotypes of primitivism and black magic instead of the spelling preferred by Haitians writing in English, Vodou; the term "priestess" here also adds a sense of racist gendered exoticism (see Dize 2017). Richard Burton's translation of the *1001 Nights*, as discussed in Chapter 1, provides an example of a translation that intensifies racism present in the source text. The scene in the *Nights* where the queen cuckolds her husband with a Black slave already contains anti-Black racism—the indignity of the betrayal is not only that the queen has sex with another man but also that that man is *Black*—but Burton embellishes the description of the slave with racist animalistic language (6). In this chapter, I focus not on cases where the translator has introduced racism into a text ex nihilo but rather on examples like the *1001 Nights* where part of the text or the text as a whole is already (more or less) racist, including racist slurs, racist descriptions of characters' bodies, thoughts, or actions, or racist ideas otherwise expressed explicitly or implicitly in the text.

When Samoyault poses the question in her essay as to what a racist translation is, her answer is somewhat tautological. That is, she defines racist translation as reproducing or introducing racism in a text, but she never defines what makes a text "racist" itself, as if it were self-evident. What is understood to be racist is actually subject to interpretation, complicated particularly in translation by the fact that what is "generally" considered racist can vary by culture and changes over time. As one example, Ewa Kujawska-Lis (2008) notes the famous debate between writers and critics like Chinua Achebe and Cedric Watts over whether Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* is racist, and then she explains how an early translation into Polish minimized the racist discourse in the novel so that the question of racism was not a major concern for Polish critics, while a more recent translation intensified the racism, making it uncontestably racist. How, then, do translators evaluate whether source texts or parts of them are already racist? As a starting point, translators need an idea of the history of race relations in both the source and target cultures as well as, when relevant, between the source and target cultures. Further, literary translators require a strong sense of both the denotative and connotative meanings of racial terminology in the source and target languages in the present and historical contexts, regardless of when the text takes place or was written, since racial identity terminology once considered relatively neutral may later be considered pejorative, or pejorative terms might be reclaimed and repurposed. "[T]exts strongly marked by race and gender would probably need to be translated by people who are concerned with these issues," writes Françoise Massardier-Kenney in an introductory chapter to *Translating Slavery*,

> That is not to say that only a woman can translate a woman author, or that only a person of color can translate an author of the same color, but that

> a translator aware of issues of the construction of gender and race will be better equipped to pick up in the texts the strands that are significant in terms of gender, or of race. (17)

It is worth noting at this point, then, that if a translator, especially a White translator, is not prepared with this background knowledge, they should consider whether they are actually a suitable translator for the text.

With some understanding of the cultural meanings connected with racial terminology and representations, translators can interpret how race is operating in the source text in order to make decisions for the target text. While the hermeneutic aspect of translation is commonly recognized and we are living after the theoretical "death of the author," translators also frequently frame their interpretations in terms of capturing the "author's intent" or "what the author intended." But the issue of racism in texts raises particular problems about the question of "intent," which I address here through the framing common in anti-racist discourse of "intent vs. impact" (see, for example, King 2019). The framework of impact as opposed to intent encourages people to take responsibility for how their speech and actions are received, especially by people of color, regardless of whether they intended to say or do something racist. The limitations of intent in evaluating whether or not something should be considered racist are clear when often even broad negative stereotypical statements are not "intended" to be racist but are rather pronounced as though they represent an "objective" reality. White abolitionists, for example, frequently couched their arguments in racist tropes that generalized Black people negatively as having been inevitably debased by slavery or positively as being childishly innocent and closer to nature (Kendi 95–98, Lively 55–98). As critical race scholars have shown, White people also deny or obscure intentionality in regard to racism through various discursive strategies, perhaps the most notorious being statements that begin with, "I'm not racist, but…" (Bonilla-Silva 2013, Bonilla-Silva and Forman 2000). In some cases, such as microaggressions, the speaker may not be aware (or may profess not to be aware) of the racist undertones or tropes that their speech references. For example, when a White person describes a Black person as "articulate," they might (profess to) intend this as a compliment, but its subtext suggests that most Black people are not articulate and that this Black person is seen as having elevated themselves 'above their race' (Gordon 2014). An author, then, may not have "intended" what they wrote to be racist but its impact might be. What should the translator translate: the intent or the impact?

Some issues in the translation of intent vs. impact surface in Yardenne Greenspan's explanation of her thought process for translating the Hebrew word *kushi*, a somewhat pejorative term for Black people of African descent, into English (Qualey and Greenspan 2015). Here, Greenspan writes that "the

first thing [she] must do is consider the intention" (np), making clear the framework of interpretation. For Greenspan,

> If the author is using the word *kushi* out of force of habit rather than negative intention, I would be hesitant to use an equivalently offensive term in English, which would misrepresent his or her intentions. In principle, translators shouldn't be judged for authors' foibles, but, like it or not, we are in the business of context, and our duties often include protecting an author from his or her own subconscious choices. (np)

The author's (presumed) intention appears directly throughout the passage ("rather than negative intention," "misrepresent his or her intentions"), and the use of the racist term is deemed unintentional by phrases like "force of habit" and "subconscious choices," as well as being minimized as a "foible." What is notable here is that the focus on the author's intent shifts the question of impact from those targeted by the racist term to those using it, as the author needs to be "protect[ed]" and the translator seeks to avoid being "judged" for the author's choices. The impact of being perceived as racist takes precedence here over the impact of pejorative language on Black people in Israel or on Black readers of the translation, which as noted above, is a feature of white fragility, where "[w]hites who position themselves as liberal often opt to protect what we perceive as our moral reputations, rather than to recognize or change our participation in systems of inequity and domination" (DiAngelo 2016 248–249). Greenspan's explication of the term *kushi* in the source culture furthers this protective stance:

> [*Kushi*] is an unfounded, decontextualized term that many Israelis—including intelligent, liberal Israelis—still unthinkingly use, unaware of its potential to offend the very small minority of Israelis of African descent and the increasing number of African refugees and migrant workers. (np)

Here, "intelligent, liberal" Israelis use the term "unthinkingly" and "unaware" because it has been "decontextualized." The use of *kushi* by these liberal Israelis can be considered an instance, then, of what critical race studies scholars call "aversive racism," where people—especially educated, liberal people—"support the principle of racial equality, and regard themselves as non-prejudiced" but still hold implicit biases based on race (Dovidio and Gaertner 3). How might the discussion of translating the term *kushi* change if it were framed not in terms of intent but in terms of the impact of casual racism from bourgeois liberals?

Bringing together the idea of impact with the hermeneutic function of translation provides a different means of interpreting a source text beyond whether or not the author "intended" all or part of it to be racist. Another

way to approach the interpretation is by asking how race is *functioning* in the source text. While Greenspan begins with the question of intent behind using the term *kushi*, the supporting questions she asks next get at how the word is functioning in the text and consequently what its impact might be: "Who is using this word? Is it a character, the narrator, or the author? What kind of person are they? What tone are they utilizing?" (np). Broadly, the translator might consider whether the *text*—not (a) character(s) or the author—seems to be critiquing or supporting a racist viewpoint as a whole and/or at the moment where slurs or racist depictions or ideas appear. When determining how race and racism are functioning in a text and its impact, the translator, as usual, has a dual context for interpretation: the source culture and the target culture. Something that might "generally" be considered inoffensive in one culture or subculture might be considered racist in another. With Greenspan's example, for instance, it seems that a larger proportion of Israelis would not think of the term *kushi* as racist than a proportion of the US population would in regard to a similarly pejorative term in English. If a translator is aiming for what is known as "functional equivalence," there would be "an attempt to make the target text function in the target culture the way the source text functioned in the source culture" (Lefevere and Bassnett 8). In other words, if the impact is not considered racist in the source culture, then it would be translated in such a way so as not to have a racist impact in the target culture, even if what is written in the source text would have a racist impact in the target culture. Functional equivalence, though, presents some of the same problems as intent in relation to whose perspective is prioritized.

If intent prioritizes the perspective of the speaker/author, impact and function prioritize the listener/reader—but which reader? Critical race studies exposes how hypothetical or abstract subject positions are presented as if they were race-neutral when in fact supposedly "universal" subject positions tend to be theorized according to the norms of whiteness, as described in the Introduction. When scholars, translators, editors, and reviewers talk about "the reader" in translation studies and the literary translation profession, that reader is usually presumed to be White, even if that goes unspoken (Hur 2022). Though the "general" reader of an Israeli text might not find *kushi* offensive, how is it interpreted by a person of African heritage in Israel? Defining the reader more concretely and specifically could lead to different interpretations of the function and impact of the way race is represented in the text, which does not always mean that people of color interpret the text as more racist than White people do. For example, in her translation of a Haitian novel containing Vodou and high eroticism, Kaiama L. Glover chose to prioritize Anglophone Afro-diasporic readers most, then Haitians in the diaspora who do not read French (30–33), and she also considered how academic and "non-professional" readers might variously interpret certain

elements of the novel (35). In presenting her work in different academic settings, Glover found that students from

> an elite institution … the majority of whom were not of Caribbean origin, and all of whom were well versed in postcolonial and feminist theory as articulated within the frame of North Atlantic scholarship … expressed discomfort with the perceived excesses of [the author's] carnivalesque presentation of Vodou and hyper-sexualization of [the protagonist]

whereas students at another institution who were less familiar with theory and "the vast majority of whom identified as first-generation Caribbean-Americans … read the same descriptions of Vodou, sex, and carnival without objection" (36). For the first group, then, these elements functioned to reify racist stereotypes about Black people, whereas for the second group, these elements function resistantly to the "relatively Puritanical culture of the [US] Anglosphere" (34). How race functions in texts and how texts function in the target culture thus depend on a more specific accounting of readership beyond the types of general "Anglophone reader" or other national or cultural readers that have been theorized in translation studies, which have actually tended to prioritize White bourgeois perspectives masquerading as "universal" readers.

Impact and function, then, in regard to race and racism should be interpreted both more narrowly and more broadly than in the eyes of "the reader." More narrowly, translators should take into account the impact of a text's racism on specific types of reader, keeping in mind that interpretations within broad racial identities will also not be homogenous. As André Lefevere and Susan Bassnett write, "A culture, then, assigns different functions to translations of different texts. The way translations are supposed to function depends both on the audience they are intended for … and on the status of the source text they are supposed to represent in their own culture" (8). Lefevere and Bassnett point, for example, to translations whose projected audience is comprised mainly of children (8), which would affect the level of the vocabulary chosen as well as whether elements considered to be "mature," like racism, would be included in the translation. Many texts that deal with race and racism are assigned the function of historical or cultural informant, in which case racial tensions tend to be maintained, whereas for texts that function as literary "classics," racist elements may be sanitized so as not to harm the book's canonical status. On the broader scale, translators should reflect on texts' impact not only on reading subjects but also on the social and cultural structures within which those readers find themselves. How might certain types of discourse about race uphold or challenge structures that maintain white supremacy and other forms of racial inequity? How might

these representations be used to justify or oppose racist policies and institutions like incarceration, imperialist warfare, neoliberal extractivism, and paternalistic international aid? Further, ideological and geopolitical concerns specifically between the source and target cultures can shape how racist elements of translations function. Janko Trupej demonstrates, for example, how translators into Slovenian intensified racism in translations of US texts during periods of tense relations between former Yugoslavia and the United States (2017 "Strategies"), whereas Joe Lockard and Qin Dan outline how Chinese translators have avoided Jack London's racist anti-Chinese texts in favor of repeated retranslations of other London texts that fit narratives of working-class struggle and anti-imperialism (2013). There is no "neutral" position within which translations of racist discourse function.

Decisions about even a few racist words in a translation thus occur in relation to a large constellation of interrelated factors: the history of racist terms and of race relations within and between the source and target cultures, how racist discourse functions in the text and its impact on different sets of readers, the function of the text in both the source and target cultures and the audience prioritized for the translation, the relation of the racist discourse in the text to the wider structures of racism, not as individually held beliefs but as systemic and institutionalized policies, practices, and codes and in relation to intercultural and international relations as well as global forces like capitalism and imperialism. The complexity of how race and racism function in texts means there is no simple answer about how to translate them. Broadly speaking, there are two main strategies: softening or removing racist discourse on the one hand or maintaining or intensifying it on the other, though there are different ways of implementing these strategies, which also might both be used in the same text. Other scholars have analyzed strategies and sub-strategies for translating racism in regard to case studies of particular texts or sets of texts in a particular target culture, such as Rachel Weissbrod (2008), Denise Filmer (2011), Trupej (2017), Samoyault (2021), and Carla Mereu Keating (2014), the latter providing a more detailed taxonomy of strategies, in relation specifically to the dubbing of racial slurs, which includes strategies such as calque, paraphrase, and replacing racial slurs with other slang, particularly homophobic slurs (301–307). While these various studies outline possible strategies, they also underline that translators often seem to not apply them in a consistent manner, even within the same translation, resulting in confused passages and no obvious overarching strategy (see, for example, Trupej "Strategies" 332–333). Certainly a given text may elicit a combination of strategies, depending on how the racist discourse is functioning at certain moments in the text, but systemic reflection on how race functions overall in the text in relation to the individual instances of racist discourse is required in order for race to function coherently in the translation.

My aim here, then, is comprehensive and evaluative in that I draw from these various case studies and other examples to suggest which types of strategies might be most apt for certain ways racism is functioning in a source text. There can be no systematic solution, however, that definitively assigns functions and strategies for translating racism in texts as the same strategy used in different contexts may have a different function and impact. There also is simply no way to match up terms in each language according to how they function and what their impact is because race functions differently in different cultures and so, too, do the words used to signify it because they are shaped by and shape entire histories of racial formation. As discussed in the previous chapter, even words like n/Noir and b/Black do not necessarily have the same valences in their respective languages and cultures. In translating racist discourse, then, translators cannot just find (a) target-language word(s) with the "right" amount of racist impact that would function the same way as the source-language word(s). In a study, for example, about the perceptions of Italian readers of how racist the depictions of Africans are in *Heart of Darkness*, readers rated a translation that used the Italian racist slur *negro* more frequently than racist slurs appear in the English original as *less racist* than Conrad's English text, likely because they perceived the n-word in English as more derogatory than the Italian slur, irrespective of the frequency of usage (Mastropierro and Conklin 319–320). Because it is impossible to match the function and impact of racist discourse in the source text, a major consideration for the translator is how the text will function in the target culture. Function and impact thus remain the guiding principles here, and the discussion further brings together concepts from translation studies, critical race studies, and anti-racism discourse, as well as current mainstream debates about racism in the public sphere, to propose strategies for an ethical, anti-racist practice of translating racist discourse.

Strategies for Translating Racism

The strategy of toning down or removing racist language or representations from texts has, in recent years, gained some widespread notoriety in the general Anglophone US/UK public due to its being used in re-editions of children's literature written in English by "classic" authors such as Dr. Seuss and Roald Dahl. In March 2021, the Dr. Seuss estate announced they would no longer reprint six of his books deemed irredeemably racist. Two years later, Roald Dahl's books were republished with racist and other potentially offensive language removed or altered. While people across the political spectrum, including some people of color, decried these decisions, White critics often

framed their disappointment through nostalgia for texts from their childhood and minimized the potential impact these texts could have on children of color. As Ebony Elizabeth Thomas, a scholar of race in children's literature, notes, "Folks are not remembering the text itself, they are remembering the affective experiences they had around those texts" (quoted in Alter and Harris np).

What these cases highlight is that the removal or softening of racism in texts is more contentious with readers when it occurs in texts they already know well—which, as we will see, holds true for translation as well—if nothing else because these changes are more noticeable to the reading public, when otherwise they might go undetected in translation aside from those who read in both the source and target languages. With texts considered "classics," many readers have both an affective relationship as well as a sense of veneration, then, which leads to feelings that a somehow sacrosanct text has been violated. Yet, for example, Dahl had already agreed in 1971 to revise his work before his death to edit out a racist depiction in *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* of the Oompa-Loompas, who in the first 1964 edition had been "found … in the very deepest and darkest part of the African jungle where no white man had ever been before" (quoted in Eplett 14) and then were smuggled in packing crates to England to work in a factory by Willy Wonka, whom Layla Eplett characterizes in this version as "a business owner who bears the white man's burden" (14).[3] "Original" texts themselves are thus far from inviolable and unchanging, an argument long made within translation studies, which provides a means for rationalizing the strategy of altering the text by removing or softening its racism.

In *Literary Translation and the Making of Originals*, Karen Emmerich "questions the often unexamined assumption that the object of translation is a single, stable lexical entity whose existence predates the process of translation" (13). As Emmerich notes, "authors, translators, rights holders, agents, editors, publishers, scholars, and so on … both negotiate and further the textual instability that has always characterized literary works," so that the "original" is not a fixed text but one that continuously shifts as various stakeholders interact with it (13). Translators sometimes have to choose among several editions or manuscript versions as their source text, meaning that they themselves "fix" the original, however contingently, and there are many cases of authors revising their texts in re-publications in line with changes that occurred in translations into other languages.[4] Similarly, Rebecca L. Walkowitz questions the stability of the original through J. M. Coetzee's novel *Diary of a Bad Year*, whose Dutch translation was published prior to the English edition, and translations into several other languages were released "almost simultaneously" with the English publication (51). "What does it mean," she asks, "to refer to *the text* when the work exists from the start in several editions?" (53, italics original). Aside from the fact that the "original" itself is not an eternal and sacrosanct whole, translation studies

scholars like Lefevere reason that there is always a process of transformation, or what he calls "manipulation" during translation that occurs in motivated ways according to (or against) an ideology (a "certain concept of what the world should be like") and poetics ("a certain concept of what literature should be like") current in a literary system (217). Samoyault, then, suggests that a "more radical and interventionist" method for making a translation "less racist" is to "intervene at the moment of the 'naturally' transformative operation of translation" (101), since change is inevitable anyway. These interventionist types of strategies have long been used by feminist translators to reduce or challenge the sexism in translated texts and might be applied to racism in texts as well.[5]

Combining feminist interventions with an intersectional approach that also takes into account race, for example, Claire Salardenne and Massardier-Kenney manipulate the abolitionist novel *Ourika* by White Frenchwoman Claire de Duras to soften a racist aspect of the characterization of the protagonist, an African kidnapped as a girl from Senegal and raised in a White Parisian family according to the same standards as a White girl. It is only later in her life that Ourika comes to a realization of what her skin color means in French society, and she eventually retires to a convent, unable to be with the man she loves. As mentioned earlier, White abolitionist writers, despite their anti-slavery politics, still often held racist, patronizing views about Black people and their supposed childlike innocence. Massardier-Kenney describes how she and Salardenne "purposefully height[en] the eloquence of the black female character in an effort to make heard a female voice that reaches the modern reader muted[.] … [B]oth [translators] purposefully effaced what sometimes appeared to them as the whining undertones of the character Ourika" (8–9). Their goal was to "produce a text that presents an oppressed but dignified woman of color" since they were "aware of the patronizing implications of presenting a woman and a colonized subject strictly as a victim" (9). Massardier-Kenney and Salardenne thus address a more subtle form of racism than blatant racial slurs, and their strategy similarly unfolds in a more subtle shift in language across the novel's characterization of Ourika. The translators see the function of the text in the source culture as an abolitionist text calling for a recognition of the equal humanity of Black people with White people, and the impact of Ourika's dialogue in the target text, if translated more directly, contravenes that function in the target culture and so is manipulated to be less racist. However, the paratextual apparatus of the translation—it appears in a two-volume collection of essays, interviews, translator introductions, and translations of French abolitionist writing—makes these changes apparent to the reader so that the problematic nature of the White women abolitionists' views about Africans is not concealed. The translation thus functions to uplift the character of Ourika from racist stereotypes at the same time as it historicizes those stereotypes.

While the racism of what Adam Lively calls the "sentimental imagination" (55) in abolitionist texts functions subtly but systemically, another possible apt context in which to employ the strategy of softening or removal is when the racism is brief and incidental. This might include, for example, a slightly pejorative term or descriptive phrase a minimal number of times in a text. This type of more incidental racism is what Khairani Barokka refers to as being "within repair" (28) by removal from the translation. Notably, she discusses this practice in the context of works by living authors where the translator could have a discussion with the author about what is problematic in the source text and how to address it in the translation in an effort to "reduce the propagation of ableist, racist, sexist, homophobic, transphobic, xenophobic and other discriminatory views in language—ever-urgent needs in a violent world—[since] not to bring up ethical issues is itself an ethical choice" (28). Khairani Barokka's framing and strategy here differ from Greenspan's, however, in that she does not refer to the "intent" of the author or suggest the terms should be suppressed to "protect" the author or translator; indeed, she recommends that the discussion between author and translator about the problematic language be made public:

> Rather than making the necessary changes or choices to minimise harm without public comment—which could in fact be a 'masking' of the issues in the original text, a form of pushing past harms under the rug—an explanation of why the changes were made might benefit other authors, translators and publishers. (28)

This strategy then functions according to what DiAngelo identifies as missing in reactions to being called out for racism based in white fragility: "to recognize or change our participation in systems of inequity and domination" (2016 249). The impact of the text's racism, in Khairani Barokka's framing, is harmful, and so the translation, when it softens or removes the racist language, functions as harm reduction, but only insofar as it attempts to reduce that harm more broadly, not to the author's moral reputation but to larger systems of structural racism by highlighting the issue publicly.

What Khairani Barokka calls the "masking" of a text's racism by removal or softening points to problems with this strategy when not accompanied by some sort of paratextual commentary, as she recommends. Put another way, it allows for a kind of passing: not passing as a different race but rather a racist text, character, or author passing as not racist. Such translations fall within the logic of "colorblindness," which, as described in the Introduction, claims that the way out of racism is to "not see" race. "Colorblindness," however, functions as a kind of aversive racism that only obscures, rather than cures, racial inequities. For Eduardo Bonilla-Silva (2013), the disavowal of racism while its structures remain intact results in the paradoxical and

impossible situation of "racism without racists"; eliminating racism from translations in an effort not to perpetuate racism may actually, then, only give rise to the impression of "racism without racist texts." As Bonilla-Silva and other critical race scholars and anti-racist activists argue in response to colorblindness, refusing to "see race" is a refusal to see racism, and refusing to see the problem keeps it from being addressed. Under the pretense of combatting racism, "colorblindness" results in a denial of any responsibility in perpetuating racism or in any responsibility to do something about it. Drawing from Bonilla-Silva's research on colorblindness, Mica Pollock puts forward a concept she calls "colormuteness," "a purposeful silencing of race words" (2) or refusal to talk about race. In her own ethnographic research, Pollock found her subjects resorting to colormuteness "when they were discussing inequitable patterns potentially implicating themselves" (9). Muting or masking racism in translated texts, then, can serve an exculpatory function, absolving a translator, author, culture, or racial group from being interpreted as racist.

Colormuteness, or muting racism, in translation does not function to absolve only White people or culture from racism. For example, Ghenwa Hayek analyzes the translation of the Lebanese novel *Ḥikayāt Zahra* by Hanan al-Shaykh into English where a feminist critique of patriarchy's effects on Arab women conflicts with the racist way in which characters in the novel treat and talk about Black Africans. In the English translation *The Story of Zahra*, Hayek details, the anti-Black racism of the novel is toned down or removed in several ways, including softening or replacing anti-Black slurs and racist depictions of Black men and women, what Hayek calls a "whitewashing" of the text (97). Drawing on Mona Baker's idea of "selective appropriation," in which "deliberate omissions or re-writing … enable the text to circulate in different contexts" (95), Hayek argues that the whitewashing of the characters' anti-Black racism privileges *The Story of Zahra*'s circulation on the world literature market and in the world lit university classroom as "an indictment of the patriarchal violence of Arab masculinity" (95). This becomes the function of the translation in the Anglophone literary context, and the anti-Black racism depicted in the novel could be seen to complicate or get in the way of this function, since it would mean the Arab women in the novel would be "imperfect victims" as the racism could be distasteful to readers. What is sacrificed is the potential function to expose how anti-Blackness is a global phenomenon not limited to the West or to the white-black binary. Ironically, the exculpatory gesture of eliding the Arab women's anti-Black racism in the novel could actually also serve to perpetuate anti-Arab racism in the West because it functions to reify stereotypes of Arab women as only passive victims of male violence without agency of their own.

"Whitewashing" or removing/softening racist discourse, then, frequently serves less to avoid perpetuating racism and more to protect the reputation

of a book—and its circulation and reception. This protective strategy is often used in regard to older texts under the pretext that the authors were "products of their time" and should not be judged by today's standards of racism, an argument that relies on the framework of intent—these authors supposedly could not intend to be racist because they did not even know that certain terms, views, or practices were racist. But such a stance presumes a certain intent on the part of the author without considering the impact of how the text functions in the (historical) source culture, especially when more specific readers or interpreters of the text might be imagined. That is, at any given time, there were a range of views about race and racism: even if European imperialism or transatlantic chattel slavery were widely accepted at a certain moment, there were always those who opposed it, including those being colonized and enslaved, as critical race scholars continuously emphasize. The "view of the time" trope in regard to racist discourse, practices, and structures thus again passes off the view of a segment of the White population in that historical moment as "universal." This repeats the situation of "racism without racists" in a different form, where individuals or texts are exonerated from racism because it was supposedly "normal" at the time.

Historical texts in particular, then, can function to show the foundations of current racist thought and policies, but only when the strategies to remove or soften racism are not used, at least not without commentary. These issues arise in recent translations into German and French of Margaret Mitchell's 1936 novel *Gone With the Wind*, which takes place in the US South around the time of the Civil War and Reconstruction. Andreas Nohl, one of the German co-translators, indicates, according to journalist Elizabeth Grenier, that "the historical context in which such books have been written cannot be changed"; as Nohl says, "we don't rewrite the world anew" (np). But oddly, Nohl's interpretation of the function of *Gone With the Wind* is not as a racist book but rather as one that "describes a period of racism" (np). Even more oddly, he uses the German words more closely equivalent to "Blacks" or "slaves" than the German word more closely equivalent to the n-word when translating the latter into German. How can the book describe a period of racism without showing the racist ways in which White people dehumanized Black people? This incoherence is further explored by Samoyault in the recent French translation of the novel, in which the speech of the Black characters is rendered in a less caricatural way than in the English text and in an earlier French translation, but the omniscient narration stays largely the same. This results, according to Santiago Artozqui, in the book's racism remaining largely intact because it lies in the novel's basic premise itself: "a ~~slaveholding~~ idyllic society that White people have constructed, a sort of paradise lost where Black people were happy and in their place" (np, strikethrough original). Following Artozqui, Samoyault argues that "the racism of the narration … is [actually] more

problematic—because less visible—than the stigmatization of so-called Black speech" (99). Again, these translations demonstrate that intent—of translators as well as authors—matters less than function and impact. The translators' choices here function to obscure the racist logic not only of slaveholding society but also of Meade's nostalgic representation of it, so that the impact is one of minimizing the pervasive racism that carried over from the era of legal slavery to the Jim Crow context in which Meade wrote and which still has repercussions today.

In order to make clear how racism functions in historical texts like these, and how racism functioned in the texts' cultural moment, the translator may actually choose to heighten the racism of the text, making the function of racist discourse there less ambiguous. This is the strategy used by the recent Polish translation of *Heart of Darkness* described above, where the Polish translator and publisher take a clear stand in the debate about the text's racism and render their interpretation apparent to the reader (Kujawska-Lis). Paradoxically, in cases like these, making the text (or passages or characters within it) *more* racist actually does less to perpetuate racism because it makes the racism more identifiable and easier to condemn. An additional strategy to make the racist function of the discourse clear when retaining it is to include paratextual elements, such as a translator's introduction or notes, to explain and contextualize the choice to retain racial slurs and other racist language, helping to guide the interpretation of how race functions in these texts and its impact on readers while distancing the translator and publisher from the racism itself. Weissbrod sees commentary as an "an optimal solution" because "it enables the translator and publisher … to offer the readers an adequate translation, which does not mislead them regarding the source, and at the same time to retain their 'visibility' and integrity" (182). The strategy of commentary and contextualization is particularly apt in the case of academic publications, for which various forms of paratextual apparatus are already quite common and engaged with by readers. The publication of texts that perpetuate racist discourse and racism in academic presses also locates their function as sources for research about how racism functions—an object of intellectual study—and less as a literary text to be appreciated for its aesthetic pleasures and social and cultural commentary. In this way, not whitewashing the racism of historical texts, especially canonical ones, echoes the current public call for racism not to be whitewashed in history curriculums in education, part of the so-called culture wars in which the history of slavery in the United States and of colonialism in Europe are main points of contention (see, for example, Bouie 2023, Collins 2020, Goodfellow 2019). Just as an un-whitewashed history desacralizes historical figures who enslaved people, enacted settler colonial genocide, or otherwise participated in colonial violence, contextualized translations that retain racist discourse desacralize canonical texts of world literature.

These same strategies of retaining or even heightening racism apply as well to texts that include racist terms and discourse as a means to lay bare and challenge racist structures, where removing or softening the racism could blunt the texts' anti-racist critiques. In the translation into English of the Cameroonian novel *Une vie de boy* by Ferdinand Oyono, for example, the translator consistently deracializes terms like "*Noir*" and "*Blanc*" by replacing them with terms like "African" and "European" and softens the use of the pejorative "*nègre*" (Moore 105–107). The result, according to David Chioni Moore, is that the translation obscures the novel's depiction of "a violent and hypocritical French colonial society" and the Cameroonian protagonist's "self-directed racism" from internalized colonization, which he progressively sheds throughout his life (107). The same dynamic is at play in translations into Serbo-Croatian and Slovenian of Sinclair Lewis's *Kingsblood Royal*, as explored by Trupej ("Significance"), in which the racist protagonist learns he has a Black ancestor and gradually comes to renounce his former views and identify as Black, then experiencing racial discrimination himself as his neighbors try to force him from the neighborhood, including with physical threats. Because the racial slurs he himself uses earlier in the novel as well as the slurs directed at him later are softened or removed, Trupej argues, the protagonist at first

> appears to be somewhat less racist; since the same is true for mid-western society in general [in the translation], the amount of racial prejudice the protagonist has to face is also reduced, which diminishes his moral growth later on, when he completely changes his opinion about black people. (132)

While the translators of *Une vie de boy* and *Kingsblood Royal* may have wished to avoid replicating racist language, the strategies of softening and removing racist slurs and racist discourse, then, contradict these novels' function as explorations of internalized racism and its connection to the violent structures of African colonialism and Jim Crow-era racism. The impact of these texts as critiques of the structures and logics of racism is thus diminished.

Translators may, then, instead make the choice to reproduce racial slurs, especially when used by authors of color, when they function in the text to comment on the internal and external effects of racism. Jamie Richards and Alex Valente use this strategy when translating a story by Indian-Italian author Gabriella Kuruvilla in which the protagonist, too, has one Indian parent and internalizes the slur "*negra*" after being repeatedly assaulted by the term in street graffiti and by her own Italian mother. As Richards and Valente explain,

> Though in Italian 'negro' doesn't have the full force or the history of the English n-word, the social context here, where the insult prepares, or even

> predetermines, the fate of the main character, definitely suggests that any softer alternative to the insult would weaken the story. … here it is about understanding racism in the Italy of today. (np)

What is significant here, especially in relation to this last remark, is that *negra*, like the n-word in English, more usually denotes blackness, whereas the character in the story is Indian-Italian. Richards and Valente's translation, then, by using the n-word, demonstrates how internalized racism functions in the text but *without* imposing a US conception of how race functions onto the story, retaining instead the Italian framework of racialization and racism. While Kuruvilla's protagonist, like those of Oyono and Lewis, exhibits internalized racism, other authors may use racial slurs as a kind of reclamation toward empowerment. One of the most notable literary instances of this comes in the 1930s *Négritude* movement of young Black Francophone African and Caribbean intellectuals who asserted a positive Black identity against the way that blackness had been cast as the antithesis to White Europeanness in the dialectic of race. The neologism *Négritude* incorporates and reclaims the pejorative term *Nègre*, a political move and etymological history lost in the way the term has come over to English as Negritude, which at most alludes to the milder ethnonym Negro. For this reason, A. James Arnold argues that the radicalness of the gesture can only be understood in English by translating the term, as it is coined in Aimé Césaire's book-length poem *Cahier d'un retour au pays natal*, as "Niggerness" (1977 34–36, 1991 217). Not all instances of racial slurs, then, necessarily function in a racist way, though their impact may be different for different readers.

In a reflective, coherent approach to translating racism in texts, then, different strategies can be used toward the same aim of an anti-racist translation practice, depending on the function of the racism in the text and in the broader source and target cultures. In some cases, however, a text may be "beyond repair" and also function more to propagate racist ideas than to educate readers about racism in different historical or cultural contexts. Confronted with a text rife with racist discourse, the translator should ask whose and what interests would be served by translating it. While the translator's own economic and institutional power may impact their decision, they should not shy away from the strategy of deplatforming, that is, not translating the text at all. After recent cases in the United States where people accused of hate speech or abuse have had book contracts cancelled, debates have arisen more broadly in the publishing industry on both the right and the left as to whether deplatforming—not giving people a platform from which to amplify their views—constitutes a breach of free speech. But deplatforming is an ethical (and a market-based) decision, not a legal one; deplatforming is not censorship. As Ari Paul argues, "Freedom of speech and of the press don't mean everyone is entitled to a contract with a particular publisher" (np).

Similarly, no author has the "right" to have their work translated. Just because a text functions as an "important" work in its source culture due to prestige and/or sales does not mean that it "deserves" to be translated. As Terry Eagleton summarizes literary value,

> the so-called 'literary canon,' the unquestioned 'great tradition' of the 'national literature', has to be recognized as a *construct*, fashioned by particular people for particular reasons at a certain time. There is no such thing as a literary work or tradition which is valuable *in itself* … 'Value' is a transitive term: it means whatever is valued by certain people in specific situations, according to particular criteria and in the light of given purposes. (10, italics original)

Different (sub)cultures thus assign value to different (types of) texts at different times. "The" canon actually shifts over time, and as world literature scholar Mads Thomsen points out, "national canonization has a different logic and different value than international canonization. World literature is consequently not a reflection of national literatures" (3). It has never been the case that the circulation of world literature means the translation of what each national literature values as its "best" literature.

Translation is thus not a passive distribution of "canonical" or "important" works from different national literatures but actually participates in canon formation itself, especially when the translation is into a language like English or French with high cultural capital and a large number of readers internationally. When faced with a decision about whether or not to translate a racist text, then, translators and publishers should reflect on what has allowed a racist text to accumulate cultural capital and how translation facilitates that accumulation while work by authors of color or work that challenges racist cultural frameworks is marginalized. Especially in the Western Anglophone context, where such a meager proportion of the market is comprised of translation—the notorious 3% statistic—works that are selected for publication have an oversized impact in regard to representing their source cultures. Though the impact of the literary translation sector in the overall literary ecosystem is relatively small, the dearth of work published means that translators and publishers can have a relatively large impact *within* the sector when selecting texts for publication, then. With so little of the literature of the rest of the world reaching English translation, why should those few works which do pass into publication be racist ones? There is nothing inherently "good" about translation in promoting intercultural or interracial understanding, as some suggest. This book argues that radical transformation of translation theory and practice as well as the structures and institutions that support them is necessary for racial justice, but this chapter also aims to show that even small acts—like decisions about texts to translate

or how to translate racist language—can contribute to this wider transformation. Literary translators in the West should consider their own function within a system that perpetuates racism and white supremacy and the impact of their choices.

Notes

1 For a detailed discussion of decisions around racial terminology and capitalization in this book, which varies by chapter, see the Preface. Briefly, in this chapter, I capitalize Black and White when used as demographic categories but not in collocations such as white fragility. When discussing case studies, I follow the capitalization in the examples.
2 Unless otherwise noted in the References, all translations are my own.
3 Marisa Fernández López (2000) notes that the Spanish translations—at least at the time of her essay—still used the unrevised version of *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* as well as of other English-language texts that had been revised to remove racist depictions, again pointing to differing levels interculturally of "tolerance" for racism in the public sphere or different interpretations of what constitutes racism.
4 For a very thorough exploration of one case study, see Michelle Woods's *Translating Milan Kundera* (2006), which chronicles the various rewritings Kundera's novels underwent in translation and his consistent efforts to try to re-fix the originals and translations with "authorized" versions, a process that ultimately escapes him.
5 See, for example, Suzanne Jill Levine's *The Subversive Scribe* (1991), Barbara Godard's concept of "womanhandling" texts (1995), or Luise von Flotow's concept of "highjacking" texts (1991).

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CONCLUSION

In one sense, this book serves as a calling out of various ways in which translation studies as a field and the literary translation profession in the West are rooted in and uphold white supremacy and other forms of racism. It also serves as a calling in to make changes toward racial justice and away from the "unbearable whiteness of translation" in the West. I am very aware that I myself am part of that unbearable whiteness and that I hold a relatively privileged position within racist systems: I am in a tenure-line position at a research university, have published a book-length translation, hold high-ranking office in a national professional translators organization, and serve as a translation editor for a well-established literary journal. The stance I hope to take from this position is not one of white saviorism but of solidarity. Those of us with white privilege within the racist university and publishing systems have some power to wield in creating more opportunities and access for scholars and translators of color. But the ultimate goal must be disinvestment from the power of white privilege itself and the racist systems that support it. As Rinaldo Walcott writes, "White people will have to risk something here. … The measure of a possible future begins in the moment of the betrayal of whiteness, both in its bodily comportment and in its authority to know, narrate, administer, and thus command the terms of social relations and sociality" (403). This means not only giving up some forms of privilege but also giving up the idea that the systems we have now could be equitable if we could just make them more "diverse."

The structures we have in place now are not actually working—except for the very few. University tuition costs are going up while overall teaching salaries have been going down with adjunctification and casualization. As I write this conclusion, unionized staff in UK universities have come off a spring of strike action. Staff at HarperCollins, one of the five major publishing houses in the United

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States, went on strike this spring as well. Graduate students across the United States are unionizing as cost of living increases outpace increases in stipends. The US Supreme Court has just struck down race-conscious affirmative action in college and university admissions. What critical race studies and racial justice activism bring to the discussion is a recognition that reform is not enough. As this book has made clear throughout, it is not sufficient to include more scholars and translators of color, to put some critical race theory on syllabi, and publish some more books by authors and translators of color—though each of these is a small positive step. I am arguing for more than an intellectual "turn" in the field, but rather also real material change. Only a radical transformation of our structures and ideas can lead to a sustainable and equitable future for everyone. And it is in organizing around the politics of those most marginalized and harmed by these structures that this transformation can occur. As the Combahee River Collective insisted, "If Black women were free, it would mean that everyone else would have to be free since our freedom would necessitate the destruction of all the systems of oppression" (22–23). Solidarity is the only way forward.

Drawing primarily on the Black radical tradition, particularly Black radical feminists, this book makes some arguments about how to transform the theory and practice of literary translation in the West in ways small and large. But while the stance of this book is one of solidarity, there are limits placed on it by the unbearable whiteness of translation. Despite the field literally being *translation* studies, relatively little scholarship and other texts about translation written in languages other than English are available in English translation. I thus draw mainly on scholarship and essays shaped by the norms of the English-centric global academic and literary systems. I also rely too heavily at times on US conceptions of race and racial justice due to my own location and the dominance of these frameworks internationally. As a translator of Caribbean and African literature, my international references for thinking through race may also often seem to center the black-white binary that frequently dominates discussions of race. The book, then, inevitably suffers from some of the same critiques it makes, but it is intended as a gesture toward opening a discussion with a larger range of intellectuals, translators, and activists writing, translating, and organizing not only within but also outside of traditional structures. We must conceive new ways to bring these conversations together and put their ideas into practice, beyond the unbearable whiteness of translation. I look forward to new collective imaginings of what translation might be and what kind of world it might be in.

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